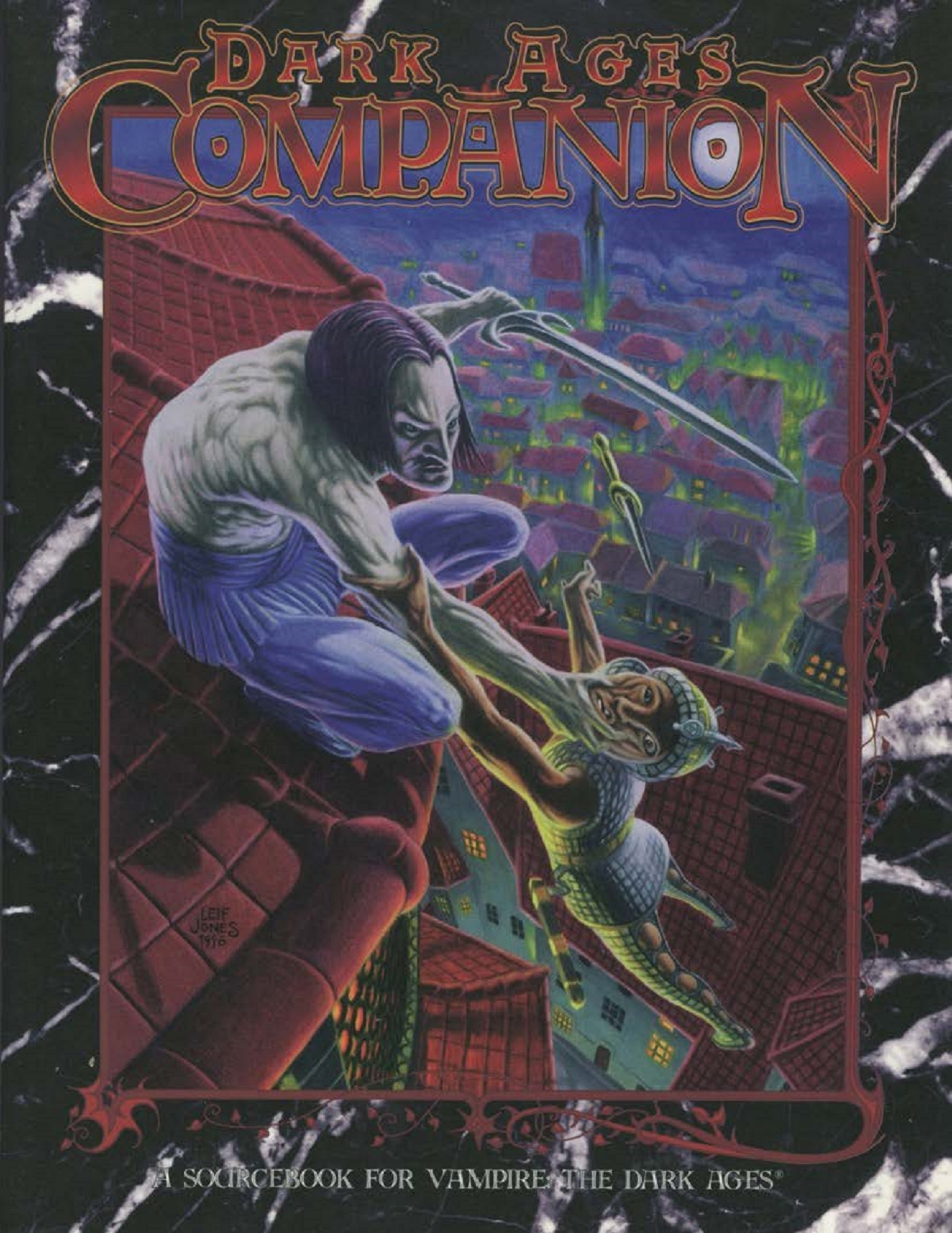
DARK AGES COMPANION



A SOURCEBOOK FOR VAMPIRE: THE DARK AGES®

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Dark Ages Companion™

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Introduction:

The Dark Medieval world is a huge and sprawling thing. It is a living entity, rife with untold adventure, and it anxiously waits those who would face its dangers. This realm is simultaneously thrilling and dreadful, magnificent and terrible. It offers vast treasures, but they are guarded by the treachery, deceit and machinations of ancient Cainites. Nonetheless, faith motivates all who eke out an existence here, for all hope that, at the end of the Long Night, a new morning will dawn. Whether that first glimmer of light shall promise salvation or herald the coming of Gehenna, none can say. Until then, the denizens of the world struggle for their own rewards.

Dark Ages Companion is designed to help your troupe achieve those rewards. In this book you will find new foes to confront, new abilities to learn, and new friends to meet. The Long Night is not over, and there are winding paths yet to be walked.

This book is designed as a resource for both players and Storytellers. It contains numerous secrets, known only to the most ancient of Cainites, as well as facts, myths and rumors known to the common person. Players are advised, if they peruse this whole book, to remember the difference between *player knowledge* and *character knowledge*. Of course you can possess all these bits of wisdom — you bought the book! But characters in the Dark Medieval world don't have hobby stores where they can pick up guides to their shadowy milieu. Part of the joy of playing **Vampire: The Dark Ages** is uncovering the mysterious plots of inscrutable elders and experiencing the thrill of confronting the unknown.

That said, here's what you'll find within:

Chapter One: Combat offers new rules for expanded combat in your chronicles. The concepts presented here add detail to the martialism inherent to the violent Dark Medieval world.

Chapter Two: Cainite Roads presents an in-depth look at Via. At once a philosophical analysis of individual Roads and a discourse on their function, this chapter takes a look at one of the fundamentals of Cainite existence that is all too often taken for granted.

Chapter Three: Bloodlines examines those enigmatic vampires who walk the Earth, some of which fail to survive the ravages of the Inquisition.

Chapter Four: Disciplines discusses those powers inherent to all Cainites. This chapter presents not only expanded powers for truly terrifying high levels of mastery, but also a few unique Disciplines that will either vanish with their parent bloodlines or that lurk just beyond the veil of that which is holy.

Chapter Five: Matters of Faith delineates those aspects of mortal existence that are beyond human will and control. This chapter takes an in-depth look at Christianity, paganism and Islam, with particular attention to how they relate to the Dark Medieval world.

Chapter Six: The Dark Medieval Europe looks at those things which are beyond Cainite control. How do vampires eke out their unlives in this rough time? What mysteries does Kabballah hold? Which military orders were active and where, and which hunted the undead?

Chapter Seven: Infernalism takes a look at the dark powers, which hide even deeper in the shadows than vampires do. An insidious menace lurks at the fringes of the Lord's flock, waiting to lure human and Cainite alike to eternal damnation.

Appendix: Bestiary provides statistics for animals, and describes the personalities that medieval folk ascribed to creatures.





How to Use This Book

The most important rule to remember is that it's your game. This book presents a myriad of new ideas and concepts for **Vampire: The Dark Ages**. Feel free to ignore any of them, add your own, or fiddle with what is provided here. There is no reason why you absolutely *have* to use new bloodlines or Disciplines, just as there is no reason why you have to limit yourself to what is printed here.

In short, do what you want with any and all of this. You know what you like.





Chapter One: Combat

The life of man [is]...nasty, brutish and short.

– Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan

This chapter presents optional rules designed to enhance the combat in your chronicles. Included within are details on mounted combat, sieges, mass warfare and stapling as well as a word or three on new combat maneuvers.

These rules are included in the interest of adding extra detail to the thrill of combat. Storytellers should consider carefully whether they wish to use these rules or if they prefer to keep the systems more streamlined. As always, the story is the important thing and if the rules interfere with it, cast them aside.

Spilling Blood

The backdrop of the Long Night is often the battlefield. If a vampire is physically stronger than his enemies, he will typically see no need to bother with parlay or courtly manners. Like the humans they walk among, the Cainites of these dark times settle dispute after dispute with drawn blades — or worse.

Any number of combat situations may arise in a **Dark Ages** chronicle. Vampires may attack one another on the roads like common brigands, true, but Gangrel also squall beastlike in the woods, and Ventrue and Lasombra hold midnight tourneys, shadowed mockeries of the "legend of chivalry." Nosferatu will guard their stinking havens as would mother bears with cubs, and fevered Brujah philosophers may well lash out at their detractors with whatever piece of oak they find close at hand. However, a chronicle shouldn't consist solely of martial pursuits; even a game based on the battles of the Crusades should allow characters to dabble in the intrigues and personality interactions of the war.

When blades are drawn, though, it's far preferable to make the combat scene as vivid as possible. Gamespeak can be clunky and out of place in a good dramatic sequence. Avoid describing your character's actions by saying "I hit him" or "I dodge." Detail your approach. Watch for your opponent's mistakes, however slight, and capitalize on the weakness of any move he may make. Feint. Parry. Use the terrain — dodge around trees or lead him onto unstable ground. Disable him if there's no time for a quick kill — if he's clutching desperately at his spilt entrails, he has no time to menace you. Of all the best battles in swashbuckling or medieval-setting films, not one limits itself to a pair of antagonists exchanging clumsy blows like a life-sized Punch and Judy.

Once again, we stress the importance of bringing dice into combat scenes *only when necessary*. Is there ever any doubt that the century-old Brujah cavalier can swing effortlessly into his saddle when necessary? Dice add a dramatic element of chance, but also slow the game down. Resort to dice only when the outcome of a scene is in question.

The following are a number of optional rules and guidelines for elaborating on combat in your chronicle. Incorporate what you like; freely discard the rest. And if a rule ever prohibits the game from proceeding in a dramatic and logical fashion — don't hesitate to throw it out at once.

New Maneuvers

Treat the following combat maneuvers as you would those in **Vampire: The Dark Ages**, pages 194-195: They are completely optional, but may add texture and detail to a fight scene. Discard or modify them as you will. In addition, each lists a prerequisite or two; not just anybody knows how to hamstring an opponent in the midst of a duel.

Roleplaying Frenzy

A vampire under the thrall of her bestial nature is not the most calculating of opponents. Although still capable of thought, a frenzied Cainite is unlikely to rely on tactics any more complicated than tearing apart a foe's armor and burrowing through his chest to find the heart.

Some players dread frenzies, feeling that the loss of control handicaps their ability to roleplay their characters — after all, a frenzied vampire is no longer guided by her conscious personality. Worse, succumbing to frenzy is obviously detrimental to a Cainite's already blighted soul. This dread of such a loss of control is a matter of taste, however; just because you aren't roleplaying your character in her usual rarefied sensibilities, you aren't condemned to having no fun.

When the frenzy hits, roleplay it for all it's worth. Ignore the crossbow bolts slamming into you as you smash the baron through his oaken door. Forget leaping for the mounted man-at-arms — hurl his horse to the ground and rip him to shreds when he lands next to you. And if you find yourself at some sort of tactical disadvantage for your actions — what of it? The play's the thing, and it is far better to make the game more enjoyable for the troupe than to timidly refrain from doing anything that *might* cause your character inconvenience.

Melee Maneuvers

• **Riposte:** This technique is a lightning-quick strike that follows a parry. If the character successfully parries an attack, she may make a riposte as her next action — if she dodges, moves more than a few steps or takes some other action, her opportunity for a riposte is lost. The riposte's speed is its advantage. If the character parries one turn and attacks on the next, she gains two dice to her initiative Dice Pool to effect a riposte. If her parry and riposte come in the same turn, they are assumed to take place nearly simultaneously. A character must have at least Melee 2 and Dexterity 2 to attempt a riposte.

Roll: Dexterity + Melee **Difficulty:** 6
Damage: As per weapon **Actions:** 1

• **Tendon Slice:** A talented fighter can slit the tendons in his opponent's wrist or ankle, disabling his foe. This maneuver can only be performed with blades. Characters must possess Melee 4 and Dexterity 2 at least to use this maneuver. Vampires may use this ability with their fangs or claws, but only if they possess at least Brawl 4.

If the character successfully strikes, and causes at least two Health Levels of damage, the opponent's tendon is cut. If the attack was aimed at the wrist, then the foe's hand becomes

largely useless, and he cannot use it to wield a weapon. A successful attack directed toward the ankle will hamstring the opponent, reducing a bipedal foe to 1/4 his normal movement rate and a quadruped to 1/2 its move. Unless the target can regenerate or is mystically healed, this injury will cripple him for life.

Roll: Dexterity + Melee **Difficulty:** 9
Damage: As per weapon **Actions:** 1

Brawl Maneuvers

• **Choke Hold:** Stealth is one of the greatest friends of the creatures of the night. An expedient way of dealing with some obstacles is to strangle them quickly, before they may raise an alarm. To throttle someone, a character must first catch them by the neck. Naturally, the victim may try to escape each turn with a resisted Strength roll. If he fails to escape, he may take no other action.

On the initial turn of the choke hold, the victim takes no damage, but may not speak or shout. The victim loses one Health Level per turn after the first, as long as the assailant maintains the hold. This damage may not be soaked. These Health Levels are not as debilitating as normal damage; if the victim survives, he may recover the strangling damage at a rate of one Health Level per hour. Once incapacitated, however, he is in danger; if the strangler sustains the hold for a further number of turns equal to the victim's Stamina, the victim dies. Vampires obviously cannot be throttled, although this maneuver will keep them from speaking.

Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 7
Damage: Special **Actions:** 1

• **Gobbet Rend:** Certain Cainites, realizing that their worst enemies are always other vampires, practice certain combat tricks intended to hamper a vampire's fighting ability. One of the more reliable ways to impair a Cainite is to limit his blood supply, and this maneuver accomplishes just that. The vampire seizes a hunk of his opponent's flesh and tears it away, preferably from the heart or neck. Vampires no longer pass blood through their veins, so the Cainite must rip away a gobbet that has been fully saturated with blood. Enough vitae sprays loose with this attack that the victim is sure to be inhibited.

Only vampires with claws (Protean 2) or Potence of at least 2 can successfully rend away a chunk of flesh in this manner. The victim takes damage as usual from the claw attack or strike, and unless she soaks this damage completely, she also loses a Blood Point. Naturally, this attack is sadistic and devastating to the extreme when used on mortals, as well



as something of a waste; the mortal is likely to messily bleed to death, spilling far too much blood for most Cainites' tastes. Although this maneuver will eventually fall from common practice, it will endure as a secret trick in the arsenal of more bestial vampires.

Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 8
Damage: As Claw or Strike **Actions:** 1

• **Joint Break:** A brutal maneuver often used by frenzied or sadistic Cainites, this involves seizing an opponent's limb (typically an arm) and either bending it in a direction it wasn't meant to bend or smashing the joint with a powerful blow. If the victim takes any damage from this maneuver, her limb is broken and useless until it heals. A character must have at least Brawl 4 and Strength 2 to use this maneuver.

Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 8
Damage: Strength + 2 **Actions:** 1

• **Neck Snap:** Cainites often cannot be troubled with mortal opponents, and this maneuver is an effective way of disposing of such chaff. The character seizes his target's head, and with a quick, brutal twist, snaps her neck. If the attack is successful, roll damage as below. The victim may add her Strength to her Stamina for soak purposes, but if any Health Levels are unsoaked, her neck is broken. This means death, or at best paralysis from the neck down, for mortal opponents. Vampires may regenerate the damage as normal, but are paralyzed until they do so. Werewolves and other supernaturally fast healing creatures drop to Incapacitated, but may heal from there as usual. A character must have at least Strength 2 and Brawl 2 to use this maneuver.

Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 9
Damage: Strength + 3 **Actions:** 2

Signature Style

Specialities are far more than a simple rules advantage: They're opportunities to infuse your characters with further vitality. Consider two vampires with Melee 5 swordfighting. Not very exciting in and of itself, is it? But if one is a Castilian Toreador trained from birth with a family blade of fine Spanish steel, and another is a Scottish Malkavian who's stained his beloved bastard sword with many a man's blood — now the duel becomes more interesting.

The specialties in **Vampire: The Dark Ages** are an indirect way of granting players a rules advantage for fleshing out their characters with a signature style. This advantage becomes just as vital on the battlefield, and a good specialty can add stylish touches to your battles that make the experience more than just hackneyed dice-rolling. This rule is doubly important for Storytellers — players might not remember the dangerous and nasty-looking Tzimisce ghoul as clearly as the Scottish autarkis who splintered a character's ribcage with one swipe of his nail-studded maul!



The following specialties are presented to give players and Storytellers a few more ideas. Not every soldier and thug should use outlandish weapons or tactics, but a little variety goes a long way.

• **Brawl:** Biting (learned long before the Embrace), Breaking Bones, Dirty Shots, Elbows and Knees, Eye Gouging, Left-Handed Swing, Knockdowns, Trampling Fallen Foes

• **Dodge:** Close Quarters, Shields, Slippery Terrain, Tumbling

• **Archery:** Crossbows, Distance Archery, Gut Shots, Mounted, Penetrating Cover, Stapling, Throat Shots, Welsh Longbow

• **Melee:** Avoiding Shields, Dismemberment, Family Weapon, Hamstrings, Improvised Weapon, Lance

• **Ride:** Jousting, Leaping from the Saddle, Pursuit, Steep Terrain

Stapling

Cinematic combat is full of scenes where a character pins an opponent to a wall, tree or other available surface. In many swashbuckling movies and books, a fighter will usually catch his opponent's sleeve or cape. However, in the Dark Medieval world, it's more pragmatic to drive your steel through your foe's flesh. This technique works best when you intend to take a prisoner alive, particularly if you want him thoroughly intimidated. Although this works best when your target is unarmored, powerful longbows have been known to pierce a knight's armor twice (once on the way in and another on the way out), pinning his leg to his horse!

To pin someone's flesh to a surface, you obviously must use a piercing weapon. The attack is resolved as Dexterity + Melee or Archery as appropriate, but the difficulty increases by two, to a maximum of 10. (Thus, pinning a man's hand to a tree with a dagger strike is a mere difficulty 6, but doing the same with a poleaxe's point is difficulty 9.) Roll for damage as usual; the victim is allowed to soak. The Storyteller may allow the victim an extra soak die or two, depending on how solid the backing surface is. If you inflict at least one Health Level of damage, the target is considered pinned. Unless the attacker was specifically trying to badly injure the opponent, this attack inflicts only one Health Level of damage. (After all, if your intention was to kill your target, you likely wouldn't be trying to pin him, would you?)

To pin a character by their clothing or mail armor, attack as above. (There may be further modifiers as appropriate. Stapling a Celt to a tree by the leather belt that is his only garment is logically trickier than catching a peasant by his oversized woolen tunic. The difficulty modifiers are at the Storyteller's discretion.) It takes only two successes to staple a cloth garment; four successes allow you to pin a fold of chainmail to a surface. The number of required successes may be increased at the Storyteller's whim, depending on the type of surface you pin your victim against.

A pinned victim may tear loose by making a Feat of Strength, with a required Dice Pool of anywhere from two to six. This depends on where he was stapled and with what — if impaled by a boar-spear still held by a maddened Brujah, escape becomes more problematic than if his shirt was stapled to a tree by a dagger. If pinned by a weapon through the flesh, he must also immediately roll to soak an additional four Health Levels of damage — armor does *not* apply to this roll. Obviously, stapling will not always hold an opponent for long; but it will usually immobilize him long enough for you to put your blade to his throat, or otherwise gain his attention.

Weapon Reach

Entire battles have been won or lost by the force that fields the superior weapon. In many cases, superiority is a simple matter of reach. What good is a Gaul's sword if your spear slays him before he can touch you? How fearsome is a knight's lance if your pike takes him from his horse at a distance of 20 feet?

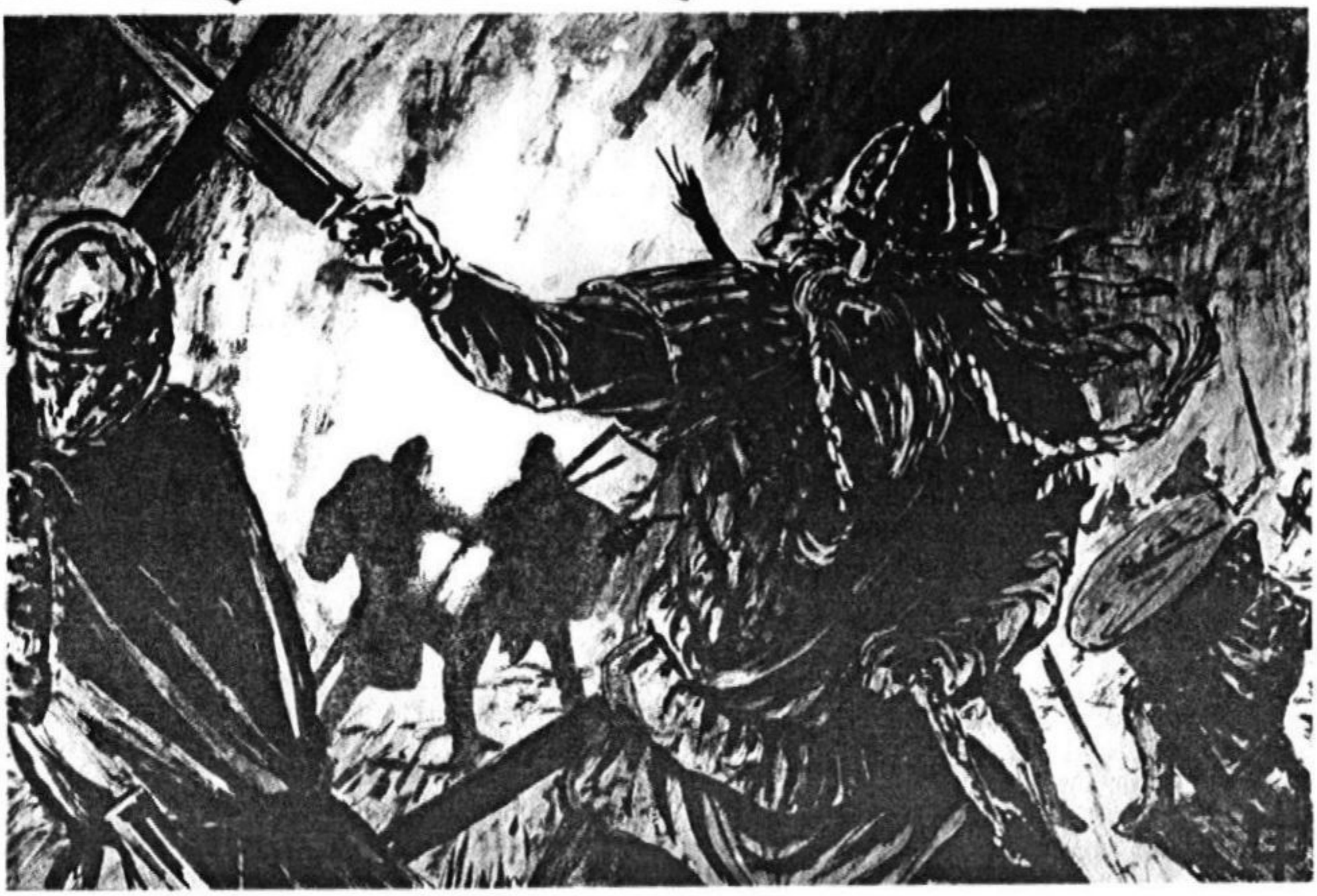
Although adding a "Weapon Reach" statistic would pointlessly slow down combats, Storytellers and players should take the relative scale of their weapons into account. It's purest folly to draw a dagger and leap at a man with a bastard sword — unless you can get inside his guard, you'll be hacked to bits without ever drawing blood.

We recommend using the optional ruling on page 188 of **Vampire: The Dark Ages**, and granting initiative to the character with the longer weapon (in one-on-one combat, of course). A Storyteller may allow Cainites with Celerity to react on her usual initiative by spending a Blood Point for the turn. A sword does little good if the creature before you moves more swiftly than the wind....

If a character challenges an opponent whose weapon is a good deal longer than her own, the difficulty of her Melee rolls should be raised by one. This penalty can be increased to two or three if the discrepancy is truly ridiculous (a skinning knife against a seven-foot spear, for instance). This is doubly important when one combatant is armed and the other isn't! A talented Cainite can effortlessly take an untrained peasant's pitchfork away and snap it over her knee; it's not as easy to disarm a skilled knight.

Two Weapons

Although centuries will pass before Florentine fencing truly comes into its own, fighting with two weapons rather than one is an old concept. Cutthroats will sometimes draw a knife with each hand, certain barbarians prefer two hand axes to one, and a warrior armed with paired longswords may win a fight through intimidation alone. Directing two separate attacks with separate hands isn't as easy as simply drawing them — it requires a certain level of coordination and skill. A character must have Dexterity + Melee pool of at least five dice to properly use two weapons at once.



Storytellers have a number of options for adjudicating two-weapon combat. Perhaps the simplest method is to increase the difficulty of a foe's Melee attacks by one, just as if the second weapon were a smaller shield (**Vampire: The Dark Ages**, page 193). A character who wishes to attack with both weapons in a round either splits her Dice Pool or uses Celerity; no modifiers need apply.

Lenient Storytellers may also allow character who fight with two weapons an additional die in their Melee pools. If the character uses Celerity to attack twice, or only makes one attack in a round, then she doesn't get the benefit of the extra die. The extra die is only added to the Dice Pool when the character splits her pool to make an attack with either weapon, strike with one weapon and parry with the other, or to parry two (or more) incoming attacks. If the pool isn't split, the character isn't fully taking advantage of both weapons and doesn't receive any benefits. Storytellers may wish to limit this bonus die only to characters with the specialty: Two Weapons in their Melee Skill.

Alternately, a Storyteller may simply adjudicate that a character using two weapons may use the Double Strike maneuver (**Vampire: The Dark Ages**, page 194) more efficiently. In this case, the combatant may use up to his Dexterity + 2 dice for each attack, rather than his Dexterity + 1.

Mounted Combat

Trace the word "chivalry" to its roots and you'll find a word for "horse." The horse separated the destitute from the elite, the peasant levy from the knight. Throughout the Dark Medieval times, no unit won more battles for its armies than the cavalry. Although the **Dark Ages** rulebook gives some rough guidelines for mounted combat, the use of the horse in combat is so crucial that it deserves further exploration.

Naturally, not all coteries will be mounting destriers and trampling ghoul peons with abandon, unless the Storyteller sets up the chronicle around the concept of vampiric knights or nobles, each of whom are entitled to ride from place to place. For one thing, horses, even the most broken-down jades, are horribly expensive. Peasants plow with oxen or mules; only the elite are entitled to keep horses. And the expense of keeping a stable? Preposterous to any but the lords of a dominion.

Vampires face a second problem when attempting to ride rather than walk. Horses (like all animals) are distinctly uncomfortable around the walking dead. To ensure proper cooperation, most Cainite cavaliers feed their warhorses vampiric vitae, thereby creating strong and loyal ghouls. With the addition of a little Animalism, the master controls the mount almost as easily as she would her own hand. The Tzimisce, of course, often take this practice even further: The

Fiends' war steeds are commonly horses in general appearance only, having been shaped into equine terrors with razored hooves and the mouths (and appetites) of predatory beasts.

Remember that while mounted, your Dice Pool to attack uses the Ability Melee (or possibly even Archery or Brawl) or Ride, whichever is *lesser* — if you are a poor horseman, your swordsmanship will suffer. In addition, if you suffer damage from a blow when mounted, the Storyteller may call for you to make a Stamina + Ride roll (difficulty depending on how hard you were hit) to remain in the saddle.

A character who is unhorsed or thrown might suffer two to four dice of damage, depending on what he lands on (soft peat will likely not injure one at all, but landing on cobblestones is painful). This damage is soakable as usual (unless you land for some reason in a firepit — or worse....). An unhorsed character also runs the risk of being trampled, at the Storyteller's option (see below).

Jousting

Although no Cainite will ever partake of the sunlit glories of a human king's tourney, many a prince of the Long Night has been recently enamored of the fledgling sport of tilting. This trend is likely to continue as mortal society moves into what will be called the Age of Chivalry. For those troupes who don't mind adopting the mildly anachronistic practice of jousting a little early, or those who choose to roleplay in a later setting than the early 13th century, a few words on jousting are hereby included.

The jouster's primary goal is to unhorse his opponent, although countless variations persist among Cainite society. Some Lasombra count a joust as ended only once the defeated vampire is trampled beneath the hooves of the victor's animal. Other princes disdain the use of the lance, and require that their knights attempt to knock one another from the saddle with a ball-and-chain. (Repeatedly swinging such a weapon requires such strength of arm that these matches usually go to the Cainite most learned in Potence.)

Jousting itself is relatively simple: Both horses begin on separate sides of a partition, and charge full-tilt at one another. Each jouster aims the lance to best unhorse his opponent, while placing his shield so best to deflect his rival's lance.

In game terms, each jouster makes a Dexterity + Melee roll to accurately place his blow; shields adjust the difficulty as usual. Unless the two are using weapons of unequal length, both blows hit simultaneously — there's no need to roll for initiative. If both are unlucky enough to miss, they ride past one another, wheel their mounts around, and try again. If only one is accurate, then he makes an opposed Strength + Melee roll against his opponent's Stamina + Ride. Success means he unhorses his foe.

If both weapons strike true, then each player must make two more rolls. The first is a Strength + Melee roll (difficulty 6) to unhorse his opponent; the second is a Stamina + Ride roll to resist being unhorsed himself. The difficulty of the second roll is 3 + the number of successes the opponent made on the first roll (maximum difficulty of 10). For example, Lord Caius and Signor Magdiel manage to strike one another in a pass. Caius' player rolls 4 successes on his Strength + Melee roll, and adds two more for having Potence 2. Magdiel's player rolls 5 successes, and has no Potence to add. The difficulty of Magdiel's Stamina + Ride roll is 9, while Caius must roll against difficulty 8. Both vampires score at least one success, and remain in the saddle — at least until their next pass. Obviously, humans are at a great disadvantage when jousting against vampires; most princes do not consider such unequal matches sport at all.

Incidentally, it is possible to be injured while tilting. Storytellers may call for damage and soak rolls (the typical jousting lance is not lethal, and does a mere Strength + 1 damage) during a joust. Characters using shields should receive an additional two soak dice, presuming that their opponents are attempting to unhorse them traditionally. If the contest becomes more lethal in intent, consider it mounted combat as usual. These jousting rules do not properly reflect standard mounted combat, and should only be used for sporting events.

Trampling

Although some animals readily trample predators as a form of defense, any person unfortunate enough to be in the path of any large animal might find himself thrown to the ground and trampled. If the trample comes as an attack (for instance, from an elephant), then the attack is resolved as usual, and the target may dodge. If the target is prone, he may still dodge, but the animal's difficulty to trample him is reduced by 3.

However, it's entirely possible for a person to be run over by a herd of animals, a coach, a mounted knight or a human mob simply because he was standing in the wrong place. In this case, there is no attack roll — the character is assumed to be automatically trampled. He may make a Dexterity check to avoid damage entirely — the difficulty and number of successes needed depends on the number of pounding feet he must avoid. If he fails this roll, he may still soak damage as usual. This damage is not considered aggravated.

Trampled by	Difficulty to avoid	Successes needed	Damage
Horse†	6	2	6 dice
Warhorse†	6	2	7 dice
Coach and four	7	3	10 dice
Cavalry charge	9	5	9 dice
Mob	9	4	8 dice

Notes: † If the rider is deliberately trying to run the victim over, she may make an opposed Manipulation + Ride roll against the victim's Dexterity + Athletics. This counts as an attack which cannot be parried, only dodged. The difficulty is 8 for an poorly trained horse, 7 for a well-trained horse, or 6 for a warhorse.

Sieges

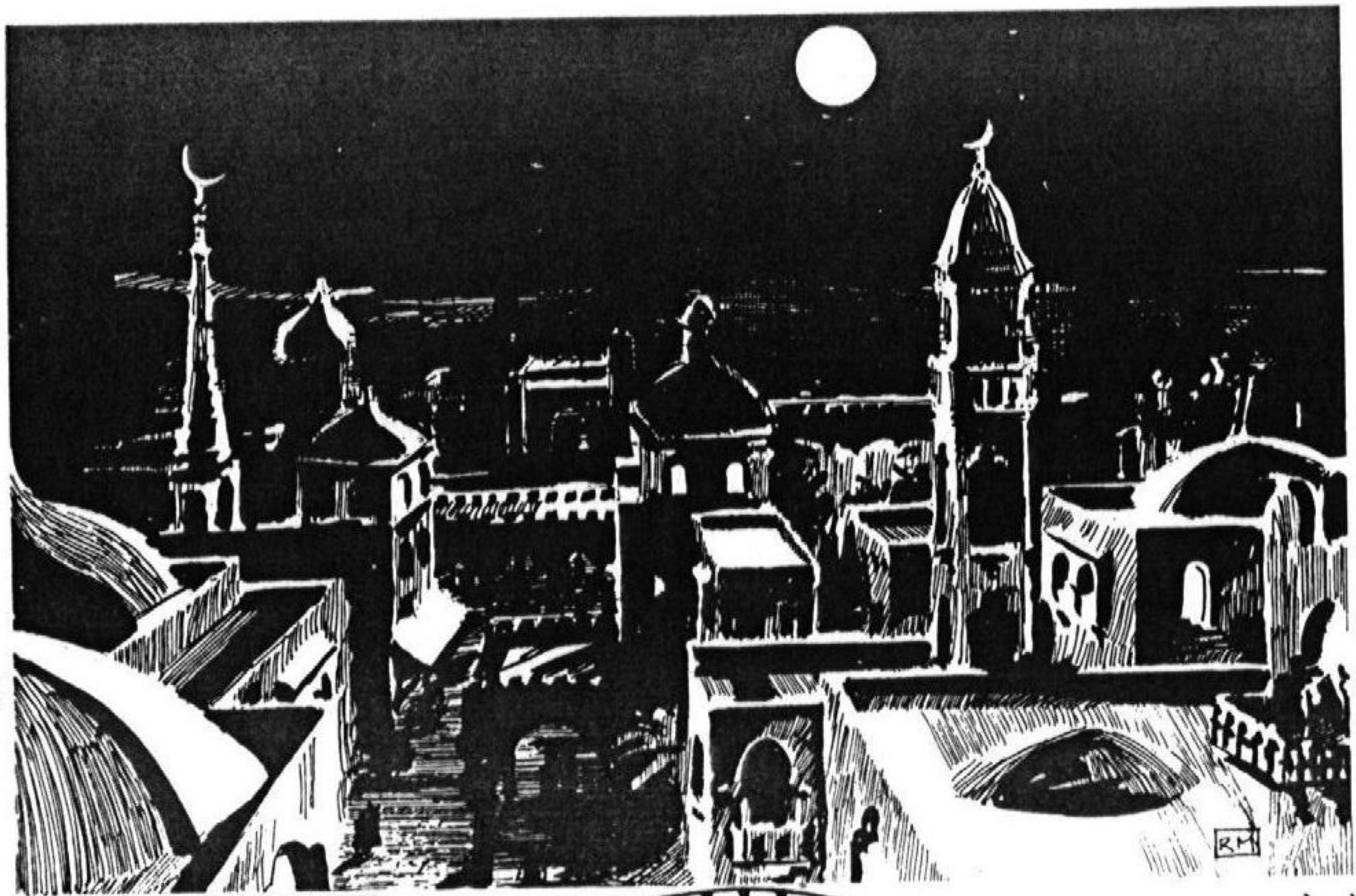
The Children of Caine have always had quite a taste for mortal politics. Some few are even credited with orchestrating the rise and fall of entire kingdoms. In more refined times, a vampire's involvement with politics is usually covert and subtle; but in the Dark Medieval world, a Cainite's manipulation may take the form of outright war. After all, if you have made an enemy of a prince, why not influence mortals to lay siege to his city at the same time you do? And think of the story possibilities if the coterie wakes one evening to learn that armies have surrounded their home....

Sieges last for days and months. Vampires have to return to their havens or find temporary shelter during the daylight hours of an ongoing siege. Being captured by the enemy or caught out too late can result in Final Death. Then again, what better way to break the will of a besieged or besieging enemy than to sneak over the castle or city wall each night and feed on those beyond? Lords and generals who are wise to the existence of vampires may even call upon their services in a siege, whether to force the inhabitants to capitulate or to drive the attackers away.

Horror after horror awaits the besieged. Starvation can drive the desperate to cannibalism. Attackers would often launch rotten animal corpses or other filth over the enemy walls, sapping their opponents' strength through pestilence. A Cainite must feed carefully under such conditions, or risk further endangering her supply of blood. Truly, such a situation can be horrific as the citydwellers raise wails to Heaven for deliverance that may never come. But if one is searching for new ghoul servants, the desperate make excellent candidates for a "deal with the Devil."

Thankfully for vampires, most sieges die down at night. When an army must light fires to see, they give up any hope of concealing their movements — their firelight is good for illumination only to a certain point, but is visible from quite a distance more. Cainites are thus safe from most of the fighting, with one exception: Once the besiegers deem the target sufficiently weakened, they sometimes make their final attack at night. Thus, it's entirely likely that the one battle in a siege in which a vampire might become involved is *the* battle, the one that decides who wins and who loses.

A siege story can bring a great deal of drama to a chronicle. First, the coterie might well be involved in local politics to the extent that they witness (or even precipitate) the events leading up to the siege. When the attackers arrive, the characters may scout out the opposing army to see what forces are arrayed against their home city. (And not all of the opposition must be necessarily human; a rival Cainite will likely tag along to assist in the destruction of his enemies' havens. To say nothing of the Lupines or magi...) As the siege is drawn out, city dwellers gradually grow increasingly desperate; infighting and desertions may stir a riot or frantic atrocities as humans turn on one another like terrified rats. Perhaps a traitor makes plans to open the gates for the attackers in exchange for his life



— what would the characters do if they learned of this? Maybe one of the characters is struck by a catapult shot fired by a restless enemy; maybe the besiegers start a fire that drives a character into the Rötschreck. And then the final strike lands; the walls are breached, or the gate is forced open. The characters must then fight with all their cursed might, or lose their havens to fire and the sword.

Perils of War

Humanity is a clever beast. In the millennia since Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden, mortals have developed almost countless methods of killing one another. Siege weaponry is a prime example: Soldiers on either side of the walls are subject to numerous forms of attack, from boiling pitch to catapult stones. If a Cainite is involved in the battles, he may well find himself cast into the Final Death before he knows it.

If a character is unfortunate enough to be struck by a ballista bolt or catapult stone, she will likely take anywhere from 10 to 15 dice of damage, soakable as usual. (A note: Ballistae fired bolts of such size that forging a metal head would have proved uneconomical. Therefore, their points were typically sharpened, fire-hardened wood. If pierced through the chest with such a projectile, a Cainite will likely be forced into torpor. Although the inaccuracy of siege weaponry is such that a deliberate "heart-shot" is all but impossible, stranger things have been known to happen.)

Incendiaries

Fire is a devastating weapon, but it's hard to control. Armies are usually careful about using raw fire against their foes, as a blaze may well sweep back and engulf them as well. Fortunately (or not, depending on your position in a battle), humans have developed several alternatives, and can deliver the sheer destructive force of flame on their foes without having to worry as much about accidentally destroying themselves. The following substances might well be encountered by Cainites involved in a human battle; vampires may also readily use these weapons on one another. Each of these burning agents causes aggravated damage, and are soaked as fire (**Vampire: The Dark Ages**, page 200).

Boiling Oil

Perhaps the most familiar tactic for repelling besiegers is by dousing them with cauldrons of boiling oil. Oil holds its temperature better than water, and takes some time to cool down. Damage from boiling oil is usually difficulty 7 to soak, and the slightest spark can visit even greater harm on unfortunate victims. Even the survivors of such an attack bear the scars for life, and their horribly melted flesh is usually excuse enough for most villages to drive the wretches into the woods.

Boiling Tar/Pitch

Even worse than boiling oil, tar and pitch stick to their targets, continuing to do damage until washed off or cooled down. Injuries from boiling tar or pitch are difficulty 6 to soak; like fire, the Health Levels depend on how much of the character is covered. This attack can scar victims even more horribly than boiling oil. Cainites lucky enough to survive such an experience have had the flesh boiled and seared to the very bone, disfiguring them as thoroughly as any Nosferatu.

Heated Sand

Another clever method of repelling armored invaders is the use of heated sand. Defenders heat the sand until it is hot enough to cause injury, then dump it on their enemies. The sand sifts effortlessly through the cracks in armor, but doesn't run back out as easily. The results are accordingly gruesome — Knights can be roasted alive in their armor like shellfish. A victim will usually have to strip away his armor to get free of the sand, endangering him even further — archers often wait to loose on any survivors. Heated sand is difficulty 6 or 7 to soak; obviously, armor cannot add to this roll.

Greek Fire

Fire is bad enough, but the chemical concoction of Greek fire is even worse, for water will not extinguish it. This dread Byzantine weapon has thankfully fallen from mortal hands by the 13th century, but certain vampires may well have preserved its secrets for exclusive use against their rivals. Naturally, the Cainite struck with Greek fire will almost certainly fall prey to the Rötschreck, particularly if he tries to douse himself with water and fails. The "fire that will not die" raises the difficulty of Courage rolls by one once its nature is learned; being burnt by Greek fire requires a difficulty 9 Courage roll, or the character loses all reason, and may continue vainly trying to outrun the flames or pour water over himself until Final Death takes him. Needless to say, this weapon is used only in the direst circumstances; the possibility of a backfire worries even the most malicious of Cainites.

Greek fire adheres to whatever surface it strikes, and is exceedingly difficult to wash away. Targets may only extinguish it by fully immersing themselves in water or otherwise completely smothering the flames. It is difficulty 6 to soak, and is considered aggravated damage of the highest order.

Cainites and Open Warfare

What are the medieval times characterized by if not by massive armies of armored men? They swing swords and axes, stomp around on snorting warhorses, fire swarms of arrows and charge maniacally into each other with a mighty clash of steel. The Dark Medieval times are no different. However, this is a world in which vampires lurk in the night and have influence over the battlefield, if not directly, after sunset, then through proxies during the day.

This section is designed help you stage mass battles between armies in your **Dark Ages** games. We're not talking about moving miniatures around on a table. This is about Storytelling the chaotic, horrific, violent and destructive nature of warfare — with vampires and ghouls in the thick of

it all. These rules avoid blow-by-blow confrontations and the conventional dice rolls of the Storyteller System. Rolling for each sword swing would be boring and would deny the bloodlust of battle.

These rules capture the insanity of warfare in broad strokes with emphasis put on individual characters. Armies are certainly on the field, but Cainite and ghoul characters face off against the individual opponents who stand in their way, and are largely oblivious to events elsewhere in the fray.

Imagine major battle scenes in movies like *Braveheart*, *Henry V* and *Excalibur*. Now imagine yourself in the midst of such a battle, only you're undead. One of Baron Friedrig's footmen bellows insanely as he charges at you with an ax raised over his head. Two more men have just killed one of your mortal allies and are turning their attention on you. An enemy knight is about to bash you with his shield. Combatants struggling behind you suddenly crash into your back, knocking you off balance. The ground under your feet is slick with blood. You're about to frenzy. The Beast demands a taste of everyone. Now roll dice to account for it all. Difficult. You want to know what the enemy general is doing 300 feet away? Unlikely.

The ideas that follow are meant to be used to depict battle scenarios, resolve them with a minimum of rolls, and convey a frenetic, ultraviolent atmosphere while concentrating on the individual in the story.

Lead Up

Mass battles don't just occur spontaneously in the Dark Medieval world. There are hundreds and sometimes thousands of men and horses involved. They need to be mustered, organized, armed, transported, camped and fielded before a single arrow can be fired. The process takes weeks, sometimes months to complete. When a battle is waged, it's anticipated by and prepared for by all parties, Cainites included.

If you want to stage a mass battle in your game, make sure that there's sufficient motivation for it — that there's a story behind it. If the vampires know the mortal leaders who are feuding, they can influence those lords to declare war. (The Cainites might even be the leaders.) Even if undead aren't applying their influence, mortal wars need to be fought over important issues, usually land or the simple desire to wipe out the enemy. Don't just thrust a major battle into your chronicle for its own sake. (Although traveling vampires who "stumble" across a battle is justifiable.)

The point is, mass battles are major affairs in mortal and Cainite spheres. They take extreme motivation to initiate and a lot of time to execute. They shouldn't be waged every other game session. One per chronicle is a good rule of thumb. A chronicle could even be based on impending warfare, with the climax occurring with the battle itself.



Who Are We Fighting? I Can't See!

You may have already realized the inherent difficulty in staging large battles that involve vampires: Medieval battles are usually fought by day, not by night. This is where you have to take some liberties. Mass battles might be fought by night for any number of reasons, from premature contact between enemy troops to surprise attacks staged after dark.

Major battles don't have to be fought at night for Cainites to get directly involved, though. Nocturnal skirmishes and raids on enemy camps can prelude or follow mass battles. These would be hit-and-run affairs, but still large enough to be staged with the guidelines presented here.

Daytime battles can also be played out through ghouls that players adopt temporarily. Sure it's fun to be a vampire, to tear open enemy soldiers, gorge on their blood and throw around numerous Disciplines, but ghouls come a close second. They're two or three times stronger than the average mortal; some are deranged enough to gorge on the enemy; and some even have more than one Discipline at their disposal.

Ultimately, if you stage a battle scene that involves more combatants than characters can count at a glance, use these mass-battle rules. If a smaller fight occurs, run it with the normal Storyteller rules.

If you want to go so far, you can adjust difficulties (+1) for mortal attacks made at night. Cainites clearly have the advantage when it comes to fighting in the dark. It's even likely for blind mortal forces to attack their own allies — or be tricked into it.

Just remember, if Cainites get involved in a major battle that's fought at night, dawn is inevitable. A typical battle won't last more than several minutes, or at most a couple of hours. Vampires must be able to take shelter after the chaos of the battle is done.

Winds of Fate

It's important to establish a story behind a mass battle to make warfare realistic and convincing. It's also important because that story often determines who will win the fight. Storytelling a battle scene can get out of hand when the Storyteller has no vision for what can happen. Many people are killed and injured, and vampires are probably left standing, but to what conclusion? If a battle is large enough, not even vampiric efforts can change the inevitable course of things (there are only so many soldiers that a Cainite can slaughter before even she is overwhelmed by the masses). The Storyteller should therefore know who will win a mass battle before it begins, and under what terms (total rout, attrition, unconditional surrender, conditional surrender or perhaps a standoff).

With an established outcome, a battle becomes a plot element rather than the be-all and end-all of a story. There are repercussions that the remaining story addresses, and by deciding the winner of the battle in advance, the Storyteller knows what those repercussions will be.

Don't underestimate the players to turn the tide of events, though, no matter how firm you think the outcome of a battle is. Players always do their best to ruin the best-laid plans. Cainites are going to hunt down opposing leaders and personal enemies on the battlefield. Army generals are often easy to find. They're typically surrounded by entourages and aides, and stand aside from the fray where they can observe events. Singling out an enemy leader means wiping out his bodyguards and agents, but that's not impossible for powerful or cunning vampires.

If a general or significant lord is assassinated, not even the destruction of the enemy may salvage a victory for the dead lord's army. Everything that the lord sought to accomplish is probably lost, unless some successor can pick up the torch.

That said, have a contingency plan in mind for your story if characters undo your planned aftermath. Duke Oswald is found dead — and pale white. Can his frail son find the strength to inspire the army's captains and carry the victory that they won? What if the Cainites visit Oswald's son in his field tent and make him a casualty, too?

The Dogs of War

This mass-combat system is designed from the individual's perspective. You don't play a general who moves troops around (unless your character *is* the general), but rather a single person who is caught in battle, where death can strike from any angle at any moment, even for a vampire. Characters have no time to plan, reconsider decisions or sometimes even think — combat is a barrage of confrontations and chaotic events. Instinct is the rule. The Beast is virtually irresistible.

A medieval battle typically occurs in regulated stages. Archers (if any) fire first and maintain fire until friendly troops enter the field of fire. Foot troops march across the field and charge over the last few yards to the enemy. Cavalry (usually armored knights) is either sent forward before friendly infantry to crash through enemy lines, or is sent in after infantry attacks to pursue routed enemies. Lightly armored cavalry units may skirt the battlefield in order to flank the enemy. Cavalry can also be used to counter oncoming cavalry attacks. The winner of the battle is usually the force that can hold its ground; most battles are won when enemy units flee.

The true battle is fought when forces clash. Individuals in the mob face constant obstacles and threats. The Storyteller should never let up on characters caught in the fray. There should be someone (or multiple opponents) to face at every turn. Likewise, terrain and events should constantly conspire against each character. The following is a list of challenges that a vampire can face in any — and every — moment of battle:

- Multiple opponents attacking from various directions (a given and a constant);
- Blood-slick, rough or cluttered ground that makes footing difficult;

• Falling bodies (human and horse);

• Random arrows, spears, axes, rocks, helmets and shields flying through the air;

• Charging units of troops, whether infantry or cavalry, engaging or fleeing from the enemy;

• Burning arrows, terrain, buildings, opponents and the all-time favorite, oil;

• Barriers and obstacles that impede travel (rivers, gullies, ridges, fences, buildings, barricades, stake walls and troops waiting in reserve);

• Vision-obscuring smoke; and

• Disoriented troops that mistakenly attack their allies.

Throw a variety of these situations and events at them at all times, whether they stand still and wait for threats to come to them or try to make their way across the battlefield.

A battle usually lasts from six to 10 turns before the outcome is decided. (A turn can amount to a few seconds to a couple of minutes, depending on events.) After that time, remaining enemies are dealt with, captured knights are escorted away to be ransomed, and routed foes are pursued. It's at this time that frenzied vampires have a chance to cool down and compose themselves, assuming they aren't hunting down fleeing troops.

The Rules

To stage mass battles quickly and dramatically, we have simplified the Storyteller combat system into a few representative rolls. You're welcome to change these rules as you see fit, but it's recommended that you put emphasis on storytelling over cumbersome rolls.

The heat of mass battle persists for about six to 10 turns. In that time, each character faces a variety of opponents and obstacles that the Storyteller throws at him. The players declare actions as usual, even though their characters may be separated from each other.

Initiative

Initiative is based on Dexterity alone; characters with high scores act first, characters and opponents with low scores act later.

Actions

Each vampire or ghoul gets as many actions in a single mass-combat turn as he has Dexterity dots. Each "dot" can be used to attack, perform some quick action, run around, leap, heal or activate and use a "quick" Discipline such as Talons of the Beast. (Treat each dot as a turn would be handled in the normal **Dark Ages** combat rules, except that most characters have Dexterity scores of two, three or more, so characters will be able to accomplish a lot in each "mass- combat turn.")

If a character wants to attempt more than one action with a dot, use the normal multiple-action rules; Dice Pools are split between actions. Otherwise, Dice Pools are not split among actions taken with different Dexterity dots. If a character dedicates one dot's action to attacking with a sword and leaping a ditch to avoid pursuers, the Dice Pool is split between the actions. If the same character dedicates his *next* dot to making another attack, the attack receives a full Dice Pool (dice aren't allocated among the three actions, only the two that "share" a dot).

Possession of Celerity doesn't necessarily increase the number of times that a character gets to act in mass combat; on a narrative level, everyone performs several actions without any defined time parameters. However, possession of Celerity allows a character to escape a confrontation or move to any other spot on the battlefield almost instantaneously, all at the expense of one Dexterity dot's action (and a single Blood Point, as usual). Escaping confrontations might mean avoiding five opponents, a falling horse and rough terrain all at the same time. Celerity doesn't immunize the character against the attack roll that's made against him in the turn (see below), but it does allow him to avoid specific dangerous situations.

Activating and using Disciplines typically demands a full turn, regardless of how many dots of Dexterity the Cainite has — all dots are used up. Disciplines are more demanding than melee attacks and quick actions because they usually require the vampire's full attention, and concentration is difficult to maintain in full-blown battle. Imagine a vampire who attempts to use Dominate on a foe. He has to catch the target's eye, hold his attention and then act on that bond. That also assumes that the target is capable of eye contact when consumed by battlelust. Meanwhile, the vampire tries to ignore or escape all the distractions around him.

Some Disciplines (ones that activate or are used in moments), can be applied like normal attacks or actions — with Dexterity dots. The Storyteller and player are left to decide what is a quick-to-use power, although the Storyteller is the final arbiter.

If the Storyteller chooses, attempted uses of Disciplines over a whole turn can demand rolls to determine concentration. Roll Wits against a difficulty of 6. If the roll succeeds, the character uses his Discipline as intended. If the concentration *rolls fails, disruptions on the field ruin the attempt.* A botch delivers some tragedy upon the character. A Willpower point can always be spent to ensure that a Discipline is used successfully, negating the need for a concentration check.

Effects of Actions

Being on a battlefield is obviously extremely dangerous, not only in terms of hand-to-hand combat, but in terms of random mishaps and unexpected incoming attacks. An enemy soldier can swing a sword at a vampire, but arrows also fly through the air, terrain shifts make footing difficult, and objects crash into combatants. These "coincidental" dangers are reflected in this system, but in a simplistic way that keeps events moving quickly.

Spills and Mishaps

At the beginning of each mass-combat turn, a player should make a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 6). If the roll succeeds, the character maintains his footing for the turn and manages to account for all coincidental dangers around him, such as falling knights, charging troops and rough terrain.

If the roll fails, the character loses one of his Dexterity-dot actions for the turn. No damage occurs to him, but he loses the ability to act as often as normal because he falls down, rushes to get out of the way of stampeding horses, or is temporarily pinned under a heavily armored knight (the actual circumstance is determined by the Storyteller). A Discipline that requires a full turn to activate or use can still be applied when a character's Dexterity + Athletic roll fails, but a concentration roll (see above) is mandatory to use the Discipline.

If the evasion roll botches, the character loses all of his actions for the turn while impeded by some event on the field. Not even Disciplines can be activated or consciously used. Disciplines that are already in operation continue as long as they don't require the vampire's constant attention. If they do, they cease functioning.

Note that this roll to escape most mishaps does not account for special maneuvers that a character attempts in a turn. If a Cainite wants to leap a ravine, a separate action and roll is required. The "evasion" roll at the beginning of the turn simply accounts for accidents that occur on the field.

Blood and Gore

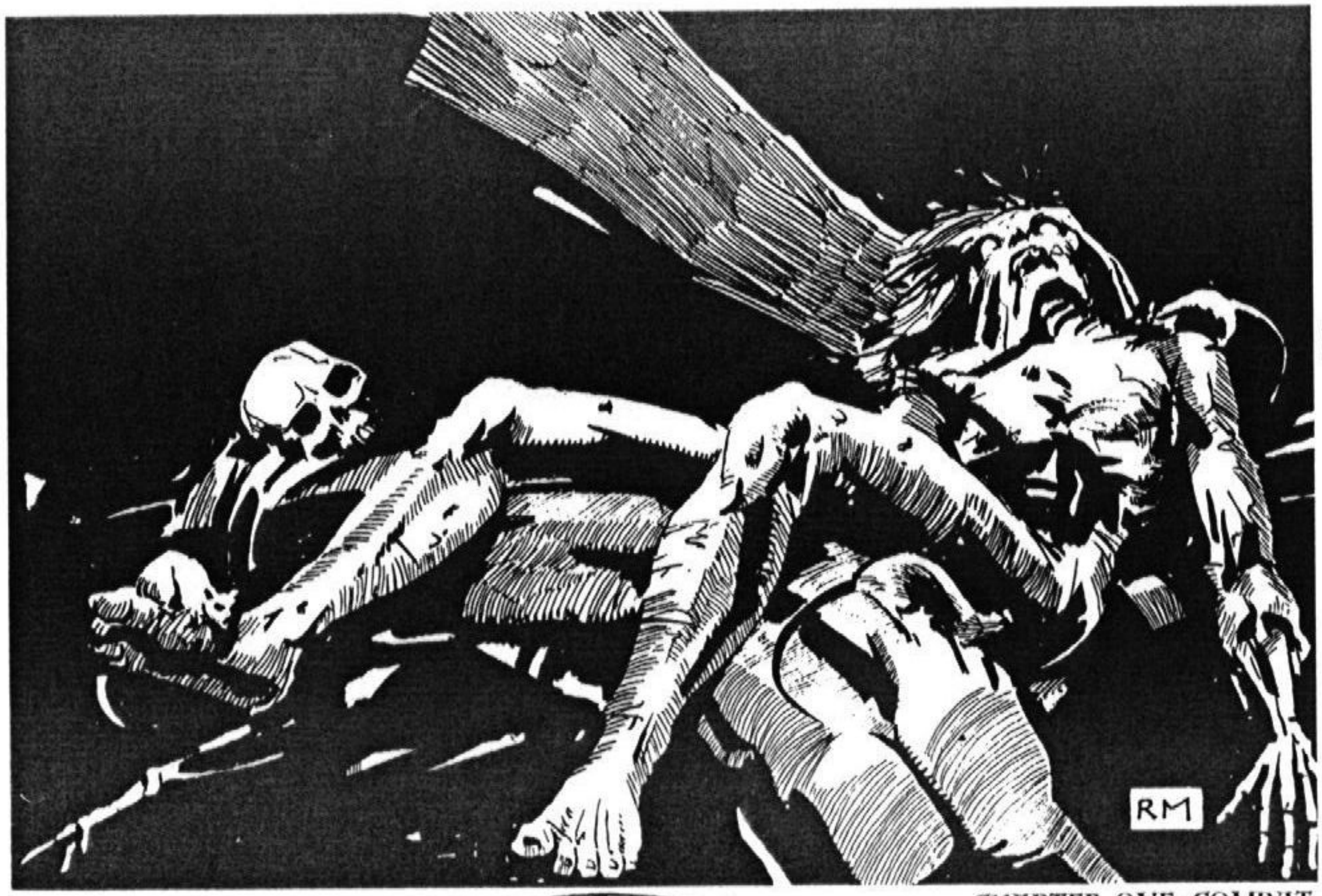
Attacks staged by vampires and ghouls are resolved quickly and have sweeping effects. A character's melee, brawl and missile attacks are rolled for normally (with a Dice Pool of Dexterity + Melee for sword attacks, for example), except that a standard difficulty of 6 is used. For every success rolled, one opponent is "dispatched." The victim is killed, gravely wounded, runs in fear or is knocked unconscious. The opponent is no longer a threat; no Health Levels are counted.

If multiple actions are performed with a single Dexterity dot, dice allocated to any attacks are still rolled, but the number of opponents that can be eliminated is obviously reduced.

Use of Disciplines typically dispatches a number of opponents equal to twice the rating of the power (a three-dot power eliminates six opponents). Of course, if a Discipline has specific parameters and would affect certain targets or a particular area of effect, the appropriate number of targets is made into casualties instead. Ultimately, it's not the quantity of bodies that a vampire piles up that's important, but the need to strike quickly and fatally in order to survive. No one has time to keep a body count during battle.

Creative Use of Disciplines

Disciplines can be used in a variety of ways in battle, and the Storyteller is encouraged to be flexible with their application. If a player proposes use of the one-dot Mortis power Masque of



Death to turn an enemy soldier into the walking dead, and the vampire sends the victim back into his own lines, more than the standard two enemies will be affected. Large number of enemy troops will flee the "corpse" before someone strikes him down. The rule of thumb is: If the player comes up with a convincing, even if somewhat illegal effect for a power, allow it. Since Disciplines can only be used once per turn, granting them wide affect makes their use more dramatic.

Players should be inventive with Disciplines. Nocturne can be used to blanket the enemy in darkness, but it can also be used to hide allies or cloak the enemy's objective. Awe can be used to convince enemies to leave a vampire's presence, but they might also be convinced to fight their allies for a turn. Interred in the Earth can be used to hide, but can also be used to spring from the ground and surprise opponents. Disease could be used on one victim and the vampire could point at him and shout "leper." Everyone, friend and foe, would flee the target. Using Disciplines in obvious ways undermines their potential and diminishes one of the most significant differences that exists between Cainite and mortal on the battlefield.

Attracting Attention

Using Disciplines or multiple attacks to dispatch large numbers of enemies at one time proves a vampire's might. However, it also attracts the attention of enemy leaders and champions. When a hole suddenly opens in a line of troops, lords tend to notice. That can mean a hail of arrows directed against a specific character or might mean a charge by lance-toting, heavily armored knights. In that case, add two dice to a mortal counterattack Dice Pool (see below) for the turn.

Counterattacks

Cainites in battle face a number of different opponents in any given turn as the tide of battle shifts. Individual vampires get multiple opportunities to act and attack in a turn of mass combat; they are supernaturally powerful and are the heart of the story, so putting emphasis on them makes sense. The Storyteller doesn't want to roll attacks for every mortal combatant who squares off against a Cainite, though. Mortal counterattacks are therefore represented by a single roll in every mass combat turn. (Mortal attacks on vampires are not rolled for every action — every Dexterity dot — that a vampire takes in a turn, but for a whole turn.)

The Storyteller makes a generic roll of five dice (difficulty 6) against each vampire, each turn. This roll represents attacks specifically directed against a character, but also encompasses random attacks such as stray arrows, erratically thrown weapons, wild swings and blows deflected from other targets. Double the number of successes made in the attack roll and use the total as a damage Dice Pool. The vampire's Stamina, Fortitude and armor still form a soak Dice Pool that reduces damage successes.



Mortal attacks on Cainites should be considered aggravated every second or third turn of combat. Aggravated attacks include flaming arrows, boiling oil and perhaps even blessed weapons (priests bless armies and sometimes weapons before each battle).

If the Storyteller makes an attack roll, aggravated or not, and achieves five successes, the targeted vampire is impaled through the heart and is immediately thrown into torpor. In this case, a lucky arrow, spear, stake or broken ax handle pierces the vampire's heart.

The traditional **Dark Ages** rules for shooting a vampire through the heart (page 192) are superseded by these rules to reflect the constant danger and chaos inherent to mass battle, as it is impossible for a vampire to anticipate every attack made against him. It is also for this reason that *no* attack made against a Cainite in mass battle can be dodged as usual in the Storyteller combat system. Not even automatic heart impalings can be dodged. Again, the battlefield is not a place for the frail or delicate.

Mass Combat and Torpor

Cainites face a greater threat of impalement in mass combat than in perhaps any other circumstance. Flying missiles and weapons can pierce the heart at almost any time, and without warning. The Storyteller should convey this danger to alert players to the jeopardy that their characters are in. A nearby mortal soldier might suddenly fall screaming and clutching at his heart, an arrow piercing straight through his chest. A knight might ride by with an enemy impaled on his lance — again pierced through the heart. Such images bring home the threat that vampire characters face — perhaps to the point of making them reconsider their necessity on the field.

Fear can be especially intense if Cainites get word that an enemy lord knows of their existence and is hunting vampires on the field. That knight riding by with the impaled victim on his lance could be the lord in question. How long could it be before he confronts the characters?

Dramatic Moments

What cinematic, mass battle would be complete without a personal duel between the story's heroes and villains? **Dark Ages** battles are no different. Characters are bound to hunt down and confront personal enemies and enemy leaders. Stage such duels with the traditional Storyteller combat rules, with a distraction thrown in from time to time. An enemy soldier might come to his leader's defense and assail a Cainite, while a soldier allied to the Cainite might stab at an enemy leader. Such distractions can be dealt with by adding to the difficulty of an attack made against the other duelist, or by diminishing the Dice Pool that either duelist has to use in a turn. Ultimately, the intruding combatants shouldn't remain for more than a turn before they're suddenly dispatched or they run off.

Morale

Mortals in Dark Medieval times are extremely superstitious. When they see another "person" tear the head off of an opponent and start drinking, they get upset. The opponents that a vampire dispatches in mass combat already include soldiers who are frightened away. However, if a Cainite makes a tremendous or dramatic display of power, such as use of the Obtenebration power Nocturne, more than the "normal" number of opponents is affected. Fear ripples through enemy troops. If several soldiers suddenly fall or flee, others run, too. The Storyteller must decide how widespread panic is. Just remember that broken morale tends to have a cascade effect; when some start running, more follow.

Feeding

Mass combat offers plentiful opportunity to feed, whether during or after battle. Treat feeding during combat as a full turn's action (as if a Discipline is used). Assume that all 10 Blood Points are drained from the victim.

Observers of a feeding, if any, probably don't realize what they witness in the flurry of events. Alternatively, they are horrified by what they see but don't have the opportunity to do anything about it. Indeed, a Nosferatu or deformed Tzimisce could reveal her full form in mass combat and the overall course of the battle would go unchanged, nor would the Cainite face repercussions afterward.

Frenzy

Very few vampires caught in the thick of battle can resist the Beast. The immediate threat to life and limb and the flow of blood is just too much to resist. The temptation to frenzy is automatic; no single Control/Instinct roll determines if a vampire can resist frenzy. Rather, each Cainite immediately enters into the five-success extended action of resisting the Beast (difficulty 6), as detailed in **Dark Ages** (page 202). If five successes are achieved, the vampire takes control of herself. Otherwise she is blood-crazed and largely remains that way until the end of the battle. All the bonuses and penalties of frenzying apply to these mass- combat rules.

Example of Play

The following is an example of how a mass battle is staged. Only two turns of actual rolls are outlined, but they convey a sense of how a whole battle is played.

Anatole wryly warned Baron Sumpter that outright rebellion against the local duke was madness. There were other ways of freeing Duke Astor from the influence of the centuries-old vampires who controlled him. Unfortunately, the enraged Sumpter refused to listen to a "demon." And so the Malkavian found himself in the thick of a futile battle, a nighttime attack meant to surprise the duke's forces. As Anatole expected, Astor's mortal army was ready for the move. Now the Cainite feared for the life of his impetuous friend... but had to laugh all the same.

In this scenario, the Storyteller has established the premise for a mass battle in his chronicle: A mortal baron has been duped into committing rebellion by conspiring vampires. However, the baron has the guidance and protection of his Cainite comrade Anatole.

The Storyteller has already determined that Duke Astor is prepared for a nocturnal attack, thanks to supernatural spies. The Storyteller decides that the heat of battle will last only six turns before Baron Sumpter's forces are routed.

Anatole has a Dexterity of 4. He may therefore take four quick actions in every turn of mass combat, or may perform one "longer" action, such as using a Discipline.

At the beginning of the first turn, Anatole's player, Justin, makes a Control/Instinct roll (difficulty 6) to resist frenzy. It succeeds, so Anatole remains true to his plan of protecting the baron.

Next, Justin rolls Dexterity + Acrobatics (difficulty 6) to see if Anatole avoids mishaps and coincidental events. That roll fails (but doesn't botch), so Anatole loses one action this turn. The Storyteller declares that a unit of charging soldiers forces Anatole away from the baron, and time is lost getting back to the lord's side.

In his first action, Anatole confronts three enemy soldiers with his sword. His Dexterity + Melee Pool is eight (difficulty 6). Justin gets five successes and dispatches the three soldiers, plus two others who flee at the sight of the carnage.

The Storyteller tells Justin that Anatole's second action is lost as the vampire is forced aside by the unit of enemy soldiers, discussed above.

In his third action, Anatole lashes out at the unit that pressed him to the wayside. Justin rolls two attack successes, so two soldiers are disposed of.

In his fourth action, Anatole strides forward to engage a captain who is marshaling troops against the baron. Justin rolls an impressive six successes. Not only does Anatole hack the horse out from under the captain and the knight is crushed under his steed, but he decimates five men who try to heed the captain's call!

At the end of the turn, the Storyteller makes a counterattack roll against Anatole. Five dice are rolled (difficulty 6). The Storyteller decides that because Baron Sumpter is the target of the enemy army, and Anatole is his defender, this attack is aggravated. Two successes occur. That means four dice are rolled in the damage Dice Pool. Three damage successes are achieved. Anatole soaks one of them (he has Fortitude). The Storyteller announces that during the course of battle, Anatole has been struck by a flaming arrow and forced into a burning haystack. Justin marks off two aggravated Health Levels.

That's the end of the first turn.

In the second turn, after successfully resisting frenzy again and avoiding mishaps this time, Anatole uses his Dementation power Haunt the Soul to implant visions in the minds of the soldiers who charge the baron's position. Justin hopes that their insane screams will frighten off other soldiers, too.

The Storyteller calls for a concentration roll (Wits, difficulty 6), which Justin makes. Haunt the Soul is a two-dot power, so four enemy soldiers are driven screaming from the field (they witness Baron Sumpter as something far more horrific than the normal man he is). The Storyteller decides that others are affected by Anatole's power as well. The Storyteller rolls a die to determine how many other soldiers flee the baron's presence, for fear that he is more than he appears.

After another counterattack roll against Anatole (not aggravated, this time), the second turn is over.

In the following turns, Anatole falls into frenzy and fails to protect Baron Sumpter as he sates his bloodlust. The baron is struck down, throwing the Malkavian further into madness. Though Duke Astor's forces win the battle, they are mysteriously whittled down on the long trek back to their manors. Justin announces that Anatole seeks revenge against the knights in the duke's army, and that Astor will be killed last — a warning to the ancient vampires who control the mortal lord. The Storyteller must now adapt this mission into his ongoing storyline.

Aftermath

After the heat of battle cools, one side (usually the one with the most troops left standing on the field) is the winner. The losing side is typically broken, with survivors surrendering or fleeing. Cainites can use this time to pursue routed enemies or to feed. Frenzy typically wears off at this point, too, and characters must decide what to do next in the story. If dawn approaches, they undoubtedly seek shelter. Conspicuous Cainites like Nosferatu need to disguise themselves or face garrisons of troops who assume that such creatures can only be allies of the enemy.

Conclusion

In the end, no matter how a mass battle is staged, it should be exhilarating and terrifying at the same time, even for supernaturally powerful vampires. Neither players nor characters should have the chance to take stock of events. Characters may not even know that their presence on the battleground means their demise, at least not until the smoke clears and it becomes clear that enemy soldiers have won the field — and now close upon the monsters.



Summary of Combat Rules

• The heat of mass combat lasts from six to 10 turns.

• Vampires immediately begin extended action rolls (Control/Instinct, difficulty 6) to resist frenzy. One roll is made per mass-combat turn. Five successes are required to gain control.

• Each character checks Dexterity + Acrobatics (difficulty 6) to avoid mishaps and pitfalls in each turn.

• Initiative is based on Dexterity; characters with high scores act first as Dexterity-dot actions and turns are resolved.

• A vampire gets as many "quick" actions (attacks, maneuvers, chances to heal) in a mass-combat turn as he has Dexterity dots. A single dot that's dedicated to multiple actions requires that the Dice Pool be split.

• Attack Dice Pools are rolled normally (difficulty 6). For each success, one opponent is eliminated.

• Disciplines that do not have instantaneous effects require a whole turn to use. The number of targets affected by a Discipline is equal to twice the rating of the power (unless the power specifies otherwise).

• A concentration roll (Wits, difficulty 6) may be required to use some Disciplines in the midst of battle; Storyteller's discretion.

• Each vampire is subjected to one counterattack roll per turn. It has a Dice Pool of five (difficulty 6). The number of successes is doubled, and that is the number of dice rolled in the damage pool. This damage can be soaked.

• Attack rolls made against vampires are considered aggravated every two to three turns.

• If an attack made on a vampire scores five successes, the vampire is impaled through the heart and is immediately sent into torpor.

• No attacks can be dodged.





Chapter Two: Cainite Roads

To His Most August Majesty, Prince Antonio Bellafonte of Genoa, Greetings:

I pray this letter finds you prosperous in these difficult times, and your dominion untroubled by famine or war. Much has been said in Spain of your great city, the gateway to the Holy Land, and of your just and fair rule of Cainite and mortal alike. Greatly do I desire to see your fair city, and great was my joy upon receiving your summons, but it is with heavy heart that for now I must forbear your generous hospitality. I am required to meet other obligations, both to my learned brethren and to my prince, which compel me to remain in Seville. Yet I would not be a true childe of the Brujah were I to refuse a request for the spread of knowledge, so while I cannot attend on you in person, please accept this letter, which I trust will provide, to your satisfaction, all the knowledge of the Cainite Roads that you may require.

Via Bestiae - The Road of the Beast

The Gangrel's eyes never left mine as he crawled backward into deeper shadow, out of the moonlight. He dragged the body of the woodsman like a dog clutching a rabbit, his jaws locked around the throat of his prey. I heard flesh tear, and he began to feed. For a long time it was the only sound in the hollow ruins of the old millhouse.

"I walk no Roads, Brujah," he said at last. His voice was like a hinge that had been left to rust. "I am true to myself. I am a vampire, a creature who feeds on the blood of men. The hunger was with me when I awoke in the grave, stronger than anything I have ever felt before. It filled me with strength and sharpened my senses, so I rose from the damp earth and began to hunt. The darkness was alive that night, and I moved through it like one of your petty kings. When I found my prey I let it run, just for the joy of the chase."

He rose from his meal and began to pace, moving with swift strides. His form was slightly hunched over, as though uncomfortable with walking erect. There was a nervous energy, a tension that seethed in him, like a caged beast.

"Near dawn, I found a cave in which to rest. I was not afraid of what I had become. Rather, I was at peace. Do you know why? Because I had no need for riches, or for the favor of some cowardly noble or for the blessing of a sneering priest. Those things were for the sheep on which I fed. I had become like the wolf, accepting the animal urges within me. It made life simple and complete."

He threw the woodsman at my feet. The body's woolen tunic was dark with spilled blood. "Drink of an honest kill for a change, scholar. You and your scheming brethren are little better than the cattle you feed upon. You think to bury your nature under courts and laws, pretending you are still human, that nothing has changed. Your cowardice sickens me."

The Gangrel was a blur of fluid motion, leaping to the windowsill. He was tall and lean, and wore nothing more than a simple linen tunic that reached to his knees. His hair was a tangled mass that gave shadow to his pale face. "Drink or do not drink," he said, the red summer moonlight gleaming in his eyes, "but leave this forest before dawn. These are my hunting grounds. If I find you here again, I will take you for my prey."

We are all pilgrims on a Road, from the first moment we awaken in the Embrace. Do you recall your first impressions of unlife, Your Majesty? The coldness, the emptiness inside, and then the terrible hunger, as the blood of Caine awakened the Beast within? It focuses all of our urges and hidden desires into a single, raw need that is horrifying in its strength and purpose. While the newborn babe comes into the world fighting for air, the newborn Cainite awakens fighting for his heart and mind, and the battle is never truly won. Defeat means becoming a monster, with no memory of what it once was.

So we must struggle against the domination of the Beast, each according to our nature. We reinforce our minds with structure and logic against the next onslaught of mindlessness. A childe of Caine must drive himself to seek a meaning for his newfound existence, a code of behavior that will define his actions, because it gives him discipline and strengthens his presence of mind. What is more, these systems of ethics provide a refuge, a point of reference to accept our existence as vampires. Unlike the mortal world, with all its ready explanations, a childe lives a life of mystery and secrets. Sometimes we find that the truth about what we are can be too much to bear, and the Road is there to offer us refuge.

In the course of my studies, I have determined eight Roads that encompass the philosophies of the modern world. Herein I shall describe them, and their followers, in detail, save one. Of the Road of the Devil I will not speak, save to say that it is no true path at all. Better to surrender to the Beast than welcome Hell onto the Earth. I will not take part in spreading its deceit.

Before I begin, let me first dispel a myth. There is no arcane formula for determining what Road a Cainite walks. One cannot simply consider nature, demeanor and clan, and then derive a predictable answer. We are not such simple ciphers! A man's pretense is too often a false face, for how many rogues have been shown to hide noble hearts? And who would think a Tzimsice would follow the Road of the Beast, yet it is sometimes so. Oftentimes, the choice of Roads is not a conscious one, but an unknowing reaction to a Cainite's newfound existence. In general, an individual's nature will largely determine which Roads are most agreeable to follow. A true rogue could not take the Road of Chivalry to heart, any more than a just prince could dedicate himself to the Road of Paradox. Each clan, by its nature, tends to espouse particular Roads that keep with its ideals, but ultimately the choice belongs to the childe. Following a Road for the sake of a clan rather than the dictates of one's heart has led more than one Cainite to a tragic end.

In the following passages, I have tried to illustrate the different beliefs of the seven major Roads in the words of their adherents, along with my own observations. You will also find various archetypes that are agreeable to each Road, the clans that favor a particular Road and why, and various physical details of the believers that may be of interest to Your Majesty.

Most Cainites struggle forever against the Beast within, because its raw savagery cares nothing for compassion, reason or regret. It paces and hungers, the soul of a predator, and we hold it at bay for fear of what its urges may drive us to. We hold to a desperate belief that whatever we have become, we are not animals.

Those who follow the Road of the Beast say we are living a lie.

These *ferals* accept the bestial instincts that arise with the Embrace as the natural condition of the vampire. Driven by instinct to hunt and feed on human blood, they see themselves as akin to the bear or the wolf, and retreat into the wilderness to live like any other animal. This is almost always an unconscious reaction — sometimes a person becomes a feral because the knowledge of his damnation is too much to bear, and his terror

and shame compels him to forget his human existence. Only a rare few, disdainful and bitter with mortal society's corruption, choose to deliberately abandon themselves to the wild.

While it would be easy to dismiss the Road of the Beast as nothing more than uncontrolled barbarity, its philosophy in fact has an enviable simplicity, and is as principled as any other Road. A feral thinks of himself as a creature of the wilderness, subject to the laws of nature like any other animal. When he hungers, he feeds. When tired, he rests. When cornered, he fights. The weak must perish so that the strong may survive. As a result, the feral's mind is always on the moment at hand; the past is dead, and the future will take care of itself. He trades reason for instinct, wisdom for impulsiveness, and acts on his urges as they arise. By doing this, he maintains a balance with the Beast within. Rather than hold it back, he gives it release.

Like the animal, a feral is unfettered by doubts, ambitions or by any of the other distractions of the reasoning mind. He sees the world in absolute terms — predator and prey, good and evil, friend or foe. As a result, he has no patience for deceit, and is brutally honest in his dealings. This single-mindedness, however, also makes him dangerously short-sighted. At best, a feral will only consider the most immediate consequences of his actions, which can be a potentially fatal mistake. This perspective also leaves him prone to manipulation (but woe unto the manipulator should he be found out).

On the surface, the Via Bestiae may seem chaotic, but a feral is bound by a definite code of behavior. He must establish a territory of necessary size to provide good hunting for himself, and then keep it free from rivals. He kills only when he must, to feed or to defend himself or his territory. The feral avoids cruelty and maliciousness as much as altruism, for those are all seen as "civilized" traits. When he fights, no quarter is asked and none is taken. He must avoid material desires and the trappings of mortal society. Last, but most important, a feral must maintain his freedom at all costs. He owes no prince allegiance, and is bound by no law but his own. Few things inspire dread in a feral as much as the thought of the Blood Oath.

Ferals tend to lead solitary existences, sharing a healthy contempt for mortal and Cainite society. They are intensely wary of any new element in their environment, and are instinctively mistrustful of people. When interacting with others, they are blunt and forthright, and have no patience for small talk or pleasantries. While it is not impossible to earn a feral's trust, such favor comes only with time and patience. Friendships of a sort can be forged, but the feral will always keep himself at a distance, unwilling to be drawn too deep into the ways of social interaction. In cases where a feral chooses to become part of a group of Cainites, he often assumes a packlike mentality, looking out for other "pack members" while at the same time vying with the "pack leader" for dominance. The feral will accept leadership only from someone whom he can respect.



By nature, ferals tend to be of a type that is self-centered and antisocial. A barbarian or a rebel might choose this Road out of contempt for civilization and its decadence, while a loner might seek the wilderness because the ways of people were never welcome to him. A hard-bitten survivor of life's misfortunes will sometimes take to this Road, because he favors abandoning restraint and living by wits and strength. There are also rogues who occasionally turn to this Road, preying on the weak to feed their selfish desires, but this is rare.

The only clans that routinely lay claim to the ferals are the Gangrel, the Nosferatu and, to some extent, the Tzimsice. Many Nosferatu flee into the deserted places of the world in horror at what they have become, and seek the Road of the Beast to forget what they once were. The Tzimsice cultivate attitudes in keeping with this Road, opening themselves to their Bestial urges; some of their number have been known to embrace this Road wholeheartedly (much to the embarrassment of their peers). But the Gangrel by far is the clan with the most claim to this Road; they actively teach its ways to their childer, invoking the animal natures within them.

Ferals can run a wide range of appearance, from naked and filthy to armored in leather and furs. Their clothing is simple, often dirty, and threadbare, usually a patchwork collection of items stolen or taken from unresisting prey. They have no interest in jewelry or ornamentation, looking on such with disdain. Ferals tend to avoid the use of tools or weapons, preferring their natural abilities instead.

Via Equitum - The Road of Chivalry

The knight, his eyes grim and purposeful, strode past my protesting servant and into my chambers. He wore his full suit of mail, armored head to toe, and his sword hung from a worn scabbard at his side. I stood, bewildered, a scroll dangling loosely from my hands as the warrior knelt before me.

He looked at me expectantly. I frowned. "What do you want?" I asked.

"I am Geoffrey of Anjou, my lord," the knight replied. He had a square-jawed face scarred by war, with a patrician's nose and cold-blue eyes. His voice was coolly civil. "My lord the Prince of Seville, Miguel del Santos, sends his deepest concern for your safety and well-being, and has commanded me to watch over you."

Then I understood. "This is about that bloody rumor, isn't it? Those Moorish zealots have no interest in a simple scholar such as myself!"

The knight's face hardened to a mask of resolve. "It is no rumor, my lord. The prince's agents have learned, for a fact, that the caliph in Granada has sent an Assamite to destroy you. You are more than merely a simple scholar to the prince. He values your counsel in all things."

"More is the pity," I said in disgust. I threw the scroll onto the table before me. "This is madness. What? Does the prince believe my duties would be better served by setting watch over my every move? I have no wish to be nursemaided by a knight."

Geoffrey of Anjou was unmoved. "I cannot help that, my lord. I must protect you regardless. I have given my oath upon it. When the Assamite comes, I am bound to defend you at the cost of my own life, if I must." The knight hazarded a tiny smile. "Of, course, I would rather he paid for it, instead."

"You are damned forthright for a Lasombra," I snapped, trying to think of how to send the knight back without insulting the prince.

At this the knight bristled slightly. "I am no Lasombra, my lord. I serve the prince, but I am a Ventrue."

It was a few moments before I regained my composure. "How is that again?"

"I challenged the prince in a trial by combat, and was defeated. He accepted my yield, in exchange for a year and a day of service." He might have been speaking about the weather, explaining an obligation that would have humiliated any other member of his clan.

I pulled up a chair, suddenly needing to sit down. "Let me see if I have this straight. You are a Ventrue, in service to a Lasombra, who has commanded you to protect a Brujah."

Geoffrey nodded solemnly.

"And you do this of your own free will?"

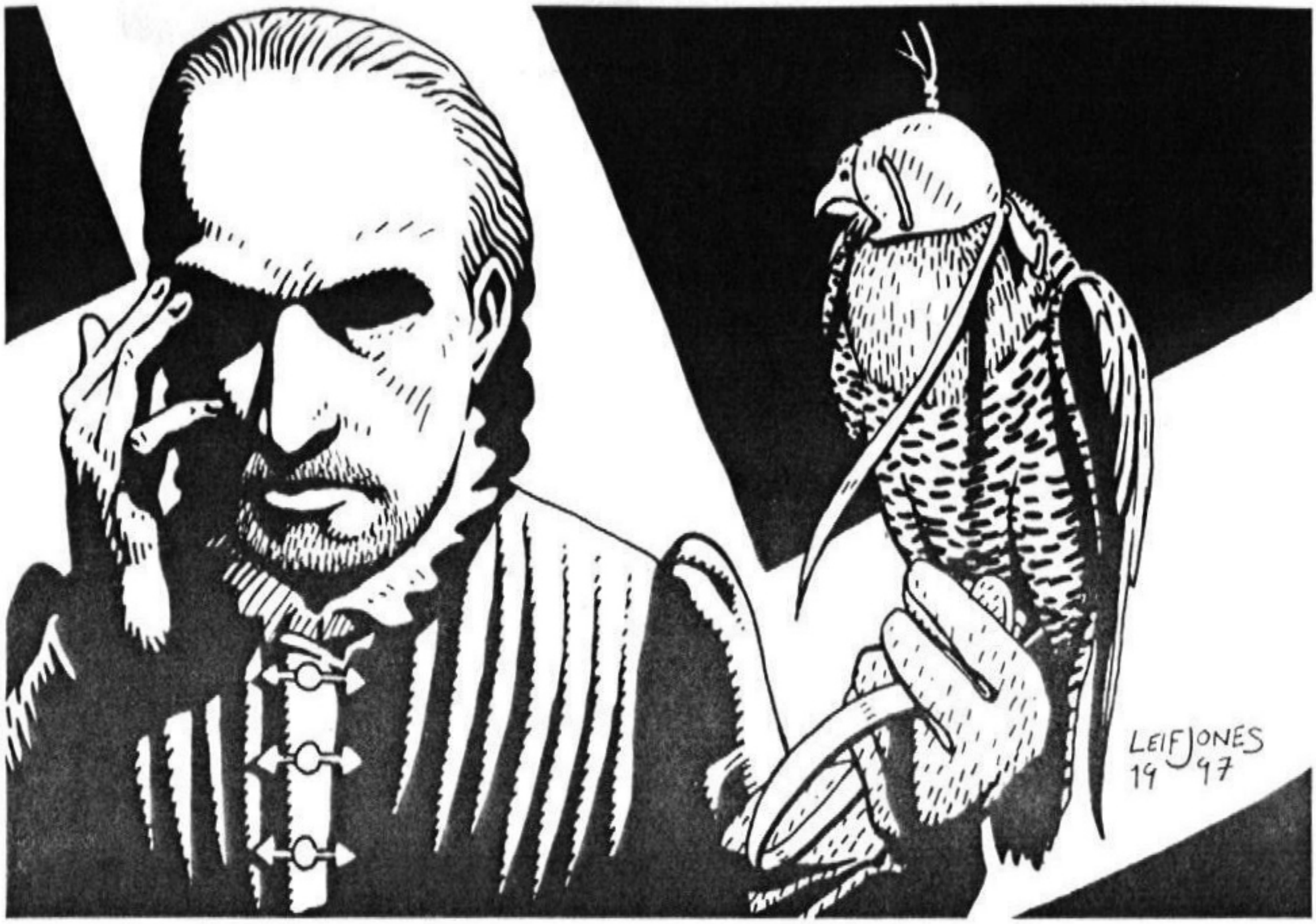
"And to the best of my ability, my lord. My honor demands it."

In a dark age of treachery and brutality, the Road of Chivalry is a difficult and demanding Road, dedicated to honor, courage and nobleness of spirit. Sadly, the Road's greatest challenge comes not from the Beast within, but out of keeping one's integrity intact amid the tangles of Cainite politics and intrigue.

The Via Equitum is a philosophy passed down as a sacred trust from sire to childe, charging each *paladin* to take responsibility for her newfound powers and to use them for the betterment of all children of Caine, rather than her own lot. The paladins see themselves as the caretakers of Caine's vision, whereby all Cainites should live in harmony, among an honorable and selfless society. Some of my learned brethren maintain that this Road found its origins in Carthage, our lost utopia. I must reluctantly dispute this. Though a paladin's ideals are indeed noble, her ethics and honor are largely reserved for vampires alone. Mortals are seen as noble animals, like the stag or the eagle, and afforded the respect such creatures deserve. They are to be treated fairly and honestly, but that is all. Paladins see a mortal as their equal no more than they would a horse or a hare.

What is interesting to note is that this Road deals with the urges of the Beast in an almost back-handed fashion. Paladins focus on the obligations and responsibilities that come with the power of the Embrace. To them, the Beast is no different from the terrible temptations any mortal is prone to, though it is given greater strength in proportion to a Cainite's greater abilities. By devoting himself to selfless service and the cultivation of honor, a paladin rises above his dark nature. In fact, it is this rigorous self-denial that ultimately makes this Road so effective — the paladins' focus is on their works rather than their needs.

The philosophy of the Road of Chivalry is deceptively simple: With power comes the obligation to use it wisely and productively. The implication is that what can be given can



also be taken away if the recipient proves himself unworthy. To demonstrate that he is in fact worthy of his gifts, a paladin must treat them in the spirit with which they were given, generously and respectfully. This is why a paladin is obligated to defend those weaker than himself, and sacrifice his own needs in favor of a greater good. Again, it is noteworthy that this applies to Cainite society only.

The paladin seeks to lead by example and elevate all vampires to be worthy of Caine's vision. His ethics are designed to reflect this, and are thus more formal and detailed than those of other Roads. In his dealings with other Cainites, a paladin is respectful, generous with his hospitality and mindful of others'. He is honest and, in all things, acts with honor. His oath is an unbreakable bond. (Seeking to place a paladin under Blood Oath is seen as a severe offense to his honor and integrity, and constitutes a grave insult.) A paladin is taught to uphold the Traditions in all endeavors, and to uphold the *station* of the prince, if not necessarily the prince himself. Most of all, paladins promote justice and fairness. They are bound to protect the weak and intercede on behalf of those they believe to be innocent of wrongdoing. In battle, a paladin is courageous and fierce, but ready to show mercy should a foe offer to yield. Enemies who yield to a paladin must meet the paladin's terms of surrender and uphold them. This is called *parole*, and if the foe breaks it, the paladin will follow him to the ends of the Earth to see justice done. For these reasons, many think to equate the paladin with a warrior. This is not entirely true. What is central to the Road of Chivalry is its sense of duty and honor. This can hold true for scholars and artists, poets and troubadours.

Because of their ethics and honor, paladins command great respect in most courts; unfortunately their dedication and rigid code of behavior also makes them targets of manipulation by clever Cainites. More than one paladin has learned, too late, that his code of honor has made him a pawn in some elder's scheme. Indeed, there are tales of certain Lasombra who delight in taking these principled vampires and leading them to ruin — no inference made to Your Majesty, of course!

A paladin Embraces childer whose mortal natures show signs of selflessness and integrity — the knight who fell defending his land and his loved ones, or the noble condemned for defying his king on a matter of honor. Fanatics are occasionally chosen because their single-minded zeal gives fuel to their beliefs.

I am loath to admit it, but paladins are most often found amid the Ventrue clan. This is primarily because the Road of Chivalry had been tied to the nobility and the *noblesse oblige* from its beginnings. Lately, the ideals of the Via Equitum have also found favor amongst my brethren in the Brujah clan, going hand in hand with the militant leanings of our young childer.

A paladin chooses his appearance with care, seeking to reflect his ideals. He will be well-groomed and dressed with an emphasis on practicality, not style. His weapons and armor will be well-used but carefully maintained.

Via Serpentis - The Road of Typhon

"What do you want?" the stranger asked. His smile was warm and friendly; his dark eyes gleaming with comradely mischief. "Everyone wants something. What is your secret wish?"

There was a full moon shining over Damascus, washing the empty streets with silver. Somewhere distant, a voice rose and fell — one of the sultan's guards, keeping his watch. We sat, the stranger and I, atop the roof of the palace, lost in shadow. He had come upon me as I was working my way into the palace archives. At first I suspected that my activities had at last come to the attention of the prince of the city, but this was no attempt at warning or arrest.

"Secrets were not meant to be shared," I said with a touch of wariness. "Else why would they be secrets?"

The stranger smiled again. There was a presence about him, a relaxed charm that was subtly disarming. "Very well said. Clearly, though, you have come to Damascus for something. It is possible that I may be of some help to you."

I found myself tempted to ask him what he knew about the palace. I had not been able to learn anything about its layout or guards, and was forced to trust in my native abilities to get inside. "As you can see, I am seeking a way into the palace."

"You are trying to reach the sultan?"

"Not at all," I said quickly.

The stranger nodded. "Something else then. You hardly seem a thief, so it is not treasure you are after... ah! I know. You seem a scholarly sort. You are after the archives."

All I could do was nod. If he could help me find the scroll, would his aid not be worthwhile? "I cannot dispute this. But you haven't explained why you are so interested in helping me."

The stranger bowed. "We are all pilgrims, my friend. By helping one another fulfill our desires, do we not come that much closer to our own goals? Now tell me, which of the scrolls of al-Azaar do you seek?"

The news stunned me. "There is more than one?"

"Oh, of course," the stranger said mildly. "The scroll of Caine is but the first. He also wrote one for each of the Three Riddles of Nod. I'm surprised you did not know this."

I could not believe my luck, after a hundred years of searching! "I had come to believe the others were only a fable. And you know where they are?" My distrust was fading, like frost in the sun. Was I not old, and wise in the ways of the world? It might be that this Cainite meant me harm. If he did, I was certain I could look after myself. Would it not be worth the risk to have not one, but all four of the scrolls of al-Azaar?

The stranger smiled. "Two are below us right now. The others are here in the city."

I weighed the risks against the gains: all four scrolls.... "And you can take me to them?" I asked.

"Nothing could be easier."

And so I let him lead me to those objects that I most desired. It was much later that I realized I had never told him I was seeking the scrolls of al-Azaar.

It is in the nature of the children of Caine to live according to a code that betters our lives while avoiding those behaviors which degrade us. We struggle for the righteous path, that we may be free from sin. The Road of Typhon would have us believe that in doing so we live but half a life.

The *defiler*'s logic is seductive. Beware his honeyed words, and his brotherly demeanor! To do good works is of course a vital part of life, but what about our tendencies for evil? If we are not exploring those parts of our soul, can we say that we are truly living full lives? How can it be wrong to indulge our sinful urges — did not God put them there for us? Only by fully exploring our natures can we find our way to Heaven. More than one domain has fallen in fire and blood to the workings of the Followers of Set, after the indulgence of such entreaties as these.

The defilers abandon themselves to evil, seeking to corrupt everything and everyone around them. Rather than resist the urges of the Beast, they actively seek to lose control of themselves and reject all self-control or restraint. In this way, they open themselves to degeneracy and decay.

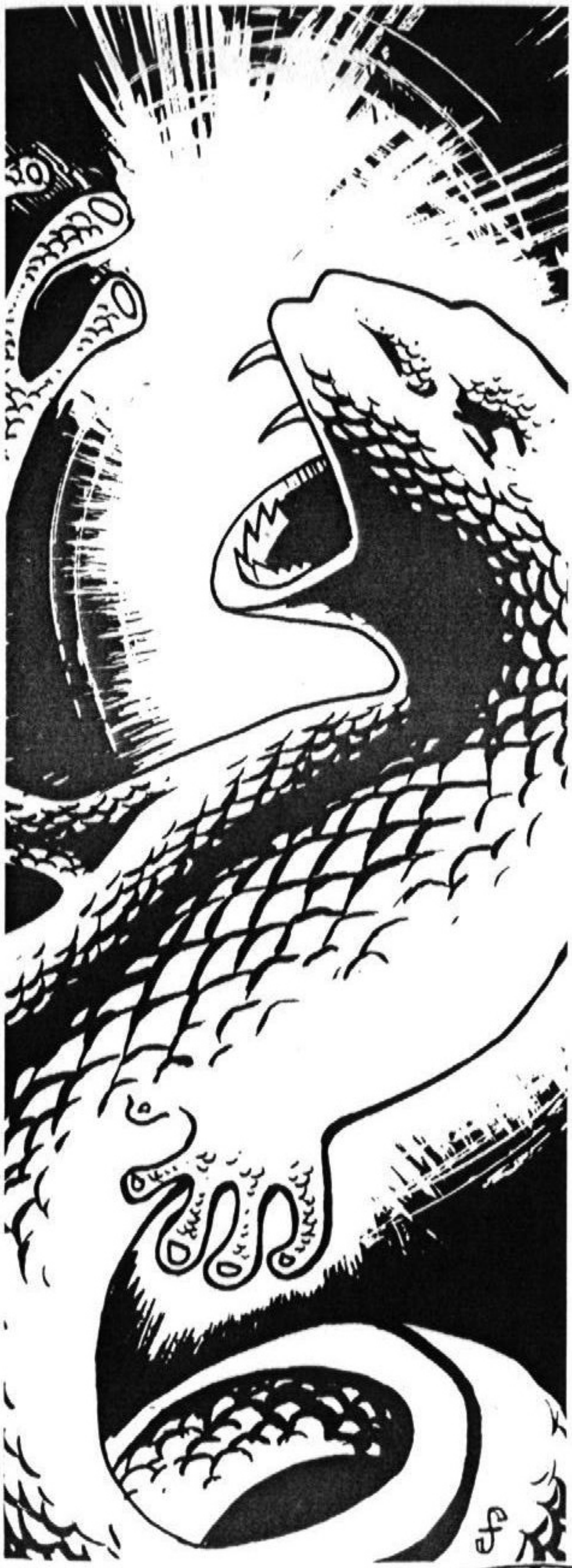
A defiler is driven to spread the taint of corruption to everything he touches. By the ruination of his victims, he learns to understand the nature of evil. Defilers are thus naturally drawn to people of great virtue or influence; members of the Church are favored victims, as is the nobility. A defiler works with patience and craft, learning his victim's secret desires and hidden hatreds, and then exploits them without mercy. He gives his victims everything their hearts desire, knowing that by feeding their dreams he builds ever-greater appetites. Before long, their needs turn to demands, and from there the descent into evil truly begins.

By definition, it seems the defiler is free from ethics of any kind. His beliefs demand that he divorce himself from any sense of structure or control. By the same token, he is driven to attack those institutions that seek to maintain authority and control. More than one domain has been rotted from within, its prince driven to cruel excesses while a defiler provokes the elders to rebellion. When the fires finally dwindle, nothing remains but ashes and sorrow.

The Followers of Set seek out those mortals whose natures are self-interested and ruthless. Any manner of rogue is favored for her selfishness. Autocratic individuals are chosen, for their desire to control the lives of others. Fanatical minds are valued for their unquestioning devotion.

Of all the Cainite clans, only the Followers of Set can be said to cultivate the Road of Typhon. They in turn spread its taint wherever they can, luring other vampires down their dark and twisting path. All too often, they are successful.

In appearance, most defilers seem innocuous, even harmless, and are often handsome and charming. They wear attire that will appeal to their victim of the moment. There are dark



tales of defilers, well-advanced along the Road, who are so riddled with corruption that their appearance becomes a thing of terror and madness.

Via Paradocis - The Road of Paradox

The Ravnos found himself before the court, bound in chains of dark iron. He bowed his head, ostensibly in defeat, though I couldn't help but wonder whether he concealed a smirk. Silence fell over the hall as the prince took to the dais.

Prince Miguel del Santos drew himself up to his full height. The force of his presence filled the chamber. "Stepan Krothos, you are charged with robbing the churches of Seville, Pamplona and Madrid—"

"And Toledo. Don't forget Toledo," the thief said.

The prince glowered down at the thief. "How do you plead?"

Krothos looked up, his expression thoughtful. "After due consideration, I must declare that I tend to plead on my belly, with lots of whining and the occasional bit of hysteria. I've found—"

"Are you guilty or innocent, you impious wretch?" the prince thundered.

"You mean, did I steal all those gold-plated, jewel-encrusted relics your men found on my person? All those bishop's signets, and the collection plates? Hmmm. I'm in a fickle mood, so I'm going to say 'innocent'."

An outraged murmur broke from the assembled elders of Seville. "You are a bold soul indeed, Stepan Krothos, to trifle with the sentence of Lextalionis," Prince Miguel said gravely. "Your depredations and the manner in which they have been performed have stirred the Church to anger and threatened the Sixth Tradition. What did you have to gain by committing these crimes?"

At this the Ravnos looked visibly relieved. "Oh! Is that all? Well, you see, I—"

The prince held up his hand. "Stop. What do you mean, 'is that all'?"

"Oh, nothing. You wanted to know what I had to gain? Well, I have this dream of rolling naked in a pile of gold coin—"

"Silence! Do not attempt to mock this court with amateurish diversions! You can answer my question, or we will see if a hot coal will loosen your tongue."

"Oooh! No need to experiment with that idea. I just... well, I don't guess it will hurt. He'll just deny it anyway."

"Deny what?" Prince Miguel leaned forward, his brows furrowed. "Who will deny what?"

The thief's face was a study in apprehension. "Well... promise you won't be angry? I'm sure he wanted it for the best reasons—"

"Guards, fetch me a hot coal!" the prince roared. The soldiers leapt eagerly to obey.

"Juan Salazar, the Brujah elder, told me to find a holy relic thought to contain the tears of Michael the Avenging Angel!" the Ravnos said in a single breath, his eyes wide with fear.

"That's a lie!" shrieked Juan Salazar, shooting to his feet. Shouts of surprise and outrage erupted amongst Salazar's supporters. Other nobles considered the thief's words, and began to whisper amongst themselves. More than one head nodded in understanding.

"See, I told you he would just deny it! But does anybody listen? No...."

"I will have order in these chambers!" the prince cried.

"I will not be accused like this!" Salazar shouted back. "I've never met this criminal before in my life!"

"Now that is absolutely true, Your Majesty," Krothos confirmed. "He was very careful not to be seen with me. We did all our dealings through intermediaries, particularly his lieutenant, Don Aldovar. Salazar is very sensitive about his position here at court, considering his own ambitions for princedom. I think he was afraid you might feel a little threatened if he was found out."

Prince Miguel turned a calculating gaze on the Brujah elder as the chambers erupted into chaos. "This is madness!" howled Salazar.

I was the only one close enough to see the Ravnos' little smile.

"It certainly is," he said quietly, surveying his handiwork.

My learned brethren have a saying: Ask three Ravnos what Road they lead and you will get six different versions (or nine if they need extra time to empty your purse). Vagabonds and thieves, heedless of laws or fealties, they move through the courts of Europe like wisps of colored smoke, restless as the wind. Where they choose to linger, chaos takes reign, but again like smoke, they vanish when hands reach to trap them. They practice deceit without lies, thievery without malice, senselessness with purpose. Many Cainites sneer and call the Ravnos madmen, but there is a queer method to their madness. In their paradoxical existence they find as much meaning and purpose as any other vampire.

To understand the beliefs of the *fool*, one must first consider how we, mortal and Cainite, define existence. Everything has a meaning and function in the world — a definition, if you will. Chair, horse, Lupine — these names define certain things, and imply functions and relationships that describe how they fit into our picture of the cosmos. With these and other names, we give structure and order to the universe. In doing so, we become everything that the fools oppose.

The fools' belief is more of an anti-philosophy: Existence is a constant flux of shifting energy; creating, existing, dissolving. When mortals see a thing and name it, they fix its characteristics, and its "energy" becomes trapped. If too much of this "energy," called *weig*, becomes fixed and stagnant, the universe dies. It is no great surprise that most Ravnos regard the ancient Greek philosophers with unalloyed hatred, Plato being one of their darkest invectives.

The philosophy of the fool is to invoke chaos, promote insanity and challenge established perceptions. This liberates weig, and is the reason behind the Ravnos' incessant trickery. For as long as a victim believes the fool's lies, his perception of reality changes. The same can be said for a fool's thievery. By the "selective redistribution of possessions," he alters individual realities, promoting that most blessed of all states: confusion.

There is a more sinister aspect to the fool's beliefs in regard to his kindred. Cainites by their very nature are potent stores of trapped weig, fixed in that state by the will of the Methuselahs. As a result, the destruction of powerful elders is



not only permitted, but encouraged. Fools also seek out powerful items, such as holy relics or talismans and seek to destroy them in order to liberate their weig. Only the most potent (or lunatic) fools attempt such acts, but they can gain great respect if successful.

Rather than struggle against the Beast, the fool embraces its urges, oftentimes amplifying them. It becomes a valuable tool of unpredictable expression.

The fool avoids the dictates of ethics. Ethics involve too much structure. The fool's Road drives him to constantly keep people guessing, to keep them unsure about the fool, themselves or *anything*. The fool changes names and personalities like quicksilver, unwilling to trap any weig. The challenge for a fool is in knowing how far he can torment his fellow vampires before they elect to stake him out for the sun to find. There are domains in Europe where the law forbidding the killing of another Cainite is waived in the case of fools. Justifiable causes are all too easy to come by.

By nature, a fool tends to be one who had little use for society in mortal life. Jesters are most favored, but so are rebels, for their contempt of the status quo. Fanatics are also chosen for their single-minded drive. Sometimes a rogue is chosen, but only if his self-interest is tempered by a certain foolish recklessness.

The Road of Paradox is the bailiwick of the Ravnos. There are Malkavians who have been known to share this anti-philosophy, but whether by accident or design, who can tell?

The fool changes his appearance as often as possible.

Via Caeli - The Road of Heaven

They stood shoulder to shoulder in the ruined church, filling the air with shouts and pleas for salvation. I waded through the mass, trying not to dwell on the rotting faces, or the look of hope gleaming wildly in their eyes. The stench of decay hung heavy in the air.

I made my way to the altar where the padre stood. The lepers surrounded him at a respectful distance, their hideous features transported with awe as he ministered to one of their own.

She knelt at the padre's feet, a girl of perhaps fifteen (it was no longer easy to tell). The priest looked down on her and smiled, his face a picture of gentle love. He held a chalice brimming with blood.

"Drink of me, and live, saith the Lord," the padre said. My insides twisted as the girl accepted the chalice and drank.

It was worse than we had been led to believe. Who had Embraced this man, telling him nothing of what he was, or the laws by which we lived? He had already violated the Silence of the Blood ten times over. I shoved past the worshipful attendants and stepped up to the padre's side. "Padre Domingo?"

"My hands!" the girl cried, letting the chalice fall. Joy and wonder transfigured her ruined features. "I can feel my hands! I can feel my hands!" The worshipful throng gave a shout as she hugged the padre's legs, sobbing wildly.

"Padre Domingo," I said a little louder. "I come at the command of the prince of Seville. You must dismiss these people and come with me."

The padre laid a hand gently on the leper girl's head, smiling fondly. He was a short, portly man, with gray in his beard and small, dark eyes. "I am ministering to the sick, my son. Does this prince wish me to abandon the Lord's work?"

I considered my words carefully, searching his eyes for any small vestige of sanity. "Padre, this is not the Lord's work. This is a terrible mistake. You should not be doing this. I beg you to send these people away."

The padre looked at me with an expression of mild reproof. "Did the apostle Paul turn away the lame or the sick? The Lord tells his children to go out and do good works, each according to his gifts. And I have been given a wondrous gift indeed."

"You are giving your blood to them!" I hissed. "It takes away their pain for a time, but it will not last. This is not healing, it's torture! And word of your "good works" is spreading like fire across the countryside. You must stop. For them, for yourself, and... for others, of which you are not aware." I took a deep breath, loathing what I had to say, but seeing no other alternative. "I have men outside, padre. Fighting men. If you will not come with me willingly, they have been commanded to bring you back by force. And they will kill whomever they have to."

The padre stared at me. For a moment, I feared that he would try to defy me. But then he smiled. "It shall be as the Lord wills it, my son. I have eternity to bring help to the needy. Take me to your prince."

Two words of deceptive power: *Deus Vult* — God wills it. With those two words, Pope Urban II ignited the fires of the Crusades in 1095. The power of the Church on the minds of the men and women of modern Europe cannot be overstated. It is the foundation for the entire social order, and the fabric from which reality is woven. All things come from God, even, as we believe it, the mark of Caine. It is only natural for some who are Embraced to believe it to be the will of the Lord. Was Job not afflicted with all manner of curses in order to prove his unshakeable faith?

In some cases, childer become *zealots* through the teachings of their sires. Most often, however, it is an unconscious reaction to their newfound existence. This manifests itself in various ways. Some childer, who were faithful to the Church in their mortal lives, are so horrified by the Embrace (and its implied damnation) that they are driven to justify what has happened to them in a way that still gives hope for salvation, or at least a part in serving God's plan. These are the disciples, the healers, the holy avengers, or worse, the scourges of the damned. The disciples are the more common sort of zealot, becoming preoccupied with the mysteries of existence and what role they now play in God's ordered cosmos. The healers believe that their gifts exist to relieve the suffering of mortal and Cainite, if the sick are willing to accept the Lord. The holy avengers see themselves as God's vengeance on Earth, acting as judges and executioners over the sinners of the world. Those who see themselves as the scourge of the damned are the most horrifying of all, believing themselves to be given the form of the damned in order to better seek out and destroy them.

Haqim replied in a voice cold as stone. "See what I have made of the darkness which you left for me? It is I, your brother, whom you betrayed in the garden. Long have I hunted for you across the face of the world, bereft of wealth or power. Now at last I shall have my due."

And Haqim, who had been left with nothing to his name but the darkness and the cruel mountains, did choose for himself the gift of the emir's life, and slew him for it, and took back all of his father's gifts.

— from the *Parable of Blood*

"They are a dark wind, come silently out of the East, and the Pilgrim Road runs red with their passing," observed the Brujah scholar Theodosius, speaking of the "shadow of death" that fell on mortal lord and Cainite alike in the Kingdom of Jerusalem following the First Crusade. His final account, little more than a collection of hastily-scrawled notes, spoke of Ventrue knights slain like infants in their sanctums, and dark-skinned demons with shining eyes, as deadly to Cainites as the lion is to the lamb. A Moorish vengeance, terrible and fierce, had been called down upon the new lords of the Holy City. Theodosius called them Assamites, and bound up with his final words was a ragged scrap of parchment filled with tiny Moorish script, which he attributed to something called the *Parable of Blood*. There are secrets in its fanciful tale, and I have spent the last fifteen years in vain trying to riddle them out. How Theodosius came by this knowledge, we will never know, but I am certain now that it was purchased at the cost of his life. The Followers of the Road of Blood prize their secrets above all, of this much at least I am certain.

Whatever else, know that the Assamites are not demons; they are vampires, for I am one of only three European Cainites I know of who has seen one and lived. He came for me at the bidding of the caliph in Granada, and was able to slip past my hounds and servants like a winter shadow. I was struck down in my study, laid low with a grievous wound before I knew of his presence. The fiend was as dark as any Moor, but his eyes gleamed with the fevered light of the faithful as he stood over me. Yet he did not gloat over his triumph like a lesser Cainite might; there was a frightening calmness to him, a terrible sense of inevitability. That was when my bodyguard came upon us, and but for the sake of this valiant knight, I would have been slain. They met, blade to blade, and such was their skill that the fight went for some time, spreading its clangor of alarm throughout the house. In the end, ravaged by a dozen fearful wounds, he fell, still trying to reach me and finish what he had begun. He could have fled at any point during the fight, but the thought never crossed his inscrutable face. It was only after he died that I realized not a sound had passed his lips.

Since then, I have thought long and hard about that night, comparing the mysterious parable to the puzzle that was the man. From what I have seen, the followers of the Road of Blood devote themselves, body and soul, to their beliefs. They are filled with the same kind of holy zeal that the heathen reserve for their Muhammad. These *mahdi* are disciplined warriors, bound by standards of rigid self-control and an inflexible code of honor that demands death before failure. At odds with this behavior, however, is an almost ritualized practice of diablerie against their victims, and the suggestion that the killings they perpetrate serve some mercenary gain. Clearly, whatever laws the mahdi hold to, they do not spring from the same source as our own.

Does the Beast whisper in the Assamite heart? Only they can say for sure. When the mahdi and the paladin fought one another in my study, I was struck by how alike they were in some ways. Both drew their strength from a higher purpose, a noble devotion to a cause. It seems to me that the Assamites hold their animal natures at bay with the same kind of rigorous self-denial that the paladin is heir to. The Assamites may well live for something greater than their individual unlives, and if that is so, then this knowledge must give us pause, for as they have scourged our kind in the East, now they stalk the night in Spain, avenging the *Reconquista*. Who knows where this terrible crusade may end?

I can only guess what natures may be most inclined to take the Road of Blood. Certainly the fanatic would be desirable, as would the hard-bitten survivor.

As to their appearance, what can be said of a clan less seen than the Nosferatu?

Via Humanitatis - The Road of Humanity

By the time I reached the town of San Sebastian it was too late. They had taken Jesus from his sanctum and dragged him to the public square, where the village priest waited with a pyre. They cast his savaged form at the holy man's feet. Jesus was pale, paler than snow, blood streaming from wounds too numerous to heal. I cannot imagine that my childe had fought against these people, his former neighbors and kin. Rather, they had turned on him like a pack of dogs.

The holy man's eyes gleamed with triumph. "Look you on the work of the Devil!" he exulted in a high, reedy voice. He thrust a skeletal finger at Jesus. "Foul incubus! After tonight you will torment the daughters of San Sebastian no more!"

"Amen!" cried the voice of the blacksmith, who stood with his thick arms around the pale form of his child. She trembled there like a trapped bird, her eyes wide and brimming with tears.

"Bring the girls forth, all those who were touched by this fiend's evil." The crowd began to stir. "Fear not, he cannot harm you so long as I am near."

One by one the three came forward. They were all of a type, young and blonde, lithe as saplings, with large blue eyes. For Jesus they spared little more than a wary glance. Their eyes were fixed upon the priest.

The priest glared down at Jesus, breathing deeply, gathering his nerve. Finally he darted forward, tangling his hand in Jesus' blood-matted hair. "Look on the faces of those you have wronged, and in the name of most holy God I command you to release your hold over them."



And I watched my dear childe gather up the strength to manage a weary smile. "Hello, little ones," he said to them. "Do not be afraid. I'm so sorry you had to see me this way—"

The priest gave Jesus' head a savage shake. "Release your hold on them, demon!"

With a cry Jesus jerked his head from the priest's grasp. "How am I one of your demons, padre? Because your holy book says so? What if I told you I can feel love, and remorse, and guilt? What if I told you that I have never taken a human life, that all life is sacred to me? I have done nothing to these children, and they know it. I was there when many of them were born. In happier times, I made them shoes. What they have said against me they have done out of fear. They know the name of the monster who torments them. So do you—"

"Do not mock us with your lies, tempter!" The priest's eyes were wild as he shoved Jesus onto his face. "These good people have seen your snake's den, where you hide from the sunlight. They know you for what you are. You cannot draw the wool over their eyes!" The priest motioned frantically to the waiting townsmen, who came forward with buckets of pitch. One was Manuel, Jesus' brother.

I watched, helpless, as they poured the hot tar over him. Once, I thought he called out to me, so soft that only my ears could hear. "Father... forgive them...."

The priest paced after Jesus as they dragged him to the pyre. "Tormentor! Defiler! Your time on Earth is finished! Soon you will wail in the fiery furnace!"

As they cast my childe onto his bed of pine the priest snatched up a torch and held it over his head.

"Spawn of Satan, let it not be said that our God is not a merciful God. Admit your guilt to these people and beg the Lord for forgiveness. He may yet intercede to save your soul."

I saw the fear in my childe's eyes, the raw terror of what was to come, but he only shook his head. "I will not lie to save you, priest. I will not lie to my friends about the serpent in their midst." Summoning up his courage, he managed a smile for the children. "Tell your parents the truth. Not for me, but for yourselves. It will not stop here—"

With a shriek of rage the priest hurled the torch, and my childe was eaten by the flames.

I had chosen Jesus out of his love for knowledge. He was the kindest man I had ever known. Never before had I wished for the death of another. Even as Carthage burned, I could only weep for what had been lost. But watching the look of triumph on the priests' face, I felt something cold grow inside me, like a blade of ice.

Tonight, there would be a reckoning, for Jesus, for the children. My childe would not be the only one to burn.

We are what we are, in birth, in life and in death — children of a great and jealous God. There are those among the Cainites who see the Embrace as a great transformation, making us beasts, or gods or monsters. I say we are none of these. We are human, with an infinite capacity for good or evil, even in the grip of damnation.

Most Cainites see themselves as *prodigals*, either by accident or design. It is only natural for us to cling to the things we know in the face of a cold new reality. Though the Embrace has driven us out of the sunlight and turned our appetites to the blood of our neighbors, how can we forget that which we once were? Many of us did not ask for this change. We had our station in life, our families, our lovers. Prodigals see the tragedy in our separation from the mortal world and are horrified by the beckonings of the Beast.

Whatever the circumstances of her Embrace, a prodigal views her vampirism as a terrible curse. To deny this slow degradation, she focuses more strongly on her thoughts, feelings and memories of mortality. To a prodigal, the Beast is her damnation, threatening to swallow her up. So long as she resists its control, all is not lost. To this end, the prodigal strives for those qualities that elevate the human condition — faith, mercy, compassion and charity.

The prodigal's ethics are simple, but open to variation. One universal tenet is to only kill when absolutely necessary. Some prodigals strive to take no human blood at all, subsisting on the thin and bitter vitae of animals. They are driven to intercede between vampires and mortals, and act to protect humanity from ruthless Cainite depredations or cruelty. It is the prodigal who most often takes the side of mortals in vampire councils. They are likewise compelled to help their fellow Cainites rise above their condition and regain the humanity they may have lost.

It is those mortals who love life and its interactions that most often turn to the Via Humanitatis. Whatever their backgrounds or personalities, all are so rooted in their experiences and feelings that the human condition is difficult to let go.

The Road of Humanity has always been the foundation of the Brujah clan, and gave birth to the shining vision of Carthage. Likewise, the prodigal finds welcome with the Toreador and their hedonistic ways, while the Nosferatu cultivate their humanity in defiance of their twisted forms. There are also Ventrue who, despite their patrician ways, have not forgotten what it means to be human. Many Cappadocians and even the dreadful Tremere can be said to have their share of prodigals.

In appearance, the prodigal will strive to maintain the manner of attire that she wore in mortal life, regardless of social station. By doing so she continually reaffirms her claim to humanity.

Vale

In closing, let me say that the path of the virtuous is torturous and deceptive. It is only by overcoming our weaknesses that we gain in wisdom and strength. To lose sight of the Road ahead is to be lost to the Beast forever. This is not to say that, once upon a Road, a Cainite may not turn to another over time. As an individual grows, his perspective on the world changes; things once held up as valuable lose their meaning, driving us to seek other ideals that will fill the void. This is only natural, but it is not something to be undertaken lightly. Changing one's Road should only come after much soul searching and thought, for a Cainite who turns to another path must begin anew. No amount of progress on the Road of the Beast would matter on the Road of Chivalry, for example. Changing Roads is a symbolic and spiritual rebirth.

To redefine our structure of beliefs is to redefine the way we view the world. For all the ways a Cainite may live, there will always be someone who envisions a different path to enlightenment. Those who seek to create a Road for themselves find the journey infinitely harder than those of us who follow a path worn smooth by our elders. These pathfinders who make their own philosophies have nothing but their own faith to count on when their beliefs are challenged. Their difficulties are greater, and their progress is slower as a result. The Beast has no mercy for the undecided or the unprepared.

May Your Majesty find the answers he seeks in this modest epistle, and greater wisdom with which to know the minds of his subjects. Knowing full well how the princes of Europe regard Your Majesty's just and fair nature, I am grateful at last to fulfill my obligation to you, and to consider my past debts to be paid in full. Let there now be nothing more between us than a love for knowledge and understanding.

May the generosity and kindness you bring to your subjects be visited back upon you a hundredfold. In all things I am your most respectful servant,

Darius Barca


AR



Chapter Three: Bloodlines

Herein we present four bloodlines that haunted the nights of old. One perished in the Inquisition's fires; one followed its sire clan into extinction; one withdrew into the far wastes, hoping to escape the great Jyhad; and the last managed to eke out a miserable and persecuted existence, persevering into the late 20th century. All are suitable for use in Vampire: The Dark Ages chronicles, and two – the Laibon and (to a lesser degree) the Salubri – may be played in modern Vampire: The Masquerade games.

The Lost

The story of Caine's children is an ancient and tragic tale. The Jyhad wages ever on; its players appear, enact their bloody roles and, all too often, die. Down the course of eons all manner of freakish offshoots have appeared to trouble the nights of mortals...only to fade away again.

Note to Players and Storytellers: You bought this book, and its contents are yours to do with as you please. If you wish to use Lhiannan, Lamia or any future Lost bloodline in your modern-day **Vampire: The Masquerade** games, feel free. We do not recommend this, however; doing so dilutes the sense of tragedy and poignancy that accompanies playing a character from a doomed bloodline. These lines (with the exception of the Laibon) are presented as historical curiosities.

Laibon

The Dark Medieval world is an enormous and frightening place, and it was not meant for most mortals to journey into the *terra incognita* beyond their hamlets. The Children of Caine have ever been wanderers, though, and their machinations have often taken them into the distant realms of Outremer.

Thus it is that Cainite travelers have returned to Europe bearing tales of a vampire line called the Laibon. The Laibon, by these accounts, are indisputably Children of Caine, but have fallen far from the main tree indeed. The Laibon inhabit the vast expanses of Afric, beyond even the Moorish kingdoms. Though they dwell nigh unto the land of Eden, they are heathens, claiming no knowledge of Christ. Instead, they speak of the "spirit world," and of Kamiri wa Itherero, their inscrutable ancestor.

European Cainites seldom truck with these creatures, but a few Assamites, Setites and Ravnos have ventured into the Laibon's lairs, deep in the fiery South. Here, near the edge of the world, the Laibon roam the savannas and jungles, sporting with lion and leucrotta, ostrich and simurgh, cockatrice and catoblepas. They are mighty hunters and shamans, and do not fear the Beast as do Europe's vampires; indeed, Laibon know a form of magic enabling them to tame and control their inner demons.

According to travelers' tales, Laibon dwell in expansive territories, preferring solitude. They act as dark guardians and medicine men to the Ethiops, Nubians and other peoples among whom they dwell, often stalking by night through villages and fields. In these tasks they serve their people admirably — though they often hunger, and their vigilance exacts a price.

Laibon do not claim descent from Caine, instead avowing themselves scions of "earth-spirits." They are wise in the ways of riddles, and for this reason the Setites have dubbed them "Sphinxes." Indeed, Laibon are knowledgeable of many things, and bear tales of a myriad exotic lands. When asked of Prester John and his army of Christian warriors, however, these Cainites simply smile enigmatically.

Laibon are often gripped by wanderlust, and so it is not entirely unknown for a scion of the line to make her way to a city of the Cainites. Such events are as rare as hen's teeth, occurring only in the Holy Land and the Mediterranean shores. The Lasombra prince of Genoa reputedly retain a Laibon, and this worthy has served admirably as a sentinel and agent.

For now, Laibon seem content to observe silently — perhaps adding to their exhaustive stock of riddles and tales. Though individuals have taken part in Europe's Jyhad, the line as a whole remains as it always has — aloof, neutral, shrouded by distance and legend.

In addition, very few Laibon are familiar with the languages of Europe. A notable few have accumulated some mastery of Latin, but none are known to communicate in any continental vernacular.

Sobriquet: Sphinxes

Appearance: Almost all Laibon bear features reminiscent of the people who inhabit Afric below the great Sahara. When traveling among European Cainites, they tend to adopt garb common to their surroundings, preferring to remain unobtrusive. When at home, they dress sparsely and comfortably. Many bear tribal scars of various sorts.

Haven: Laibon generally dwell in wilderness areas, although certain members of the line (those accepted by the tribespeople among whom they dwell) lair within villages and cities. Rumors tell of a distant city, Zimbabwe by name, which houses several of the vampires.

Background: Laibon are commonly chosen from skilled, honorable warriors and healers. Most displayed loyalty and wanderlust in equal measure prior to the Embrace. There are no known Laibon of European descent.

Character Creation: All Attributes are prized, though Mental Attributes are usually primary. Almost all Laibon have some Abilities related to survival in the wilds. Because Laibon often stem from shamanic backgrounds, many learn a spirit-based variant of Thaumaturgy, though this is not a clan Discipline. Due to the rigors of dealing with their Beasts, most Laibon have high Self-Control or Instinct ratings. Most Laibon follow either the Road of the Beast or the Road of Heaven. In addition to their clan Disciplines, Laibon frequently learn Rego Mentem, a variant Thaumaturgical path which focuses on the control of natural spirits.

Clan Disciplines: Abombwe, Animalism, Fortitude

Weaknesses: The Discipline of Abombwe involves direct dominance of the Beast, but this power has a price. A Laibon's Beast is particularly ravenous and recalcitrant, consuming a "tithe" of blood each time the vampire uses Blood Points. If a Laibon expends or ingests Blood Points, the Beast automatically "consumes" a point, or two points for an ingestion/expenditure of five or greater in one scene. Thus, if a Laibon kills and drains a mortal (10 Blood Points), she only

receives eight Blood Points; if she spends three Blood Points to heal herself, she actually loses four. Laibon grow hungry much more quickly than do other Cainites, and most try to ensure that ample feeding stock is within reach, lest they do something unseemly in their hunger....

Organization: Laibon tend to be solitary creatures; each vampire stakes out an expansive territory encompassing several villages, guarding it vigilantly against intruders. They periodically congregate at predetermined sites every 10 years or so. At these meetings, Laibon trade stories and lore. Occasionally, Laibon gather to enact protective rituals of various sorts that appear to be Thaumaturgical in nature. The few Tremere who are aware of this fact are highly distressed by it.

Destiny: Laibon, never common in Europe to begin with, wisely vacate the continent during the nights of the Inquisition and Anarch Revolt. By the modern nights, most vampires have forgotten of them, though the name "Laibon" remains on the lips of a few Gangrel and Ravnos known to wander the Dark Continent.

Quote: *I am honored to sojourn in your domain. Perhaps I might entertain you with tales of the Ebon Duke of Libya, and his seven hundred anthropophagic steeds?*



Ways of the Laibon

Next to nothing is known about these bizarre Cainites. Only a scattered few snippets of lore grace the margins of vampire grimoires, penned by curious Brujah and Cappadocian scholars who received their information from wandering Ravnos and Gangrel.

Strength and Influence

Laibon hold neither strength nor influence in Europe, though they are reputed to hold vast territories in the expanses below the Sahara. Such territories, Cainite travelers say, often extend farther than any fiefdom of Europe; villages, towns and entire walled cities await the Laibon's tread beneath the tropic moon.

Organization

Laibon are solitary creatures, and if any European Cainite has seen them discourse among themselves, none has told of it. They are guarded and talk little of themselves, but a chance comment or two has led astute Brujah and Lasombra to surmise that Laibon hold their sires in highest esteem. Laibon sire rarely, none taking more than two or three childer. Each Laibon, upon release from childehood, chooses either to take a domain or to wander; those Laibon in Europe have chosen the latter. The Laibon speak guardedly of their sires, but certain hints have led Cainite scholars to surmise that elder Laibon are frighteningly powerful indeed, perhaps on a par with the mythical Antediluvians.

Current Practices

For now, Laibon seem content merely to travel and observe. Their unthreatening demeanor and evident lack of interest in the power-games of Europe have made them valued company among those Cainites aware of their existence. Laibon have guested in the villas of the Lasombra, the loggias of the Giovanni Cappadocians, the libraries of the Brujah and even the manses of certain Tzimisce *voivodes*. They stay, observe, regale their hosts with tales of Outremer and eventually move on.

Present Concerns

The line as a whole may well have goals, but they are so far removed from those of Europe's Cainites as to be irrelevant. One Laibon, as has been noted, serves the Lasombra prince of Genoa; another has displayed passing interest in overtures from Augustus Giovanni concerning trade routes into Afric's interior.

Of the bloodlines presented, the Laibon is most suited for use in modern-day **Vampire: The Masquerade** chronicles. Though exceedingly rare, and even rarer outside its African home, the Laibon line still exists, and players may create Laibon characters with the Storyteller's permission.

Lhiannan

Most of Europe has fallen to Christendom, but fragments of the land's older cultures yet survive — particularly among the continent's supernatural denizens. Certainly the bloodline of vampires known as the Lhiannan looks back fondly on Europe's ancient nights. Seemingly a subtribe of the Gangrel, the Lhiannan are a dwindling strain of vampires who haunt rural areas, forest groves and isolated villages. Once they wove a web of influence (and terror) over Europe's barbarian population, but Rome and the Church have largely stripped the line of its deathright.

Lhiannan are largely matriarchal, even to the point of spurning the myth of Caine. Lhiannan instead claim descent from a shadowy female figure said to have walked the world in ancient nights. This figure, known as the Crone, created the Lhiannan from droplets of her blood. Most Cainite eschatologists spurn this tale, but a few Cappadocians and Brujah point out the parallels between the Lhiannan's myths and certain stories in the *Book of Nod*.



In the end, it matters little. The Lhiannan are a dying line, hounded by both mortal and Cainite hunters. Their vampiric nature shines like a bonfire before mystic scrutiny, and thus Lhiannan are often easy scapegoats and targets for witch-hunters. Their power base, which involves blood cults, ley lines and pagan rites, is blasphemous to the Church and inconvenient for the Roman-descended Cainites who have largely displaced them.

In elder days, Lhiannan established themselves among pagan Celts, Norse, Slavs and other European barbarians. These "Children of the Crone" acted as Osirises, infiltrating villages, turning key inhabitants into ghouls or vampires, and playing on the populace's superstition. Powerful individuals founded blood cults, and grisly legends sprang up around the nocturnal doings of the Lhiannan. Indeed, many pagan heroes tirelessly hunted these witches who preyed on their own people.

The real blow to the Lhiannan, though, was the coming of Rome and its Cainite parasites. Though they were individually powerful, internecine competition for ley lines left them fractious and few, and their domains fell into the talons of the more organized Roman vampires.

Worse yet was the ascendancy of Christendom, with its churches and priests and consecrated ground. The Lhiannan's mystic aura, which Christian priests found repulsive, made them among the first targets of priestly pogroms. The proud Lhiannan were forced into hiding and their cults driven underground.

Now the Lhiannan stand alone. Their gruesome practices, reliance on human slaves, and predilection for siphoning ley-line energy have alienated them to many Gangrel, while the Tzimisce see them as competitors in the Slavic states. Even the Lupines and fae, it seems, despise and fear them; one Gangrel tells a tale of being spared by a werewolf pack in

exchange for her help in eradicating a Lhiannan sabat. Nightly the Lhiannan are rooted out by clergymen and rival Cainites. Though they battle fiercely, their numbers dwindle by the year, and it will not be long before they fall.

Sobriquet: Druids

Appearance: Lhiannan survival depends on blending in with their conquerors. They generally appear as rustics of one sort or another. Due to their Ogham Discipline, however, they often anoint themselves with bloody glyphs or runes. When at a safe haven, Lhiannan often dress in the garb of old, and adorn themselves with skulls, talismans and other paraphernalia.

Haven: Lhiannan try to occupy an isolated rural village where the old ways are still practiced; they then set up a cult with themselves as the priests. Failing this, Lhiannan try to live inconspicuously on the fringes of urban demesnes.

Background: Many, though by no means all, Lhiannan are female; females tend to be perceived as having a greater connection to the Dark Mother. Lhiannan tend to be chosen from mortals who still follow the old pagan ways.

Character Creation: Any Attribute class can be primary. Lhiannan, by dint of their rural unlifestyle, tend to have high scores in animal handling and survival-based Abilities. Most Lhiannan have Retainers and Herds (pagan cultists).

Disciplines: Animalism, Ogham, Presence

Weaknesses: Lhiannan are innately pagan; the mark of the Mother-Goddess flows through their dead veins. As such, all difficulties to detect their nature via Aura Sight, Faith Numina, etc., are reduced by two. Additionally, Lhiannan increase all difficulties by two (including soak rolls, if such are necessary) when resisting Faith magic — even pagan Faith.

Organization: Lhiannan form broods centered around a powerful individual and her followers; these broods are often referred to as "covens" or "sabats." Sabats act in conjunction and generally maintain herds of mortals and ghouls. Rival sabats are often bitter enemies; this lack of cooperation is one more reason why the Lhiannan have failed to defend their holdings.

Destiny: The pagan Lhiannan have all but fallen to Christendom as it stands. By the end of the Inquisition, the Church has completed the task of purgation. No Lhiannan survives past the 14th century. Rumors persist that the Sabbat, or perhaps the mysterious Eastern vampires, make use of a Discipline similar to Ogham, but involving the use of tattoos or ideographs.

Quote: *At the hour of midnight thy vitae will flow down the spiral rock, and the Crone will feed, and be pleased.*

Ways of the Lhiannan

Strength and Influence

Each Lhiannan sabat acts alone. Though acknowledging other Lhiannan as fellow descendants of the Crone, Lhiannan are a grasping and jealous line. Lhiannan tend to remain in those mystic sites they have wrested from Lupines, Gangrel and fae.

Organization

Lhiannan form themselves into tightly knit cults, known as sabats. Sabats tend to organize along sire-childe lines, but Lhiannan can be inducted into sabats headed by a Lhiannan unrelated to them. An interesting custom among the Lhiannan involves dueling for control of a particular magical site; the loser and her sabat are immediately inducted into the winner's sabat, and the winner gains control of the site.

Current Practices

For now, Lhiannan try to hold on. They feverishly infiltrate rural communities that still remember their ancient roots, trying to corrupt the inhabitants and eventually generate a groundswell of resistance to the Church. Unfortunately, the Church expands faster than the Lhiannan can comprehend; ironically enough, the Druids' own immortality works against them.

Present Concerns

The Lhiannan have myriad concerns. Foremost among them is the spread of the Church. Already, individual inquisitors have begun targeting sabats, and a few more scholarly bishops to whom these inquisitors report are beginning to postulate the existence of a deeper conspiracy. Additionally, other Cainites are eager to wipe out the Druids once and for all, either because they object to the Lhiannan's practices or because their presence proves increasingly inconvenient.

Lamia

As the Cappadocians tell the tale, Lamia was high priestess of the Dark Mother Lilith. She inherited her name, title and duties from her mother, who had received them in turn from her mother. This had been the way of things since the Garden of Eden and Lilith's only daughter, the first Lamia, begotten on her in a fit of violent passion by Adam when Lilith refused to service him. Lamia, and all the Lamias thereafter, secretly upheld the memory of the Dark Mother, the Woman Who Came Before Eve. Each would find women worthy to understand their true ancestry and instruct them in the secret arts of their sex. When the time was ordained, each would take into herself the seed of a nameless slave (who was thereafter sacrificed to the Dark Mother), that she might bear a daughter thereby.

Through the ages, the Cult of Lamia remained a guarded secret from the tyrants and senators and kings who ground men's destinies beneath their heels. The ears of the undead hear many things, however, and thus it was that Lazarus of Clan Cappadocian stole one moonless eve to a hidden temple in which Lamia performed her rites before the statue of the Dark Mother. Lamia's erudition and fervor, and perhaps other qualities, touched something long hidden in the heart of the Graverobber; and so, rising from his hiding place, Lazarus came upon Lamia, as had Adam at the world's dawn, and bore her down beneath the disapproving eyes of the Dark Mother's ebony statue.

Come the dawn, Lazarus hid within the temple, and upon awakening inducted his new childe into the world of the undead. The beautiful priestess, he decreed, would now spend eternity in contemplation of death, the Dark Mother from whom none escapes. Lamia, smiling slightly, agreed to accompany him—but not until she had whispered a few of her own secrets into the ears of her gracious sire. Lazarus, amicable as a sire should be to his childe, stooped to listen, and Lamia whispered unto him.

What she told him, he has never recorded. Even the placid Graverobbers, however, find it odd that Lazarus has never again spoken to his childe since the night of her Embrace, and indeed finds one pretense or another to avoid her company. When circumstance forces sire and childe into proximity, Lamia often glances over at Lazarus, and smiles, and mouths a few inscrutable syllables; and Lazarus' corpselike visage blanches to an even more pallid hue. Indeed, a few impudent neonates whisper that Lazarus has taken up his hermitage merely to be rid of her.

In any event, when Lazarus recoiled from the lips of his childe and fled in uncharacteristic haste from the temple, Lamia followed behind. Coming at last to the Cappadocians' temple, Lamia was initiated into the Clan of Death by Japheth himself. But Lamia would not follow, save in the way she chose, and her childer ever bore the mark of their separation.

Though they remained apart, Lamia's childer kept close by their sire line. Where went the Cappadocians, so went the Lamia. They shared the Cappadocians' thirst for knowledge—though Lamia preferred the realms of sensation and experience to the pages of dry tomes. The Cappadocians studied death; Lamia exalted it. Lamia reveled in vampirism, seeing it as Lilith's gift and the natural evolution of humanity—just as Lilith refused to lie willingly with Adam, the Lamia say, so vampires should refuse to concern themselves with mankind, save as predators.

The Lamia's knowledge greatly benefited the research of the Graverobbers, and the Cappadocians often deferred to their childer on matters concerning the Dark Mother. In turn, the Lamia turned their focus toward defense, serving the Clan of Death as dervishes and warriors. Even in such duties they are spiritual, worshipping death in the persona of the Dark Mother. This exaltation of a female principle disturbs those Cainites who believe themselves to have been damned by an angry god, and certain Lamia exacerbate this mistrust by spreading their gospel under the guise of cults devoted to the glorification of Mary.

Lamia are rare, but have accompanied their progenitors into Dark Medieval Europe. They are the spleen and soul to the Cappadocians' brain. More practically, Lamia often serve as bodyguards and sentinels for the often preoccupied Graverobbers.

Of late, the Lamia find themselves distressed by the Cappadocians' increasing fatalism and by the growing preeminence of the Giovanni family. They see the practices of the Necromancers as sacrilegious and base, disturbing that which should not be disturbed. Though loyalty to their progenitor line keeps the Lamia from overt hostility, animosity between the two lines grows by the night.

Sobriquet: Gorgons

Appearance: Lamia originated in Semitic lands and generally resemble Semites or Mediterraneans. Like their Cappadocian progenitors, they often dress in grave-shrouds, dark robes and the like. They are not so pallid as Cappadocians; many are tall and muscular, displaying an exotic and feral beauty.

Haven: Lamia prefer to lie in tombs and sarcophagi. Unlike Cappadocians, Lamia prefer to lair alone, away from humans or Cainites, to better contemplate the mysteries of death.

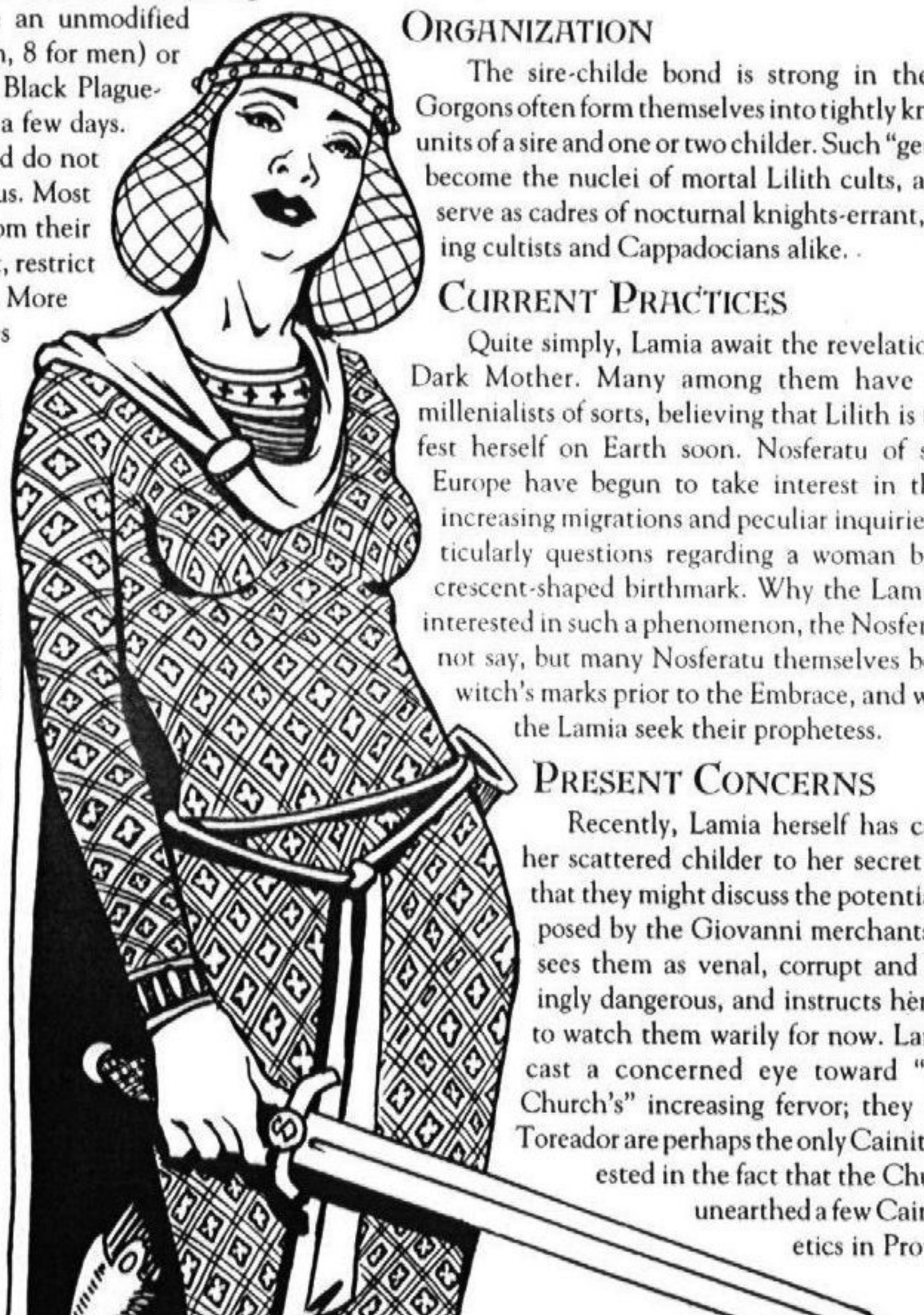
Background: The majority of Lamia are female, typically those who failed to accept the rigid status assigned to them. Lamia are often taken from bizarre aristocratic families, apothecaries, and those of sorcerous bent; many Lamia were chosen while on the verge of suicide. In recent years, Lamia have Embraced fallen Crusaders (and their Moorish foes).

Character Creation: Lamia often give themselves over to strenuous rites; thus, Physical Attributes are often primary.

Lamia serve all Roads equally, though many prefer the Cappadocians' Road of the Bones.

Clan Disciplines: Deimos, Mortis, Potence

Weaknesses: Lamia are carriers of a virulent plague, which they dub "The Seed of Lilith." Anyone or anything upon whom they feed must make an unmodified Stamina roll (difficulty 6 for women, 8 for men) or become infected with a loathsome, Black Plague-like pox, which is always fatal after a few days. Vampires who consume Lamia blood do not die, but become virulently contagious. Most princes know this and ban Lamia from their domains outright or, at the very least, restrict them to leper villages and the like. More humane Lamia often feed on corpses and burn the bodies thereafter.



Organization: Lamia adhere to a cultlike hierarchy, worshipping the Dark Mother through a variety of rites. Though males and females alike are Embraced, women are considered closer to Lilith and thus often occupy the higher echelons of the "priesthood." Lamia dutifully serve Cappadocian elders, but from free choice rather than dictum.

Destiny: The bloodline follows its Cappadocian masters to the grave during the Giovanni purge. Lamia herself is slain by Augustus Giovanni, and the last Lamia is destroyed by a Camarilla Blood Hunt in the year 1718.

Quote: *Come to me, O boldest of knights, and feel the Dark Mother's caress.*

Ways of the Lamia

The Gorgons emulate many of the practices of their Cappadocian sires, though they color them with a decidedly eschatological slant.

Strength and Influence

Lamia are strongest in southern Europe and the Holy Land. They are virtually nonexistent in chilly northern Europe. Their areas of greatest strength tend to lie in heretic cults. Because of their clan weakness, Lamia are often forced to lair in abandoned areas such as cemeteries; sometimes they deliberately terrorize these sites in order to keep mortals away from their rites to Lilith.

Organization

The sire-childe bond is strong in the Lamia; Gorgons often form themselves into tightly knit family units of a sire and one or two childer. Such "gens" often become the nuclei of mortal Lilith cults, and some serve as cadres of nocturnal knights-errant, protecting cultists and Cappadocians alike.

Current Practices

Quite simply, Lamia await the revelation of the Dark Mother. Many among them have become millenialists of sorts, believing that Lilith is to manifest herself on Earth soon. Nosferatu of southern Europe have begun to take interest in the line's increasing migrations and peculiar inquiries — particularly questions regarding a woman bearing a crescent-shaped birthmark. Why the Lamia are so interested in such a phenomenon, the Nosferatu cannot say, but many Nosferatu themselves bore such witch's marks prior to the Embrace, and wonder if the Lamia seek their prophetess.

Present Concerns

Recently, Lamia herself has called all her scattered childer to her secret temple, that they might discuss the potential threat posed by the Giovanni merchants. Lamia sees them as venal, corrupt and exceedingly dangerous, and instructs her childer to watch them warily for now. Lamia also cast a concerned eye toward "Mother Church's" increasing fervor; they and the Toreador are perhaps the only Cainites interested in the fact that the Church has unearthed a few Cainite heretics in Provençal.

Salubri

Once among the most prized of healers and teachers, the Salubri find themselves hunted and despised. The death of Saulot 50 years earlier has changed their fortunes dramatically, and they now worry about surviving from night to night. Unable to find refuge from the unremitting hatred of the Tremere (who diablerized their sire and began the war against them), the Salubri have become nomads and fugitives, seeking shelter in the endless night and watching many of their former allies abandon them.

It was not always this way. During the nights of the Second City, the Salubri, under the guidance of Saulot, reached new heights in the powers of healing and mystical studies. They delved into the holy mysteries, studied with masters of the great religions and made their own inroads into understanding the Beast. Their voices were heeded with respect in council; Saulot himself was advisor to and beloved of Caine. Their rare and mighty holy warriors were feared in battle for their prowess and command of their Disciplines. The Salubri seemed to have few worries and few enemies, and most stories describe their position as comfortable.

Few can date the beginning of change with certainty, but most agree that the Baali did much to change the place of the Salubri. The Salubri led the crusade against the Infernalists to rousing victory, but at terrible cost — their fabled warriors dead and the clan severely decimated. Worse, some whispered that the Baali had received aid from a Salubri, supposedly one of Saulot's own childer. The disappearance of Caine and Saulot's increasingly eccentric behavior only fueled the fires of rumor. As the Salubri scattered throughout Europe and the Middle East to seek their own ways, they were caught unawares with the death of their clan leader at the hands of the Tremere. Not long after, the Usurpers began to hunt down the Salubri with murderous intent.

The Tremere hunt (and its fallout) has done more to eradicate the group than any other disaster might. Some Salubri were turned out of the shelters of princes' courts, if the princes hadn't staked them first. Some were simply unlucky. Some were tracked to their havens and slaughtered. Those taking shelter among groups like Muslims and Jews watched pogroms sweep through, and were often unavoidably caught up in them. The Crusades pitted siblings of the clan against one another, decimating more of their number. Those Salubri in the Middle East frequently allied with the Assamites, and found themselves facing their European brethren across the battlefield.

The remaining Salubri have become as elusive as unicorns, fearful to trust, desperate or unthinkingly angry. Some still pursue Golconda, hoping to join their leader in whatever afterlife awaits them. Their healing gifts, once so prized, now mark them instantly for what they are. They are not completely friendless, however; many princes still value them as advisors and teachers of Golconda, and the other clans beset the fledgling Tremere in retaliation for their foul deeds. For now, the Salubri walk an uncertain road, and many fall into their day's sleep wondering if they will survive to see tomorrow.

Sobriquet: Cyclops. Though once known as Unicorns, the Tremere have saddled them with this more derogatory moniker.

Appearance: Every Salubri who progresses above the second level of Valeren develops a third eye in the middle of her forehead (it looks no different than a human eye, and is usually the same color as the Salubri's own normal eyes). Many uses of the Discipline cause the eye to open; it is not easily hidden. They come from all walks of life and all races. Many radiate auras of calm and serenity. They prefer to dress in ways that will not attract undue attention, choosing simple styles and plain colors. Those who were deeply religious in their mortal lives or members of the Church continue to wear their vestments. Many choose to cover their third eyes with hoods, wimples or Gypsy-style headscarfs.

Haven: Most prefer to live near or among humans and enjoy their company. Some take up residence in monasteries or convents (provided there are no Lasombra already in residence). A great number shelter among Jews, Muslims or "heretical" sects, such as the Templars and Manichaeans. A rare few choose solitude, having small cottages on the fringes of human settlement and taking their meals from animals. The Tremere hunt has forced many to abandon their havens and take shelter on the road.

Background: The Salubri look for those who have a strong sense of right, wrong and compassion. Anyone may be considered, whether noble or serf, Christian or Jew, male or female. There is a strong tendency to Embrace those who belong to religious orders. Such people may have come into the Church for less than honorable reasons, but have come to espouse the ideals of their orders and dislike the bickering and lack of piety seen in the upper echelons.

Character Creation: Salubri choose from the dedicated and compassionate of humanity. Mental Attributes are emphasized, particularly Perception. Caretakers and Defenders fill most of the ranks, although Judges, Penitents and Celebrants are also represented among them, with the occasional Fanatic. Concepts can be from a wide range; compassion and honor need no rank to flourish. The Roads of Chivalry, Heaven and Humanity are followed exclusively. No Salubri starts lower than the 10th generation; the need to keep the blood strong and "pure" has been of great concern for many.

Because of this, two points must go into the Generation Background during character creation. In Backgrounds, Salubri look for things that can give them an edge in surviving. Almost all have at least one dot in Medicine, as Valeren is primarily a healing Discipline. Empathy and Occult are also important, and the wise Salubri makes certain to have a dot in Linguistics to reflect her knowledge of the language of the Second City (which all Salubri learn at some point to keep correspondence and conversations private).

Clan Disciplines: Auspex, Fortitude, Valeren

Weaknesses: Their status as a hunted clan makes them dangerous companions. Many vampires refuse to shelter a Salubri in fear of the Tremere; the Usurpers are proving to be dangerous enemies. A warrior Salubri cannot refuse to aid someone in need; if she does not help someone in need, she will be down two dice in any rolls he makes until he makes restitution. A healer Salubri who injures another will be down two dice in any rolls for the rest of the night, to reflect how badly he has been shaken by the experience.

Organization: None at the moment. In earlier days, many corresponded with each other, and often answered summons for help personally no matter the distance. Now, they leave messages for each other in hostels or monasteries, or even in roadside shelters. The messages are written in the ancient language of the Second City, often indecipherable to vampires of this new age, and allow the clan to know who still survives and who has fallen. If two meet, they will aid each other fiercely if needed, and help others of the clan, even if they do not know each other.

Destiny: The Salubri fail to provide any unified opposition to the Tremere after their unexpected exsanguination. By the late 20th century, their numbers dwindle to a mere seven, all of whom spend their nights avoiding persecution.

Quote: *My road takes me into darkness, but there is light upon my soul, and as I stand within it, I am not afraid. Would you learn to see that light upon your own soul? Let me but bide with you a while, and I will teach you what I can.*

Ways of the Salubri

Strength and Influence

For the moment, their clan strength has dwindled to almost nothing, excepting a few isolated spots. Before the hunts began, however, Salubri often held high esteem in whatever Domains they lived. A prince fortunate enough to have one as part of his court made great use of the resource. Some few are still sheltered by their courts, but many have been forced to flee in the wake of Tremere persecution. Their healing gifts and studies into mysticism are their best bargaining tools for aid. Likewise, they are some of the most likely to remember or know about the older days reaching back to the ancient cities.

The true Salubri warriors were believed to be entirely destroyed during the war against the Baali. A new Salubri may choose the path of a holy warrior, but she must seek out a teacher to instruct her in the alternate uses of Valeren. *The Code of Samiel*, a written account of the creed and life of the first and greatest Salubri warrior and the Road followed by the true Salubri warriors, is believed long vanished. The Via Caeli or Via Equitum are considered to be acceptable substitutes for the time being, but a Salubri is not considered a true paladin of his clan until he reads from *The Code of Samiel* and gives his unlife to its teachings.

Organization

In spite of being scattered, many in the clan seek to find out who among them still lives. A number of monasteries, convents, Jewish settlements, Gypsy caravans, Moorish





outposts and travelers' hostels have become unaware dropboxes on the Salubri road. Somewhere in such places, there is a wall with a continuing message (usually written in the tongue of the Second City), to which each visiting Salubri contributes a line about her welfare and notes those she knows to be dead.

Anxious that their studies in mysticism not vanish with them, a number of Salubri have taken up residence with so-called heretical sects, such as the Manichaeans and Waldensians. Here, they teach and heal in return for shelter. Several Salubri doctrines have crept into mortal thought in this way.

Some young Salubri, especially neonates whose sires are missing or dead, have begun to cluster together, thinking to find safety in numbers. This is being discouraged as often as possible, lest it become too easy to slaughter them.

Current Practices

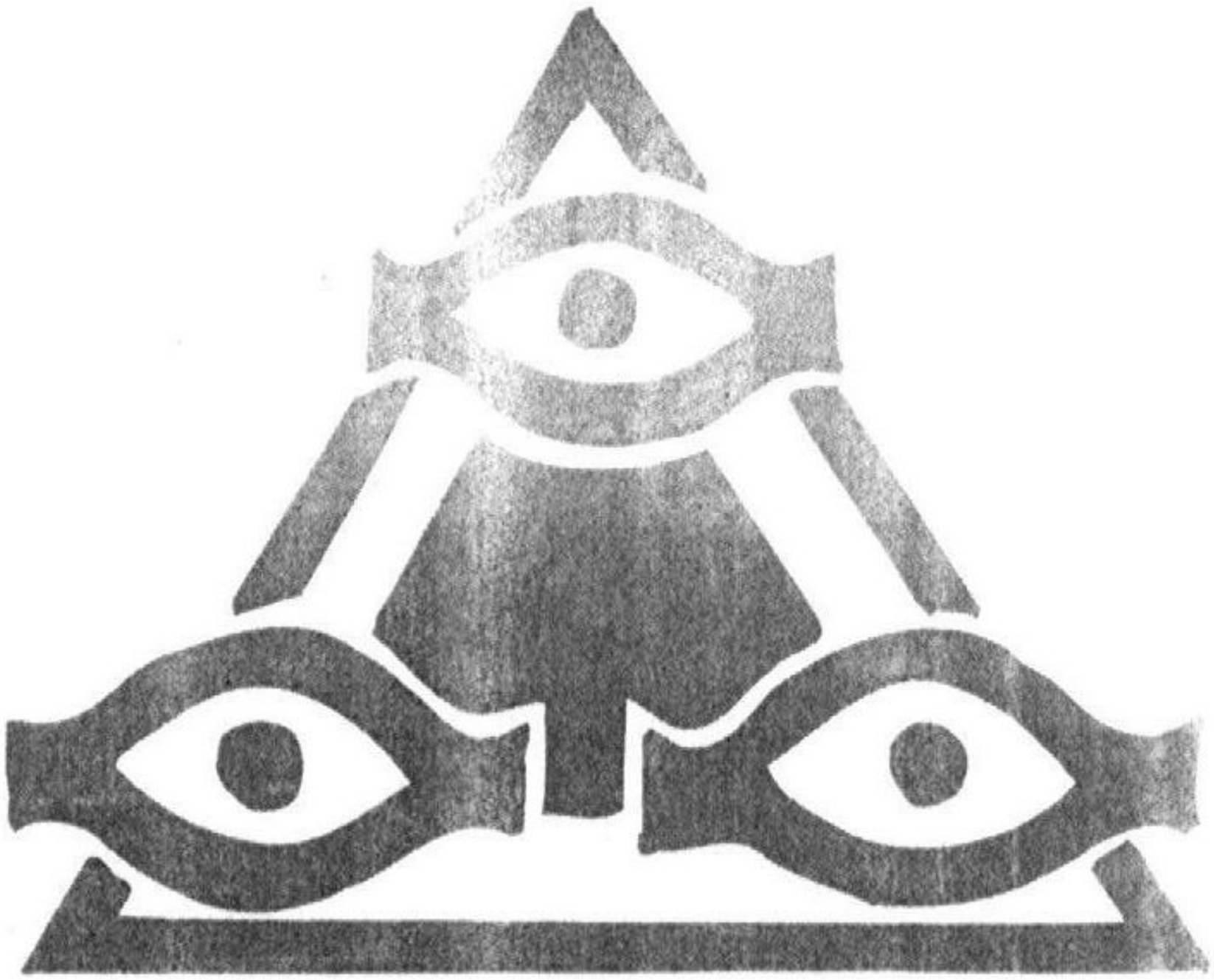
Many Salubri are reluctant to Embrace during this time, not wishing to bring progeny into a hostile world where existence is so precarious. A few have, and these childer receive their lessons in survival on the run. Some new childer have awakened from a day's rest to discover their sires dead or otherwise gone, and a disturbing practice of "sink-or-swim" is developing among the clan because of it. Likewise, the newest Salubri describe a bizarre ritual diablerie, in which their sires command the childer to diablerize them to ensure the new ones will have sufficient generation to survive. At present, this event is limited to isolated incidents, but it seems to be gaining in practice. Reaching Golconda and assisting others is always a task at hand, and the Salubri teach their childer the basics almost immediately. The loss of elders is resulting in a loss of the necessary knowledge, and most young Salubri are already struggling to stay afloat with what little they've learned.

The persecution has brought about many changes in a number of Salubri. Most vampires believe the Salubri to be a largely peaceful lot, which has resulted in protection from allies and slaughter from their enemies. Not all have simply lied down to be martyred along with their leader, however. A few have rejected pacificism, which they believe caused Saulot's destruction, and return the Tremere's enmity to them a hundredfold. These avenging angels stalk the countrysides, seeking out Tremere havens and chantries, killing those they encounter with a rage that has given some Brujah pause. Some have retreated to the safety of burial mounds and catacombs and long torpors through the help of Cappadocian allies. Some cultivate contacts among other Cainites to beset the Tremere. Others concentrate on passing themselves for humans, with varying degrees of success. The remaining few have chosen simply to concentrate on surviving, however it happens, and with whatever means are given them.

Present Concerns

Survival is their most pressing need at the moment, but there are some with other concerns competing for attention. Some Salubri still seek to make their healing gifts available. Shared by all Salubri is great concern for how the Tremere could have killed their leader, and suspicions about outside help is a usual topic of conversation whenever Salubri manage to meet. A number of the bloodline have sheltered among Jews, Moors and so-called heretical sects, where they are often made welcome. Recently, pogroms and persecution of these groups has been on the rise, and the Salubri fear that they may be endangering their hosts.

With several of their number falling to rage to stay alive, those who have not done so fear that these angry ones may be lost to Golconda. They do their best to foster hope in each other, lest despair and anger cause more grief for their kind. As frightened as they may be, the Salubri work very hard to keep their spirits high. Finding another of their kind alive is a cause for quiet celebration.




AR



Chapter Four: Disciplines

Just as mortals whisper of the dread powers of vampires, so do vampires whisper of the powers of their elders, which are beyond even Cainite imagination. These extreme abilities indicate the almost limitless potential to which Cainites can extend their control over the world. Such manifestations can humble even the most confident of vampires: not only are these Discipline powers an irrefutable sign of might, they are the hallmarks of awesome and ancient undead. Only the irrevocably mad or dauntlessly courageous dare provoke such immortals to display their potency.

Some of those powers are detailed here. Bear in mind that this is not an exhaustive list of Disciplines; it is a compilation of the high-level powers that are relatively common among the few Cainites who can wield them at all. Levels Six and above allow the possessor of a Discipline to generate effects that stem from her own personality, not simply from the blood of generations as low-level powers originate. Each power

obtained at Level Six and above in any Discipline costs as many experience points as "re-buying" that level as a whole. For example, Baron Belleme, a sixth-generation Ventrue, decides to spend his experience points on obtaining Dominate Level Six; this costs 30 experience points (current level (6) x 5, as Dominate is a Ventrue clan Discipline). Each additional Dominate power he accumulates costs an additional 30 experience points, as his current knowledge of Dominate is still Level Six (6 x 5 = 30).

Additional powers may be obtained for Disciplines outside those of a given clan's specialization, though the experience point price paid for these is accordingly higher.

Animalism

••••• Sense the Savage Way

Many vampires see themselves as more closely tied to beasts than to mankind. Some Cainites have become so intimate with their own animal natures that they may access other creatures' senses. The vampire is a passive observer, merely seeing what the animal sees, tasting what it tastes. Even though a beast cannot be controlled with this power, many Cainites find bestial sensations highly pleasurable and even educational.

System: The player rolls Perception + Animal Ken (difficulty 6) for the vampire to bond with an animal of her choice. While the character need not touch or even see the creature when employing this power, the beast must be within range. The number of successes rolled determines the maximum distance possible for effective initial contact.

1 success	20 yards
2 successes	80 yards
3 successes	300 yards
4 successes	1000 yards
5 successes	One mile

The vampire maintains the connection for as long as she desires, but can perform no other action while doing so. As with Ride the Wild Mind, the spirits of vampire and animal become entwined. A Wits + Empathy roll (difficulty equal to 10 minus the character's Road rating) is necessary after using this power. Success indicates that the character resists the lure of bestial drives, while failure signifies that the character is influenced by the animal's passions. The effects are temporary, but should be roleplayed accordingly. (The extent and duration of these animalistic tendencies are up to the Storyteller.) On a botch, the character enters frenzy upon severing the connection.

••••• •• Twist the Feral Will

While Cainites recognize their bestial nature — indeed, often relying on it to guide their way on the immortal path — they know they are superior to all other creatures. This power reflects the Cainite's utter mastery over lesser beasts. The vampire need not bother possessing an animal; the smallest portion of her will is enough to seize control of the creature's spirit and force it to do her bidding. This influence is so great that it is unnecessary to speak commands or be present once the animal is controlled; in fact, the vampire may go about other business while maintaining control.

System: To initiate this power, the vampire must achieve eye contact with the animal. The player rolls Manipulate + Animal Ken (difficulty 7); the number of successes obtained determines the strength of control. One success is sufficient to demand actions that are natural to the beast, while five successes create a bond so strong that the animal can perform highly complex actions (specifics are left to the Storyteller's discretion). The vampire may perform other actions while commanding the animal, but such activities are done at a higher level of difficulty (determined by the Storyteller). Contact is broken if the creature goes more than a mile from the character. If the player botches the roll to use this power, the vampire enters frenzy as she is overwhelmed by animalistic impulses.

••••• ••• Taint the Caged Beast

There are some Cainites who are so sympathetic to the Beast within all creatures that they can unleash it in a victim, even another vampire, at will. Through innate understanding, a vampire can sense the ebb and flow of this primal energy. At the merest touch, the Cainite can send any subject into frenzy.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty 7) and the character must touch the subject to invoke this power. Each success adds to the victim's difficulty in making a frenzy check (Self-Control/Instinct roll, difficulty 5). Standard frenzy rules are applied at this point (see **Vampire: The Dark Ages**, page 201). On a botch, the Cainite accidentally triggers her own Beast's rage, and frenzies immediately.

Auspex

••••• • Spirit Bond

This power allows the Cainite to establish a mental bond with an object or person. The vampire may "check up on" the object or person at any time after achieving this bond. Invoking the bond instantly reveals exactly where the object or person is currently located.

This power is best used sparingly — many who apply it in excess become paranoid and useless, checking on their bonds every waking hour.

System: The character must physically touch the person or object when she creates the bond. The player spends a Blood Point and makes a Perception + Empathy roll (difficulty 8). If this roll is successful, the character may invoke the bond at any time thereafter, as long as the player makes another successful Perception + Empathy roll (difficulty 6).

Although the bond reveals the geographical location of its subject, it does not reveal any local or "small-scale" information. For example, though the bond reveals that a

Malkavian's dagger is located just outside Madrid, Spain, it does not reveal that it is in Duke Phillipe's castle, or that it is guarded by men-at-arms at all hours of the day.

A Spirit Bond lasts for 10 years (though the Storyteller may modify this to suit her needs).

••••• •• Stealing the Mind's Eye

Cainites who have been banished by others of their kind developed this power to spy on their rivals. The vampire links her mind with that of a mortal slave or ghoul servant, and passively views what that person sees, and hears what he hears. Although seemingly helpless to the whims of the "host," the vampire retains limited access to her Disciplines.

Most Cainites do not like the feeling of helplessness that comes with this mental link, and engage other Disciplines, such as Dominate or Presence, to command the comings and goings of the host.

System: The vampire must see her chosen target. The player rolls Perception + Subterfuge (difficulty equals the target's Willpower) for the character to access the mortal's senses. If the target accepts the character willingly, reduce the difficulty by two. The connection lasts as long as the vampire concentrates. Successes indicate how many other mental Disciplines the vampire may utilize while within the mortal's mind.

1 success	No Disciplines may be used
2 successes	The vampire may use other Auspex powers
3 successes	The vampire may also use Presence
4 successes	The vampire may also use Dominate and Dementation
5 successes	The vampire may also use Thaumaturgy and Chimerstry

••••• •• Pluck the Secret

The Cainite speaks as little as a single word to her subject. The subject then reveals everything she knows about that topic to the vampire. The revelation may be delivered through thoughts or speech, depending on whether the vampire wants her subject to talk.

System: The vampire must see her subject, though eye contact is not necessary. The player spends a Blood Point and makes a Charisma + Empathy roll (difficulty equal to the subject's Willpower), though callous vampires may "bully" their subjects, in which case Intimidation is used instead of Empathy. The number of successes rolled dictates how lucid the subject's thoughts are, as well as how complex a topic the Cainite can stipulate.

1 success	Random, garbled thoughts Single-word topic
2 successes	Simple ideas and concepts Two-word topic
3 successes	Clear, if uncomplicated, ideas Simple sentence
4 successes	Complex ideas presented plainly Simple concept with conditional statements
5 successes	Exhaustive and organized revelation Subjects of vast complexity

••••• ••• The Oracle's Sight

At this level of ability, the minds of subjects open to vampiric perusal. Simple desires and surface thoughts bubble out of subjects' brains, filling the vampire's mind with a cacophony of voices. Only Cainites with the greatest self-discipline dare use this power; weaker ones have been overwhelmed by the deluge of thoughts and have lost their minds or been driven to self-destruction.

Of all the clans, the Malkavians seem best able to sift through the flood of mental images. Elders of other clans typically shy away from this power, while elder Malkavians embrace the confusion it creates.

System: The vampire is privy to every thought of everyone in her immediate vicinity. The effects of this power are automatic — no roll is required. Unfortunately, the vampire cannot control the flood of images, desires and daydreams. If the character wishes to sort through the barrage, the player rolls Wits + Leadership (difficulty 6). For each success, the vampire comprehends one clear thought or image. If the roll fails, she cannot control the flow of mental images and it continues unabated. If the player botches the roll, the vampire gains a temporary Derangement. The effects of the Derangement, as determined by the Storyteller, last until the character leaves the area.

Celerity

Celerity is one of the most fundamental yet underdeveloped of all vampiric powers. The little-known abilities presented here reveal intriguing new possibilities for this Discipline, though later generations of Cainites can only dream of attaining such powers.

Those Cainites who look to avail themselves of these powers must make a choice. These alternate abilities do not automatically come with each Discipline rating. Vampires wishing to manifest these powers must choose them *instead of* the next level of Celerity when reaching that stage; the more traditional application may be bought separately for the standard cost. For example, Alisande learns Celerity Level Six. She may either take Mercury's Arrow, a power that differs from the normal Discipline, or continue along the established lines of Celerity and take the extra action (thereby giving her six extra actions per turn, provided she's willing to spend the Blood Points).

Conversely, if a Cainite already has Level-Six Celerity, she may spend the standard 30 experience (or 42, if Celerity is not a clan Discipline) to get the alternate Level-Six power. This is consistent with the Level Six through Eight powers.

••••• • Mercury's Arrow

Vampires who move at the incredible speed conferred by this power can also hurl arrows or daggers with fearsome effect. These weapons strike their targets with the force of ballista bolts. Assamites are especially adept at this technique. A Cainite using this power discharges some or all of his preternatural speed into a throw, perhaps killing the target instantly.

System: This power requires the expenditure of a Blood Point. The player chooses the number of dots of this power to be invested into a throw. Each dot automatically adds one Health Level of damage to the damage roll. Any dots remaining in the power can be used as per normal Celerity, to move quickly, gain extra actions, or even throw another missile.

••••• •• Sanguinary Wind

Cainites with this knowledge of Celerity move almost inconceivably quickly. In combat, they become whirling dervishes of destructive force, reacting to their enemies' movements before their enemies have even moved.

System: This ability requires two Blood Points to activate. The Cainite moves so quickly that the player may add a number of dice equal to Celerity to melee attacks. These dice may be applied only to negating the successes of an opponent's dodge maneuvers; the Cainite quickly positions her weapon in the exact spots where her opponent moves to.

Once activated, this power remains functional for the duration of the scene.

••••• ••• Resist Earth's Grasp

Cainites with this power can defy the Earth's pull. While they cannot fly *per se*, the speed at which they run allows them to scale buildings or cross water without sinking. Cainites with this skill can also ascend battlements, taking the defenders by surprise.

System: The greatest problem facing the vampire is maintaining momentum. She must be able to scale a wall or cross a body of water without stopping, or she will fall or sink. The player must spend one Blood Point to gain speed. The vampire can then move five feet vertically *up* or 10 feet horizontally across a normally unsuitable surface for each level of Celerity she possesses. Running across moving water also requires a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty varies depending on the speed of the water).

Chimerstry

••••• • Army of Apparitions

This ability allows the Ravnos to create multiple lifelike apparitions that move and behave like the real thing. This assumes that the Ravnos knows how a given object moves and behaves. A Cainite who has never witnessed a cavalry charge could not accurately reproduce one. Victims of the illusions react to them as if they were real — opponents have been known to rout from artificial cavalry charges, flee from illusory packs of hungry werewolves, or attempt to board and capture ghostly galleys.

System: The vampire must spend a Blood Point for each moving apparition after the first. She can create a number of individual images equal to her Willpower rating. The motion continues in the fashion dictated by the vampire until she discontinues her concentration.

••••• •• Mirror's Visage

This technique allows the vampire to create illusory duplicates of herself. Those hounding the Ravnos find themselves chasing three or four different copies, each capable of independent movement.

Each image mirrors the Ravnos down to the smallest detail. The Ravnos can send her likeness into potential ambushes or give the illusion of superior numbers. Sociable Ravnos can leave their duplicates to distract boring party guests while they go about their business elsewhere.

System: The player must spend a Blood Point for each duplicate created. The counterfeits move and behave exactly as the original does. The images speak, smell and even feel like the real thing. Anyone examining multiple images cannot tell the illusions from the genuine article. The effects of this power last for one scene.

Unless otherwise controlled, the images move and talk in the exact manner of the vampire. If the character wishes to control the specific movements of an illusion, the player rolls Wits + Subterfuge (difficulty 6). The number of successes determines the complexity of action the image may perform without revealing its true nature. Failure indicates that the illusion continues to mirror the Ravnos' every motion. If the player botches, the image discorporates. If the vampire wishes to control more than one image at a time, the player's Dice Pool is split. The Cainite must be able to see the illusion to issue mental commands. Once out of sight, the illusion continues to follow its orders until the Ravnos allows it to fade or returns to issue new commands.

If a mirror image is attacked, the weapon passes through it. If the Ravnos is not present to command his image to respond accordingly, it does not react at all and continues whatever action it was last assigned.

••••• ••• Fantasy World

A Ravnos with this ability can create an illusory world in another being's mind. The victim of this technique might be wasting away in a dungeon, but believes himself to be a mighty king or adventurous knight.

System: The player must roll Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty 8) and spend two Willpower points. The number of successes determines the complexity of the fantasy world created, and the amount of time that it lasts. The player decides what the victim experiences, from a nightmarish world to a paradise. If the fantasy world differs inordinately

from reality, the victim can make a Willpower roll (difficulty equal to the Ravnos' Manipulation + Empathy) to detect the illusion. The more realistic the imaginary world, the less likely it is that the victim knows anything is amiss. A victim who recognizes his predicament can spend a Willpower point to shatter the fantasy. When this happens or the power's time limit expires, the Ravnos may try to reestablish the illusion, but her difficulty increases by two.

1 success	One turn
2 Successes	One hour
3 Successes	One day
4 Successes	One week
5 Successes	One fortnight

Daimoinon

••••• • Diabolic Lure

The Baali uses this power to impose her infernal will on her subject's spirit. Upon gaining hold of the victim's soul, the Baali can steer a course toward damnation. No matter how noble the target is or how lofty her aims are, she may find herself unable to resist even the most depraved enticements.

System: After using Sense the Sin to disclose the best route to her target's true nature, the Baali spends a number of Blood Points equal to the amount by which she wants to lower the victim's Road rating. If the player makes a Manipulation + Occult resisted roll against the target's Conscience/Conviction + 4 (maximum 10), the target's Road rating drops by the desired amount, permanently. The victim now operates at her new rating, and can only regain her lost points in the standard way. While this change is sudden, intelligence is not lost with humanity. A cunning vampire should be capable of hiding her new inclinations for some time.

••••• •• Infernal Servitor

In their pursuit of darkness, some Baali call upon assistance from Hell itself. These damned vampires have, using arcane pacts and diabolical will, summoned up demonic attendants. An endeavor of this sort is not without its perils, of course. Although a demon is supposed to obey its undead master, rumor claims that many Baali have suffered horribly at the hands of their hellish servants. Such legends suggest that trafficking with beasts of the Pit will be the Baali's downfall. Then again, such stories may be panicked claims spread by Cainites fearful for their own tainted souls.

System: The player spends three Blood Points and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 8). The number of successes indicates the type of demon summoned:

1 success	Imp
2 successes	Demonhound or imp
3 successes	Demonhound, doppelganger, imp or incubus/succubus



4 successes	Any of the above infernal hosts or a demonic warrior servitor
5 successes	Any of the above or a demonic tempter

Details on these demons may be found on pages 267-269 of **Vampire: The Dark Ages**.

A mortal form must also be on hand; this subject may be a carefully selected sacrifice or simply some poor fool who stumbled in at the wrong time. The victim is possessed (or, in the case of the demonic warrior and tempter, mostly consumed) by the monster once it is summoned. The demon performs one task of the Baali's choosing and returns to the nether world, leaving the husk of its mortal victim behind. While it is bound to its summoner, the demon always tries to twist its command to its best advantage. Usually, the more demanding the task, the more likely the demon will find a loophole through which to trouble the Baali. On a botch, a minor demonic lord appears to drag the presumptuous Baali back to its fiery lair.

••••• ••• Unleash Hell's Fury

This most dreaded of powers curses the Baali's victim with the full thrust of Hell's flames. This affliction comes into effect when the sun reaches zenith directly above the subject, burning her as if she were fully exposed to the searing affects of sunlight. Flooring, heavy stone mausoleums, coffin lids and even yards of solid earth offer no defense against the curse. Only a vampire's preternatural resistance can hope to resist the all-consuming flames. This is a favored execution tactic of dangerous Cainite lords, but has also been used by the Baali for purely malicious entertainment.

System: To use this power, the Baali must touch or establish eye contact with the subject. After the player spends Blood Points equal to the number of turns the flames will be in effect, an Intelligence + Occult roll is made (difficulty equal to the target's Willpower). The curse normally triggers on the next day; every success rolled allows the Baali an extra day before it takes effect (careful Baali often choose to delay the effects to deflect any suspicion from themselves). The victim may only soak if she has Fortitude or other Disciplines that defend specifically against sunlight. Rolling about on the ground or plunging in water douses some of the flames, but the target still takes "new" damage each turn until the curse runs its course. If the player botches, the Baali is immediately engulfed by her own backlash for the designated number of turns. This backlash causes aggravated damage, and is treated as sunlight instead of flame.

Dementation

••••• • Luna's Embrace

This power was developed by a Malkavian with a capricious streak. He was interested in giving others, whether mortal or undead, not just a taste of Malkav's divine lunacy but a full draught of his own particular brand. By employing this ability, a Malkavian can manipulate the subject's mind so that it mirrors his own. The target's very personality is warped into a copy of the vampire's, including any Derangements and related mental problems the Cainite possesses. While the victim gains none of the Malkavian's knowledge or powers, she subconsciously warps the shared personality to best use, and warps those powers that she does possess to reflect her tormentor. The effects cause the target to echo the vampire's nature but do not bestow any sort of control over the subject. Malkavians find this power maliciously entertaining, though some find it enlightening to see their demented antics displayed by others.

System: Before using this power, the Cainite must establish eye contact with the subject. The player then uses the Malkavian's Charisma + Subterfuge in a resisted roll against the target's Intelligence + Self-Control/Instincts (the difficulty for both is 6). The shared personality lasts for one night to a full year, depending on the number of successes.

1 success	One night
2 successes	One week
3 successes	One month
4 successes	Six months
5 successes	One year

••••• •• Delayed Delirium

One of the many things in which Malkavians delight is seeing ostensibly sane individuals suddenly be overcome with madness. This refined version of Kiss of the Moon implants a Derangement of the vampire's choice in any victim, mortal or Cainite, to be released at a later date. Many a vampire has used this power to trigger insanity in a target to coincide with meticulous plans — just as many others have applied it purely on a whim.

System: The vampire must make eye contact and speak to the victim, describing the Derangement he wants the target to manifest. The dialogue may be interspersed in an otherwise innocuous conversation, but this raises the Malkavian's difficulty by one. The Cainite also describes the circumstances under which the Derangement triggers — anything from "When you next see your wife" to "a fortnight hence." The player makes a resisted Manipulation + Empathy roll against the victim's *current* Willpower rating. If one success is scored, the victim manifests a Derangement of the Malkavian's choice at the indicated time, which lasts for one year. Two or more successes make the Derangement permanent.

••••• ••• Prison of the Mind

Those who claim that insanity is the root of inspiration could well cite this power as evidence. Some Malkavians can create realistic yet delusional environments in which victims' minds are trapped. When this power takes effect, the subject convulses for a moment and then collapses. She no longer senses the real world, and interacts entirely with phantom people and illusory events. As long as the target's mind is locked in this psychic cell, her body ceases all but the most rudimentary functions in order to maintain life (in the case of Cainites, the subject effectively enters torpor).

System: The Malkavian must make eye contact and concentrate completely on the victim for a full turn. The player rolls Charisma + Intimidation in a resisted roll against the subject's Wits + Courage (both rolls are against a difficulty of 8). The length of time spent in the mental prison is determined by the successes obtained:

1 success	One week
2 successes	One month
3 successes	Six months
4 successes	One year
5 successes	10 years

A mortal afflicted by Prison of the Mind must be spoon-fed and personally attended — she becomes an utter invalid for the duration of the power's influence.

Dominate

••••• • Autonomic Mastery

A vampire can use this power to incapacitate her victim with a glance. This power allows the Cainite to manipulate the target's basic mental functions. Though she merely impresses mental suggestions on her target, these suggestions are powerful enough to kill. She may command her victim's heart to stop beating or cause him to go blind.

Only a few Ventrue learn this particularly deadly technique from their elders. These potent assassins eliminate problems permanently when subtlety fails to get results.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Medicine (difficulty equal to the target's Willpower +2; strong-willed individuals prove impervious if the difficulty exceeds 10). The effect lasts for a number of turns equal to the number of successes on the roll. The player must choose the exact effect that will be created before she rolls. She may choose to affect any of the basic functions of the body, including heartbeat, breathing, eyesight, hearing or even perspiration. The vampire is capable of starting or stopping such functions, or can cause them to fluctuate wildly. The Storyteller determines the actual effects on the target.

For example, a mortal stricken blind for three turns will panic, while one whose heart stops will probably die. This power works equally well on vampires, though the effects may differ: Manipulating a vampire's heart will have no affect on him, but a blind vampire is almost as helpless as a blind mortal.

••••• •• Command the Legion

This power, developed by noble Ventrue, allows the user to affect masses of people as if they were one consciousness. The Cainite can combine this power with Murmur of the False Will to affect a large audience.

System: The vampire uses Murmur of the False Will to affect the member of the crowd most resistant to his will. For each success above and beyond that required to Dominate the first individual, one additional person may be affected by the same command. If the first individual cannot be affected, then none of the group can be.

••••• ••• Empowering the Puppet King

With this power, the vampire uses her singular will to give weight to the commands of another. In this way, she may rule from behind the throne, but still demand absolute compliance from her subjects. The puppet may not even be aware of the vampire's influence. She may mistakenly believe that her rule is absolute, failing to realize that only the support of her clandestine ally keeps her from the gallows.

Ventrue often use this talent to support a chosen noble in exchange for policies that favor and fatten the vampire's coffers. Malkavians, on the other hand, have used this ability at the most inopportune moments, choosing to empower sovereigns during heated debates or at whimsical moments. Noble lords have jumped into moats at the behest of their lieges, and ladies have met untimely fates on the chopping block due to the pranks of Madmen.

System: The player selects the subject of the character's Dominate attempt, and the nature of the Dominate power she wishes to bestow. The player must roll Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty equal to the recipient's Willpower). If the roll succeeds, the vampire may use any of her Dominate abilities through the pawn. The vampire attempts to Dominate any additional subjects as usual, though she may do so only through the eyes of her "puppet." In this way a puppet monarch can be made to condition subjects with Lure of the Subtle Whispers, command guards with Murmur of the False Will, or the vampire may transfer her mind into another's body with Vessel. The player must make the Manipulation + Subterfuge roll each time her character uses a new ability through the puppet.

Fortitude

The vast majority of Cainites who enjoy this Discipline's benefits rely on it merely to shrug off the effects of damage. Their undead natures already make them highly resistant to harm; Fortitude makes them nigh invulnerable. Some Cappadocians, discontent with this power's current manifestation, have pioneered new applications.

As with Celerity, vampires who choose to augment their knowledge of this Discipline must choose, upon mastering six or more levels, whether to take the secondary power or advance normally to Fortitude Level Seven.

••••• • Armor of Vitality

Vampires are already formidable opponents in combat; those with Fortitude are doubly so. This power toughens the Cainite's flesh to the hardness of marble. Ordinary weapons shatter upon striking the vampire, without causing the slightest blemish to undead flesh.

System: The player spends a Blood Point and rolls the vampire's Fortitude (difficulty 7) when the character is struck by an object. If the successes equal or exceed successes rolled for damage, the weapon smashes to bits. On a failed roll, the player still rolls to soak the damage.

••••• •• Bestow Vigor

This special power was developed by a Cappadocian scholar interested in the relative endurance of creatures and individuals. With this ability, the Cainite can endow another with some of her own preternatural stamina. While so empowered the subject enjoys the full benefits of Fortitude, and the vampire loses none of her own supernatural resistance.

System: The player rolls the vampire's Stamina + Survival (difficulty 8), and spends a Blood Point for each point of Fortitude she wishes the character to give a chosen subject. This amount cannot exceed the vampire's own rating in Fortitude. The Cainite must make the target ingest the Blood Points spent (this is commonly done by drinking the blood or by dripping it into an open wound). The number of successes determines how long the subject retains her power. The character also retains her full level of Fortitude during this time; the effect is essentially duplicated in the subject through the power of the vampire's blood.

1 success	One turn
2 successes	Three turns
3 successes	One scene
4 successes	One night
5 successes	One chapter

••••• ••• Eternal Vigilance

Though vampiric legends disagree on a number of points, almost all support the theory that the undead must take rest each day from dawn until sunset. Even the most determined vampire cannot resist the arms of slumber during daylight hours. A Cappadocian looking to ensure his continued existence (and expand his research time) perfected this formidable power. A Cainite mastering this application of Fortitude can remain active during daytime, functioning almost as effectively as if it were darkest night. Note that this doesn't give any further protection from the sun's effects beyond Fortitude's normal benefits.

System: The player makes a Via roll (difficulty 6); each success indicates how long the vampire may remain awake before another roll is needed, as shown below. Failure indicates that the character is still trying to rouse himself and may try again next turn (however, a second failure puts him back to sleep unless something else happens to awaken him later). On a botch, he sleeps the sleep of the dead straight through to the middle of the next night.

1 success	One turn
2 successes	Three turns
3 successes	One hour
4 successes	Two hours
5 successes	All day

The player may instead have the vampire spend a Blood Point to awaken immediately (this is particularly useful if there are intruders in the Cainite's haven, intent on mischief). In this case, the character rouses instantly, fully alert for a number of turns equal to his Stamina + Road. If he wishes to stay awake after that point, another Blood Point or a roll is necessary, as above.

The player must choose which option he wants prior to taking action; he cannot choose to roll, fail and then decide to spend a Blood Point. This option may be switched at any time, however — initially spending a Blood Point, then going to rolls that are successful, or vice versa.

The player uses this system to determine wakefulness whether the character consciously decides he wants to stay awake in the coming day or is roused by activity near his haven. This system is used instead of the normal procedures described in **Vampire: The Dark Ages** (pages 206-207).

Normally, a vampire awake during the day cannot have a Dice Pool greater than his current Road rating. With this power, a vampire can have a Dice Pool maximum equal to his Road + his current Willpower.

Mortis

••••• • Animate Host

This power, a variation on the Vigor Mortis Discipline, raises a number of corpses. The reanimated creatures exist for a short period of time to do the vampire's bidding. These *zombu* function similarly to those created through Vigor Mortis, but are not reanimated to quite the same degree. Cappadocians developed this technique as a front-line defense for their havens and laboratories, using the walking dead as footmen.

System: A corpse may be raised for each Blood Point spent by the player. The blood must be physically scattered near the bodes, typically by slashing one's palms or wrists and spraying blood. These *zombu* may be human or animal and can even have been buried in the ground (although corpses so animated may spend their entire "second lives" trying to dig themselves out).

The *zombu* created in this fashion have the same Physical Attributes as when they were living, and the bodies maintain their current rates of decay. Having been raised in such a hasty fashion, there is very little life to them; they are not capable of actual thought. Instead, they function on little more than an instinctual level (each has only one dot in all Mental Attributes). They will, however, carry out their creator's commands as best they can. Also, these *zombu* possess one extra Health Level than they did in life, do not suffer wound penalties, and are immediately destroyed when they reach Incapacitated.

The animation lasts a number of turns equal to the number of successes rolled against Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 6). The character can extend that time for the entire host by spending a Blood Point for each additional turn.

••••• •• Sense Death's Imminence

The vampire can detect sudden ebbs of life energy which occur when things die. Some Cappadocians have learned to discern the subtleties of these fluctuations. With skill, the



vampire can interpret the energy flow accurately enough to sense when someone nearby passes from life into death, or even perceive the impending death of a living subject. The Cainite need not be present to read the energies, since he is attuned to the ebb and flow of the deaths of all things.

System: When someone dies within 50 yards of the character, the player rolls Perception + Occult (difficulty 6). Success determines that the character senses the death, with high numbers of success revealing details regarding the subject's demise, as indicated below (the Storyteller may roll for the player to conceal whether a failure or botch occurs). If the roll botches, the character interprets inaccurate information.

1 success	Senses the nearby death
2 successes	A basic idea of the cause of death
3 successes	General location and more detailed cause of death
4 successes	Specific location and an idea of the events surrounding the death
5 successes	Extremely detailed information regarding the death

The character may also attempt to discover the strength of death's hold upon a living subject. The player rolls Perception + Occult (difficulty is the subject's Willpower) with successes as above, except the length of time until the victim's death is revealed instead of the location.

••••• ••• Plague Wind

Cappadocians who master this power are able to unlock the decay in everything around them. The Cainite taps into the death which dwells in all living things, from mortals to beasts to plants. Human and animal victims waste away in hours. Small plants wither and decay. The Plague Wind does not discriminate; everything in the area of effect — aside from the vampire himself — is subject to its corrupting influence.

Other Cainites are not immune to this power, although it affects them differently than it does mortals. If they are unable to resist the plague's effects, vampiric victims fall into torpor. Even if they do resist, Cainites become plague carriers, spreading death to any mortals they touch.

It is rumored that Lamia developed this power before she established her own bloodline.

System: The player spends two Willpower points and the vampire touches one of the intended victims. The plague flows outward from that target on a putrid wind to engulf any other victims in the area. Each victim rolls Stamina (difficulty is the attacking vampire's Stamina + Occult) against the lethal sickness. A target with Fortitude may add those dice to her roll as well. Success dissipates the Plague Wind's full effects, but the victim still loses one point of Stamina for the rest of the scene. Failure indicates that the target is overcome by putrescent decay and dies within an hour. The total number of targets affected is equal to the character's Willpower, although

any small organisms in the area such as saplings or dogs are corrupted automatically (and do not count toward the total number of victims).

A vampire stricken by the Plague Wind is affected as above; however, instead of expiring on a failed roll the victim goes into torpor. If the subject resists the power, she becomes a plague carrier for the next three days. Any mortals who come in contact with the Cainite must roll Stamina (difficulty 6). Failure means a mortal contracts the plague.

Obfuscate

••••• • Diastasis

The Cainite gives the appearance of being somewhere other than her actual location. While her true form goes unnoticed, the vampire's reflection moves, reacts and is real in every visual sense. Anyone or anything occupying the false image's space encounters no resistance with the phantom; the image is seemingly superimposed on the real person or object, and can in no way affect (or be affected by) anything.

System: The player rolls Wits + Subterfuge (difficulty 8) to activate this power. The false image appears over the character's own form (which fades from vision) and moves up to one yard away. More successes allow the vampire to extend the image a greater distance. The illusion is sustained as long as the Cainite maintains visual contact with it.

1 success	One yard
2 successes	Two yards
3 successes	Five yards
4 successes	10 yards
5 successes	30 yards

The character can attempt other actions at an additional level of difficulty while maintaining this power. Since the vampire's true form is effectively unseen, her activities are likely performed with decreased difficulties (specific modifiers are up to the Storyteller's discretion). Whenever the character interacts physically with anything, such as picking up an object or attacking someone, those able to notice make contested Perception + Alertness rolls against the Cainite's Wits + Subterfuge (difficulty 6). If the vampire gets more successes, her true location remains unnoticed; if any individuals roll more successes than the player, however, they figure out her general position. This does not mean the vampire is suddenly rendered visible to all; those who notice her only know that *something* is there (attacks are made at + 2 difficulty), and if the character moves the contested rolls are made all over again.

Additionally, those attacking the Cainite's image make Perception + Alertness rolls (difficulty 4) when they "strike" (this difficulty may be increased if the vampire is moving her own body and "reacting" to each blow). One success alerts the individual that something is not right about his opponent, while two or more reveal the image for what it is. This does not disrupt the phantasm, nor does it divulge the vampire's true location.

Auspex will reveal the location of the Cainite using this power.

••••• •• Veil the Legions

Similar to Cloak the Gathering, this power was developed by Nosferatu strategists to conceal large forces. A Cainite proficient with this power may maintain it from a distance so that her actions do not compromise the Veil's integrity. Any protected individuals who compromise the Veil are exposed to view.

System: The vampire may conceal 10 individuals for each dot of Stealth she possesses. No roll is necessary to create the Veil, but anyone under its protection may disrupt it. Sounds of movement and whispers do not undo it, but shouting and combat within require the vampire's player to make a Wits + Stealth roll to maintain the Veil's integrity.

Should she so choose, the Cainite may apply the power in person and then leave the area with a successful Wits + Stealth roll (difficulty 7). The maximum distance the character may move from the Veil depends on the number of successes, as noted below.

1 success	10 yards
2 successes	30 yards
3 successes	100 yards
4 successes	500 yards
5 successes	2000 yards

••••• ••• Trusted Confessor

Masters of information, the Nosferatu developed this formidable power to draw out secrets from even the most private and paranoid of individuals. With this ability, the Cainite appears as someone the subject regards with the utmost respect. This person is not someone who would awe or overly impress the victim; rather it is someone she feels she can tell her deepest secrets to. The confidant can even be a far-off friend or long-dead relative if the vampire's power is strong enough to make the subject believe it all to be a dream.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Acting (difficulty of the subject's Perception + Alertness, maximum 10). The more the successes, the more convincing the deception.

Obtenebration

••••• • Darksome Embrace

This power enables the Cainite to pour forth her inner darkness. The shadow stuff vomits from the vampire's mouth and engulfs a chosen target with a soul-burning chill. The darkness leeches the blood from mortal victims in a black parody of the Kiss and, while it cannot drain blood from other vampires, it does engender overwhelming feelings of terror.

System: The player makes a Willpower roll and spends a Blood Point. While this power wraps the victim in darkness, the target is not physically hampered. Mundane attacks have no effect on the shadow stuff, though magical or Discipline-based attacks dissipate it.

Mortal victims caught in this embrace lose one point of blood per turn, and suffer an additional three difficulty to all actions (to a maximum of 10). Cainites don't lose any blood, though the preternatural chill is so terrifying that their difficulties also increase by three and they must successfully roll against Courage (difficulty 8) or suffer Rötschreck.

The user must focus her attention on maintaining the darkness and can take no other actions. If the vampire is attacked during this time, the shadow stuff instantly returns to her body through her mouth. Otherwise, the Cainite can summon it back at any moment, gaining a number of Blood Points equal to half the number drained from her mortal victim (rounded up).

••••• •• Death Shroud

Particularly clever Lasombra have become so skilled at manipulating darkness that they can animate a subject's very shadow. As long as there is sufficient light to cast a shadow, the vampire can command the shadow to perform any number of dark deeds with but a thought. While this power is active, the subject casts no shadow, as the darkness funnels directly into the Death Shroud.

The powers of Obtenebration are horrifying enough to most mortals (and even many Cainites). Still, the Death Shroud is a particularly terrifying manifestation. To a mortal, it appears as if her very soul is detached, empowered to independent action by the Devil himself. Such an unholy act can be enough to drive the weak-minded insane, and make even the most stalwart fear for their immortal souls.

System: The player spends a Blood Point and, on a successful Willpower roll (difficulty 8), the vampire brings a shadow to life. Each success animates the shadow for an hour (although it disappears at sunrise no matter how much time is left from successes). A botch animates a shadow with hostile intent toward its creator. The Death Shroud has Attribute and Ability ratings equal to half those of the subject from which it is cast (round down), although it always has the Stealth Ability of 5. Additionally, the shadow possesses Obtenebration equal to half its creator's rating, to be used as the vampire wills.

The Shroud may separate itself from the subject and travel up to 50 feet away, even slithering through cracks and up walls. It may be attacked, although physical assaults only do half damage (round all results down); flame and supernatural attacks (vampire fangs, werewolf claws, Disciplines, etc.) do full damage. If the shadow is "killed" its creator loses half her current Willpower and must roll to avoid Rötschreck (difficulty 9).

••••• ••• Night Shades

The Cainite has gained such power over Obtenebration's dark energies that he may summon creatures made of shadow itself. There is much debate as to the true nature of these night shades. Some claim they are damned souls brought back to the land of the living. Others state they are animated darkness. Still others think of them as extensions of the vampire's own black spirit. A few Cainites have pointed out that these may all be one and the same....

System: The player must spend one Willpower and five Blood Points to invoke a Night Shade (so if three of the creatures are summoned, the player must pay three Willpower and 15 Blood Points). The vampire drips the blood into his own shadow, creating a doorway through which the Night Shade enters this world. The shade can only emerge from the character's own shadow but may move about freely thereafter. Once created, the shade is ready to serve the Cainite.

The Lasombra may call up to three of these tenebrous forms at any time. While weapons strike them as effectively as if they were mortal, they suffer no wound penalties from such blows (although the shades dissipate if their Health Level drops to Incapacitated). The Night Shades' dark forms possess some sort of awareness, as they are able to carry out their

Armor of Darkness

Obtenebration 4, Fortitude 2

Most Lasombra have numerous retainers and servitors who advance the Cainites' machinations. Still, there are some Lasombra who maintain active roles in particularly sensitive plots, even if it means venturing into the dangerous realm of daylight. These uncommon vampires developed a technique for protecting themselves from the sun's deadly effects.

Blending the Disciplines of Obtenebration and Fortitude, a Cainite wraps herself in the stuff of shadow. This creates a dark mantle that shields her from the sun's rays and the harmful effects of fire.

System: The player spends a Willpower point and two Blood Points, then rolls against Willpower (difficulty 8). The number of successes equals the number of dice which may be added to soak rolls against the effects of sunlight and fire (this is in addition to the Stamina and Fortitude of the character). The Cainite must concentrate on maintaining the armor but may perform other actions and use her Disciplines as usual (the difficulty of all such actions is increased by one while this power is in effect). If she fails to soak any damage, the vampire resolves fire effects and Rötschreck normally.

This power sheathes the character in shadows that resemble a shapeless cloak. A Manipulation + Craft roll (difficulty 6) may be used to mold the darkness into a specific form, like clothing, robes or even a suit of plate mail. Any part of the body not covered by this shape is not protected. A few Lasombra are said to have this shadow armor about them always; cowled and black-clad Cainites may not be wearing heavy wool, but the very substance of darkness given shape.

This ability is guarded closely by its few practitioners. The character must first find a Cainite skilled in using Armor of Darkness, and then persuade her to pass on its secrets. It costs 15 experience points to gain this power.



summoner's verbal directions and even act independently when required to. Barring their untimely destruction, the shades do the vampire's bidding for the remainder of that night, and vanish at dawn.

Specific information on Night Shades is listed below.

NIGHT SHADE

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 1, Wits 5
Virtues: Conviction 0, Instinct 0, Courage 5
Talents: Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Dodge 1
Skills: Stealth 8
Knowledges: None
Disciplines: Obtenebration 3. A Night Shade is considered to be in Tenebrous Form at all times, though it may attack and be injured by mundane means.
Blood Pool: 0, **Willpower:** 5
Other Information: A Night Shade senses things in ways mortals cannot comprehend. It is not blinded by light (although flame injures it as does any other attack), and it is not affected by illusions or by darkness, natural or unnatural. The Night Shade's deathly-cold touch does aggravated damage. Finally, the Night Shade need not spend Blood Points to use its Disciplines.

POTENCE

Vampires of Dark Medieval Europe possess the ability to concentrate and focus their inhuman strength. The Brujah in particular have honed their skill with Potence beyond that of most Cainites. When spending experience or freebie points, the player may choose to purchase an extra point of Potence or a secondary power available at her current level.

••••• • THE FIST OF CAINE

The vampire refines control of his strength to the point where he may project it from a distance. The master of Potence delivers a devastating blow, gaining all the benefits of his enhanced vampiric strength while yards from his target.

System: The vampire may engage in brawling combat up to a number of yards away from her target equal to her Potence. The player must still roll to hit, but with modifiers that would normally apply to a ranged attack. The damage from such an attack equals the vampire's Potence, though this damage is not considered automatic (as Potence normally is) and must be rolled.

••••• •• THE FORGER'S HAMMER

The Brujah can use their supernatural strength to forge weapons of exceptional quality. While humans must use the hammer and anvil, ancient Brujah can shape metal with their hands. In so doing, they imbue weapons with some of their own mystical strength. Over time this technique has fallen into

disuse as humanity has made greater technical advances in metallurgy. The weapons of the ancients, however, are rare and valuable items.

System: The Brujah who wishes to create a weapon must first acquire the proper materials. The forging of the blade involves the most effort, but the mounting and dressing of the weapon takes as much time and skill. When forging the blade, the vampire beats the metal with her bare hands, shaping the material into the weapon of her choice. The player must succeed in a Strength + Crafts roll (difficulty 8). For every two successes, the weapon causes an additional die of damage (maximum of + 3). The weapon is also incredibly resistant and can withstand heavy blows, and remains sharp with little upkeep. These weapons cause aggravated wounds.

••••• ••• Touch of Pain

A Cainite with this level of ability no longer needs to swing clumsily at her opponents in order to cause damage. The vampire utilizes the full force of her strength with but a touch. Vampiric strength mystically focuses through contact, and can destroy the target instantly.

Rumors tell that an elder Assamite developed this technique and used it to destroy a band of Brujah intent on diablerie.

System: Through concentration and the expenditure of a Blood Point, the vampire can project the full force of her strength against a specified target. If the target is an inanimate object, it cannot resist the force of the blow. Living beings, including vampires, may soak the damage as normal. In either case, the damage level equals the vampire's Potence. Such blows can destroy wooden doors or even crumble stone walls. Genteel Brujah can cripple rivals with a handshake — never breaching etiquette by raising their fists in anger.

Presence

••••• • Renew the Earthly Pleasures

Vampires can no longer experience the simple pleasures of mortal life. With this ability, a Cainite can overwhelm another vampire with a flood of kine emotions and sensations that have long been only fragile memories. The subject of this power finds herself reeling under an onslaught of long-dead passions and pleasures. Unable to cope with or control these feelings, she may be incapacitated with ecstasy.

Some vampires actually crave the effects of this power and seek out vampires who possess it. These creatures become addicted to the flood of raw emotion they are incapable of feeling on their own. Powerful but cold-blooded Ventrue have fallen to wily Setites who employ this power.

System: The player must roll Charisma + Empathy (difficulty equals the target's Self-Control/Instincts + 3). The difficulty also varies according to the target's Via score: For each point below 5 that the target's Via rating is, the difficulty increases by one (maximum 10). This power normally has no effect on mortals. At the Storyteller's discretion, however, it might affect a particularly passionate one.

1 success	Nostalgic human feelings
2 successes	Mild pleasure (-1 to Dice Pools)
3 successes	Increased sensations (-2 to Dice Pools)
4 successes	Ecstasy (-5 to Dice Pools)
5 successes	Target loses consciousness for a number of turns equal to 10 minus Self-Control/Instincts

••••• •• Unholy Penance

Just as the Lasombra organize themselves after the Church, so do they use Disciplines that mirror religious practices. This variation of Presence was developed from the Lasombra's long-standing association with the holy orders. The vampire creates overwhelming feelings of guilt in his chosen victim, forcing him to his knees in supplication. The target begs forgiveness from whomever will listen — most often the unforgiving Lasombra standing over her stricken enemy. Lasombra commonly use this power on members of the Church. They learn all their victims' dirty secrets in just a few moments and can blackmail the kine for the remainder of their lives.

System: The player must successfully roll Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty is the opponent's Conscience/Conviction + 4). The Storyteller may reduce the difficulty against a victim who has led a particularly debauched life. He may also reduce the difficulty against a target who is exceptionally penitent. Those who are currently suffering from guilt — a target in the midst of giving confession, for example — are the most susceptible.

The effects of the power are twofold. First, each success incapacitates the victim for one turn. Second, the victim whispers his darkest secrets and vilest sins for as long as the effect lasts. This ability only affects one target at a time. The power will even quell a subject in the ravages of frenzy.

••••• ••• Bloodlust

The Cainite uses her beguiling charm and preternatural leadership skills to inspire her troops to do battle for her. This power instills its targets with unshakable confidence. The victims obey the commands of their vampiric master, even to the death. The enraged horde will attack superior forces, charge mounted cavalry, and enter into suicidal battle. Those affected will do whatever is necessary to win the night.

The Brujah perfected this technique, although too late to prevent the sack of Carthage. Still, noble Ventrue fear the repercussions of this newfound power. Under its influence, peasant armies have overthrown castles and common mobs have defeated armed guards.

System: After the vampire assembles her troops and rouses them for battle, the player must successfully roll Appearance + Leadership (difficulty 7). Those influenced by this power ignore Health Level penalties up to Crippled. Also, mortals under the influence of this ability automatically pass any Courage rolls. Once a mortal reaches Crippled, she can no longer fight, and collapses. The number of successes indicates the number of mortals affected.

1 success	Two mortals
2 successes	Six mortals
3 successes	10 mortals
4 successes	20 mortals
5 successes	Everyone who can see the character

Protean

••••• • Mastery of the Earth

This power expands on the Cainite's ability to become one with the earth, and permits him to move about in the ground as easily as if it were water. The vampire can sense a short distance around him in much the same manner that a mortal might find his way in a darkened room. He cannot, however, actually see within the earth or monitor other activities unless he raises his head above ground. As this ability clearly defies Nature's order, it is not surprising that the Cainite need only be in contact with the smallest portion of exposed ground for it to be effective. With but a thought, he can will himself through the slightest crack and into the safety of the earth.

System: As with Earth Meld, no roll is needed and the character is subsumed into the ground immediately. The player must spend a Blood Point. Once in the earth, the Cainite may move about during any time of day (although he may have difficulty staying awake during daylight hours) until he wishes to re-emerge. Should one vampire hunt another in this underground realm, contested Wits + Athletics rolls (difficulty assigned by the Storyteller) resolve the pursuit.

••••• •• The Mantle of Bestial Majesty

Originally developed by a Gangrel with an affinity for wolves, this power enables the Cainite to tap into that animal's Beast. The vampire then uses the connection to manifest the creature's essential spirit in himself. Blending his immortal soul with the *anima* of the wolf, the Cainite grows to incredible size, topping eight feet, his body thickens, and he sprouts a pelt. His arms lengthen and his hands grow razor-sharp claws. His face transforms into something halfway between man and beast.

Whispered rumors hint that the bestial spirits of cats, birds or even vermin may also be tapped in this manner.

System: The vampire spends three Blood Points to take on the mantle. The transformation takes three turns (spending additional Blood Points reduces the time of transformation by one turn per point spent) and lasts until the next dawn unless the Cainite wishes to change back sooner.

This massive man-wolf shape bestows incredible abilities, beyond dramatic cosmetic changes. All Physical Attributes increase by three and all Social Attributes drop to 1. The vampire's taloned hands and wolf-toothed jaws inflict Strength + 2 aggravated damage, and he gains an additional Hurt Health Level. The Cainite can also run at speeds of up to 30 miles per hour for extended periods of time. Furthermore, the vampire gains a wolf's superior senses; the difficulties of all hearing- and smell-based rolls are reduced by one, and the hybrid automatically receives the benefits of the Witness of Darkness power.

••••• ••• Purify the Body

Through sheer force of will, the vampire can expel a stake or other object which has been thrust into her. The violating object is ejected powerfully from her body amidst a shower of blood. This power has been the saving grace of many Gangrel who might otherwise have suffered Final Death torpor? at the point of a stake.

System: The player spends two Blood Points, then makes a Willpower roll (difficulty 8). Success propels the offending stake some distance from the vampire's body.

Quietus

••••• • Quicken the Mortal's Blood

An Assamite at this level has developed an exceptional degree of control over the vitae he consumes. Even the smallest amount of blood can sustain him. Although this power does not reduce the vampire's need for vitae, it helps fulfill his needs much more quickly.

System: After drinking from a vessel or otherwise imbibing mortal blood, the vampire can double the effectiveness of each Blood Point. The player rolls Stamina + Occult (difficulty 6). Each success enables the vampire to convert one Blood Point into two. The normal limitations for Blood Pool still apply, but the vampire requires less blood from her victims.

••••• •• Hinder the Cainite Vitae

The assassin uses this power to prevent her prey from utilizing a portion of his supernatural blood. The wretch affected by this power slowly loses the ability to heal wounds, use blood-based Disciplines or increase Physical Attributes. These powers, no matter how advanced they may be, become essentially useless.

System: The Assamite using this power must touch her prey. The player spends three Blood Points and rolls Willpower (difficulty equal to the target's Stamina + Fortitude). If successful, the target becomes unable to use a number of Blood Points equal to the successes gained on the roll. The number of successes also equals the number of turns for which the effect lasts. When used repeatedly, this power cripples its subject. This power affects ghouls, but has no effect on mortals.

••••• ••• Blood Awakening

Some vampires speak of the feelings they "taste" in the blood of mortals. Assamites know of this residual life essence and can awaken the echo of mortality in each drop of blood. These Cainites draw impressions from their victims long after those victims have expired.



Blood Awakening has two different but related effects. The first allows the Assamite to manipulate the blood in her own body, and receive impressions of a mortal victim's life. Essentially, the Assamite can communicate with the blood in her body. The second effect allows the Assamite to awaken the blood within another Cainite. This power is used to unbalance the intended Cainite with false images and feelings.

System: For a vampire to awaken the mortal blood in her own body, the player must roll Perception + Empathy (difficulty 7). The number of successes determines the clarity of the sensations. The "echo" within the mortal's blood gives the Assamite impressions of things the mortal knew. The images may warn of danger in a certain area, or show visions of the mortal's death. Essentially, anything the mortal knew or felt presents itself to the vampire. The Cainite has no control over the visions and may not be able to understand them clearly. Skilled Assamites, however, can sort through distractions and read messages written in blood.

Awakening blood in another vampire uses the same system, but has a slightly different effect. Unless the vampire has experienced this Discipline before, the awakening might confuse and disorient her. As mortal memories manifest, the vampire may lose track of reality. A successful Intelligence + Alertness (difficulty 7) is required to avoid becoming confused. If the victim receives more successes than the Assamite achieves, she can discern reality from the sanguine memories swimming through her dead veins.

Serpentis

••••• • Ophidian Infestation

The Setite with this horrifying power injects a victim with her blood. The Cainite must cut herself and touch the target to apply the power. The blood later transforms into a multitude of snakes. These blood-asps quickly grow to full size, rending the victim apart from the inside. The transformation of the blood can be triggered at any time. However, the blood loses its potency after three nights if not activated.

System: The character must touch the target (a normal Dexterity + Brawl roll is needed in combat), and the player spends as many Blood Points as he desires (up to the maximum permitted by the character's generation) and makes a Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty 6). If this roll is successful, each Blood Point later transforms into a dozen or so asps which effectively do one Health Level of damage. Stamina may not be used to soak this damage; only Fortitude can hope to save the victim as the snakes tear apart his unprotected innards and thrust their way out his body.

Needless to say, this is hideous to look upon.

••••• •• Set's Curse

This power enables the Setite to twist a victim's physical form into that of a gigantic python. The target's mass remains the same, but her body and mind transform into a snake that

is ready to do the Cainite's bidding. Rumor has it that countless mortals and even some vampires have been afflicted with this curse and remain forever changed, as protectors of Setite havens.

System: The Setite must touch the victim (a Dexterity + Brawl roll is necessary in combat situations, with a base difficulty of 4). The player spends two Willpower and three Blood Points, then rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty of the target's Stamina + Self-Control/Instinct). Successes determine how long the subject is a python. The transformation to and from a snake takes three turns.

1 success	One scene
2 successes	One week
3 successes	One month
4 successes	Six months
5 successes	One year

While in this form, the victim's mind is truly that of a snake — the target has an Intelligence of 1 for the duration of the effect. The python can still comprehend her native language, and endeavors to carry out the Setite's simple verbal commands. Obviously, the subject cannot speak, use any tools, grasp objects or utilize any Disciplines while transformed. She does, however, have the ability to grab and crush opponents by wrapping her massive coils around them. The python makes a standard attack roll; one success gives her a minor hold on her opponent for Strength damage. Two or more successes puts the opponent fully in the python's grasp. Flexing powerful snake muscles inflicts Strength + 3 damage, and an opponent so entwined must make a contested Strength + Survival roll (difficulty 6) against the python to break free.

When the subject returns to her mortal form, a Wits + Empathy roll is necessary (difficulty 6) to reclaim her human mind as well. If this roll fails, the victim suffers a permanent Derangement: fear of snakes. If this roll is botched, the victim retains a snake's mind.

••••• ••• Apep's Semblance

The Followers of Set developed this power to defend against the affronts of mortals and undead alike. The Setites claim that this power channels Set's own spirit, transforming them into a blend of human and snake. When a Cainite activates this power, his legs fuse together and grow into a tail that stretches over 10 feet in length. His torso and arms lose their rigidity, becoming much more limber. His fingers sprout webs. The vampire's neck thickens and stretches, gaining flexibility like his tail. His face extends out into a serpentine muzzle. His teeth grow grotesquely long. A mottled hide covers his body.

System: The player spends three Blood Points and the vampire assumes this shape, which takes three turns to develop (spending additional Blood Points reduces the time of transformation by one turn per point spent). A vampire wearing Apep's Semblance is gifted with more than a disturbing shape. The large, sinuous form can squeeze through openings less than a foot in diameter, and it can swim twice as fast as the most accomplished human swimmer. The difficulties of Perception rolls based on smell are reduced by two due to the Cainite's acutely sensitive tongue; this tongue may also be used like The Tongue of the Asp. Furthermore, Strength and Stamina increase by two, and Dexterity by three, but Appearance drops to 0 (the vampire's Charisma and Manipulation remain the same due to the snake's hypnotic movement). The tail can strike for Strength + 1 damage and may grapple an opponent to squeeze the life out of him (treat this as a grappling combat maneuver, per **Vampire: The Dark Ages** p. 195), while the Setite's bite inflicts Strength + 2 aggravated damage. Finally, the vampire's tough skin adds one die to soak rolls (including those against fire and sunlight). The Setite retains this form until he wishes to change back, although the man-snake form costs twice the standard nightly blood expenditure to maintain. For example, a Setite maintaining Apep's Semblance would expend two Blood Points each night upon waking, instead of one.

Thaumaturgical Paths

The following Thaumaturgical Paths use the system described in **Vampire: The Dark Ages**: A Blood Point must be spent and a Willpower roll must be made (difficulty equals the power's level + 3). A failure indicates that the blood magic does not work. A botch indicates that the character loses a permanent Willpower point.

Thaumaturgical Alchemy

Thaumaturgists who practice this Path can transmute solid iron into a puddle of slag, or petrify wood with a thought. Thaumaturgical Alchemy ignores the laws of chemistry, forcing a change in state regardless of temperature.

System: The player spends a Blood Point and makes a Willpower roll (difficulty equals the power's level + 3). Effects vary depending on the level of the power, but the number of successes determines the number of turns the effect lasts. The vampire can increase the duration of the effect by spending more Blood Points — each additional Blood Point extends the power's effectiveness by one turn.

• Fortify the Solid Form

At this level, the vampire strengthens the physical structure of solid items. Doors become unbreakable, shields deflect the mightiest blows, and arrows pierce the hardest breastplates. Seemingly fragile items can become deadly weapons in the presence of an alchemist. The alchemist can even make wooden stakes that are as hard as stone.

System: For each success rolled, an object used for defense can resist an additional Health Level. For offensive weaponry, every two successes (round down) increases the weapon's damage potential by one die. Note that this means *two* successes are required to gain any bonus damage dice.

•• Crystallize Liquid

Tremere designed this ability to hinder other Cainites from imbibing vitae. Although the effect cannot alter the tissue within vampires or mortals, it can solidify blood as it exits a body. The effect can also freeze water instantly and even turn molten lead to solid metal. The temperature of the liquid is irrelevant — boiling oil or cold water solidifies at the behest of the vampire.

System: Each success changes one Blood Point's worth of liquid (about two pints) into a solid. The temperature of the substance does not change. When the solid reverts to its natural liquid state, it behaves normally. Vampires cannot consume solidified blood.

••• Liquefy the Solid Form

At this level of ability, the alchemist can dissolve solid objects into liquids. Metal, wood or stone decays at the Cainite's behest. Swords dissolve in mid-swing and shields ooze into pulp.

System: The number of successes determines the amount of material transmuted into liquid. For each success the player rolls, three pounds of material is changed.

1 success	A coin
2 successes	An arrow
3 successes	A knife
4 successes	A sword
5 successes	A shield

When the liquid reforms, it solidifies into whatever shape it has taken. Even a finely crafted sword reforms into a useless blob of steel. An object is either changed utterly or not at all; there are no "partial" transformations.

•••• Ethereal Stone

The vampire can transform the very air into a solid prison. Air condenses to form a solid block of ice around the vampire's enemy. Crafty Tremere have used this ability to suffocate mortals by turning the air in their lungs to ice.

System: For each success the player receives, one cubic foot of air solidifies. The prison is inescapable until the effect wears off.

••••• Vaporous Transformation

Walls and other obstacles no longer hinder the vampire. She can turn stone, metal or any other solid into vapor. Walls vanish and swords disappear into thin air.

Recoagulating solids are dangerous to those in their vicinity. Slags of metal or stone that suddenly re-form can crush mortals.

System: Each success transmutes three pounds of solid matter into vapor. When the effect expires, the solid material re-forms at the spot where air currents have moved it. A Dexterity + Dodge roll (difficulty 6) must be made for each character in the vicinity; failure indicates that a character automatically suffers one Health Level of damage. A botch



indicates that the character receives one Health Level of aggravated damage from entrapment in the now-solid material. Note that it may prove impossible to separate a trapped individual without using this power again.

Way of the Levinbolt

This power allows the vampire to create and control the power of lightning. In the Dark Medieval world, only the Tremere control the ability to create raw electrical energy. The kine have yet to discover its potential.

System: The number of successes on the Willpower roll determines the length of time it takes the vampire to generate the desired electrical energy. One success indicates that a full minute is required to gather and shape it. Three successes indicate that the preparation takes two turns. Five successes indicate that the magic works instantly. The Storyteller should reduce the number of successes needed for an instant effect in particularly dry regions or during electrical storms.

To attack, the vampire must make contact with the target. This can be achieved through touch or a conducting medium such as water or metal. The Tremere cannot hurl electrical energies through the air, but can route them along surfaces, such as a sword or the target's armor. Such power may also cause fires in flammable substances and cause combustibles to explode. Damage from electricity is considered normal.

• Spark

The vampire can create a small electrical discharge. She can shock a horse into motion or stun a small child. (Two dice of damage.)

•• Illuminate

The Tremere can illuminate a small room by covering her arm in an electrical nimbus. The effect can also render a mortal unconscious. (Four dice of damage.)

••• Body of Light

At this level the vampire manipulates potent amounts of electrical power. Her entire body can be sheathed in sparks. The effects of this power can kill a mortal or stun a vampire. (Six dice of damage.)

•••• Jupiter's Aegis

The force surrounding the Cainite can destroy even the hardiest of vampires. (Eight dice of damage.)

••••• Lightning Dance

The vampire is engulfed in a blinding aura (all who look directly at the vampire suffer - 1 to Dice Pools and cannot employ Dominate against her). The Tremere very nearly transforms into a living lightning bolt. (Ten dice of damage.)

Prey on the Soul's Fear

Mortals fear the shadows that cross their paths. They tread softly through the night hoping not to wake the demons that surround them. The Tremere take full advantage of this superstition to send peasants scurrying to their churches whenever it suits the vampires' needs. Vampires can be as irrational as the human stock from which they hail, though. This power affects Cainites as well as mortals.

By the 18th century, this Path falls into ill-repute and is absorbed by the Dark Thaumaturgy of the Sabbat as the Path of Phobos.

System: The powers of this Path take place immediately upon their use. The Thaumaturgist must actually see her subject to effect any of these powers.

• Startle the Superstitious Mind

By subtly manipulating her subject, the Tremere may create such fear that a mortal or vampire is rooted to the spot where she stands. The victim quakes in her boots, unable to act or flee.

System: The number of successes indicates the number of dice removed from the victim's Dice Pool. If the victim's pool reaches zero, she cannot take any action whatsoever.

•• Rout the Charging Hordes

Tremere with this ability have caused units of cavalry to turn tail at the very sight of the vampire. This ability causes all those in the vicinity to instinctively flee from the vampire's dreadful gaze.

System: Success indicates the number of people affected by this power. Individuals may resist by rolling their Courage (difficulty of the vampire's Willpower). Each target who overcomes the number of successes acquired by the Cainite may act normally. Successes on individual rolls do not detract from the Tremere's overall success. Those that fail the Courage roll flee until the vampire is no longer visible.

1 success	One person
2 successes	Two people
3 successes	Five people
4 successes	Seven people
5 successes	10 people

••• Wrath of God

The power of God is not questioned by humanity. Tremere draw upon this fear and squash the spirit of the peasants who work their lands. The irrational fear of damnation also affects Cainites. The victim of this blood magic witnesses her particular version of Hell.

System: The number of successes indicates the impact that fear of eternal damnation has on the target; the number of successes equals the number of turns the target is incapacitated with dread. In order to take any action during this time — besides supplicating oneself, praying for forgiveness or fleeing in terror — the victim must successfully roll Courage (difficulty 7). She must exceed the number of successes acquired by the Tremere in order to take any action.

1 success	One turn
2 successes	Five minutes

3 successes	One scene	
4 successes	Several hours	
5 successes	One night	

•••• The Inner Demon

The vampire perceives the victim's deepest secrets and may confront the target with his darkest fears. The vampire has no idea what the victim sees, but the effect is obvious when the target loses touch with reality. The target's deepest dread consumes him, and is more tangible to him than reality.

System: The number of successes indicates how deep the vampire plumbs into her target's psyche. The more ingrained the fear, the more traumatic and lasting the effect. With one success the victim faces her most urbane fear, but is not incapacitated for more than a round or two. With five successes the victim might lose her grip on sanity as her worst nightmares overwhelm her. The object or circumstance is real for the victim, with detail and complexity determined by the number of successes.

••••• Demonic Horde

The Tremere who has mastered this level of power can create horrific images and implant them in her victims' minds. Victims flee from winged demons or cower before the face of death itself. Powerful Tremere can incapacitate entire armies. Tremere also use this ability to cow mortal servants and to keep the masses in line.

System: The number of successes determines the number of people affected, and the intensity of their visions. Victims who do not wish to flee from the vampire's mental assault must make Courage rolls (difficulty 8) and must make more successes than did the Tremere.

1 Success	Two people	Victims cannot advance
2 Successes	Five people	Victims cower and flee
3 Successes	10 people	Victims freeze with panic
4 Successes	15 people	Victims fall unconscious
5 Successes	20 people	Victims must roll Courage (difficulty 8) or lose a permanent Willpower point each

Path of Warding

Tremere who study this Path dedicate themselves to defending the holdings of the clan. They can practically hold off entire armies. They are also capable of exposing infiltrators before they breach the clan's havens and hiding places.

System: The Cainite paints a Blood Point's worth of vitae in the form of a sigil on the target. The glyph functions until it expires or the object is destroyed. Contact with sunlight or fire automatically destroys the ward.

• Bar the Common Passage

The vampire paints her ward on a door or other portal. The affected doorway is imbued with sufficient magical fortification to hold back the ferocious strength of a werewolf or the head of a battering ram. If something breaks the ward, the vampire is alerted subconsciously.

System: If the total Strength applied to the portal equals double the warding successes, the door opens (or is shattered) normally. If the warded portal opens, the Cainite receives a mental alarm.

•• Glyph of Scrying

By focusing her will, the vampire can view the immediate vicinity of a particular ward. Paranoid Tremere princes can monitor their entire cities through these glyphs. Portable objects can be imbued with these wards to function like remote senses.

System: The number of successes rolled indicates the number of days that the ward functions. The ward can be destroyed as usual, but always fades after the time limit expires. A clever Thaumaturgist hides a glyph from sunlight but still makes it useful.

The vampire can establish a telepathic connection with any one of her wards instantly, but never with more than one at a time. She can move about as normal while focusing on a ward, but all difficulties increase by two. Once in contact with a particular ward, the Cainite can see and hear everything in the surrounding area as if she were actually there. When she focuses on a ward, the blood in the glyph gleams as if it were liquid again.

••• Runes of Power

Many elders place these wards on ancient tomes of magic. Unwary neonates or intruders receive a nasty surprise when they make contact with these runes.

System: The number of successes indicates the number of aggravated wounds the victim suffers upon contact with the warded object (though the subject may soak if she has Fortitude). The caster is the only person who is immune to the effect. The rune remains potent until exposed to sunlight or the object is destroyed.

•••• Glyph of Enlightenment

The vampire who paints these glyphs can use them as Glyphs of Scrying, above, and can communicate through them. Tremere with this ability can even use it to attack distant opponents.

System: The number of successes achieved on a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) determines the number of days the effect lasts. By focusing on the ward, the Cainite can see and hear everything around it. She can also speak through the glyph. The vampire can choose to "transmit" another Thaumaturgical power through the glyph, as long as the power's requirements can be met (physical contact with the target of the power is not required, for example). Each such use of another power reduces the rune's effectiveness by one day.

••••• Secure the Sacred Domain

This potent ability can be used to seal off an entire castle. One glyph, painted at the exact center of a castle or tower, secures all windows, portcullises, doors and other portals from all entry or exit. A single Tremere can hold off an entire army — for one night — in this way.



System: A Willpower roll (difficulty 8) determines success or failure. The vampire must paint the ward at the exact center of the building. Failure indicates a wasted effort. If the vampire succeeds, no doors, windows or portals will open, though they can be destroyed. Likewise, existing breaches in walls may not be passed, although new ones may be opened and entered. The effects of this power last until the following dawn.

Vicissitude

••••• • Corrupt Construction

The fleshcrafter can graft the remains of the dead to a living creature, creating a hideous guardian. The vampire may use as many dead subjects in a creation as she deems necessary, but at least one subject must still breathe.

The final monstrosity possesses the fractured intellect of the living beast, but has the claws, wings, eyes and teeth of whatever the vampire has spliced together. The process often drives the living host insane. Furthermore, the victim endures the decay of its body parts. The poor creature eventually dies from disease or shock.

System: The vampire can create anything she desires, of any mass, size or function, provided she has enough parts. The player rolls Intelligence + Body Crafts (difficulty 7). Depending on the quantity and quality of "raw material" available, the Tzimisce may create anything from a simple ghoul to a rampaging *vozhd* (see the **Book of Storyteller Secrets**). The number of successes determines how successful the process is and how long the creation "lives."

1 success	One hour
2 successes	One day
3 successes	One week
4 successes	One month
5 successes	One year

••••• •• Liquefy the Mortal Coil

Victims of this gruesome power are betrayed by their own bodies, as the Tzimisce transforms his opponents' flesh and bone into pools of blood. Vampires under the influence of this ability retain their sentience, but may lose their sanity. If the power affects a mortal, the subject dies. The blood can nourish a vampire or be used to create ghouls or establish Blood Oaths (the latter two uses function only if the liquefied victim was a vampire). Vampires who imbibe all the vitae of a transmuted Cainite are assumed to have diablerized the victim.

System: To transform another creature, the vampire must touch her target; flesh-to-flesh contact is mandatory. The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Stamina + Body Crafts

(difficulty 8). Each success turns a portion of the victim's body into a Blood Point's worth of vitae. The target can negate the Tzimisce's successes by rolling Stamina (difficulty 6). Each success on the Stamina roll reduces the Tzimisce's successes by one.

The torso and each leg is worth two Blood Points, while the head, abdomen and arms are each worth one. If an entire portion of the target's body undergoes the transformation, that body part turns into a pool of blood and is useless (assuming the subject survives). Attacks to the head, abdomen or torso kill mortals outright. Vampires survive such attacks, however, even if their heads separate from their torsos. Vampires can re-form lost body parts by expending a Blood Point for each one that is transmuted (one for the head, two for a leg, for example).

Vampires transformed entirely into blood retain consciousness. Barring skill in Body Craft or Vicissitude, however, they retain no powers of locomotion or any other abilities. A vampire in this form cannot be staked, cut, bludgeoned or pierced, though fire and sunlight have the usual effect.

••••• ••• Sculpture of the Mind

At this level the vampire is capable of altering flesh from a distance. Physical contact is the tool of a lesser artist; the true art comes from the Tzimisce's mind, not her hands.

System: The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Willpower (difficulty equal to the target's Willpower). The number of successes indicates the number of dice the vampire may use on her chosen Vicissitude roll. For example, Ignatius wishes to mold her long-time rival, Claudius, into a quivering pool of blood. Willpower (seven dice) is rolled against a difficulty of Claudius' Willpower (8); she receives two successes. She may use only two dice of her Stamina + Body Crafts pool in order to attack Claudius. She may do so at range, however, which will probably save her from a sound thrashing at the hands of the angered Ventrue.

The difficulties of accompanying Body Crafts rolls are unaffected by the use of this power.

New Disciplines

The following Disciplines are rare in the Dark Medieval world, as they belong to infrequently seen clans and bloodlines. Nonetheless, they do exist, and rumors of their effects travel like plague through a rat-infested city.

Abombwe

The Beast, for Laibon, is not so fearful as it is for European vampires. Laibon are less burdened by knowledge of sin and its accompanying guilt, and thus are more receptive to the urges of their Beasts. European vampires might well learn from the Sphinxes; Laibon demonstrate admirable control over their Beasts — a control that is learned through hard experience and communion in the wastes.

The Abombwe Discipline is unique to its bloodline. It gives the vampire direct control over the Beast Within — his own and others'.

It is rumored that the mysterious Cathayan vampires of the Far East have similar powers of control over their Beasts (for more information, see **Kindred of the East**). Whether this has been learned from the Laibon or is merely coincidental is unknown.

• Predator's Communion

The Laibon can commune with her Beast. With this level of Abombwe, she is able to utilize the Beast's mystical senses, keeping it on a psychic "leash" and enabling it to act as a bloodhound of sorts.

System: The player must spend a Blood Point (actually two, because of the clan weakness). Thereafter, the Laibon may mystically sense other Beasts in the vicinity (other vampires, Changing Breeds with Rage, wraiths and Spectres, predatory animals, and humans with Via scores of 3 or less). Successful detection manifests as smell; the Laibon may "sniff out" the Beast with a Perception + Survival roll (difficulty 6; can be higher or lower if the Beast is particularly strong or weak).

The power remains active for a scene.

•• Taming the Beast

The Laibon may enter into a pact with his Beast. If properly supplicated, the Beast lends its strength to the Laibon for a brief period of time. This is a very dangerous activity, as the Beast often uses the opportunity to manifest in the Laibon.

System: The Laibon must spend a full turn in concentration. The player rolls Willpower (difficulty 8). Each success grants one extra die on a subsequent physical action (one punch, one leap, etc.) — but the Laibon must immediately check for frenzy thereafter.

••• Whistling up the Beast

The Laibon learns the "songs" that cajole and frighten the Beast Within.

System: The Laibon whistles for a full turn, and a Manipulation + Music roll (difficulty 7) is made. If the roll succeeds, the target must make a Courage roll (difficulty 7; victim must equal or beat the Laibon's successes). Even if the victim's roll succeeds, she is uneasy (one-die penalty to all Dice Pools against the Laibon; difficulty of frenzy and Rötschreck rolls is reduced by one). If the victim's roll fails, she must retreat from the Laibon for the duration of the scene — not necessarily mindless flight, but the wary retreat of an animal that realizes it has met a superior foe.

Alternatively, the Laibon may "whistle up" her own Beast; a successful roll immediately sends the Laibon into frenzy (thus negating wound penalties).

•••• Devil-Channel

The Laibon may channel his Beast through his body. Depending on which part of his body the Laibon chooses to "invest" with the Beast, a variety of powers are gained.

System: The player must spend two Blood Points (actually three, due to the clan weakness). All difficulties to avoid frenzy are increased by one because the Beast is so close to the

surface. The Beast actually manifests as a film of black, clotted blood that cakes the affected body part. Only one power may be "turned on" at a time.

Various powers demonstrated by Laibon include:

Hands: The Laibon may inflict aggravated damage with punches. The power lasts for the scene.

Body: All blood expenditure to increase Physical Attributes (not heal) is considered doubly efficient. The power lasts for the scene.

Throat: The Laibon may roar. Humans flee unless they succeed on Courage rolls (difficulty 9). Supernaturals must make successful Courage rolls (difficulty 8) or become weak with terror (all Dice Pools reduced by half, rounded up). This effect lasts for a scene.

Feet: Aggravated damage may be inflicted with kicks. This power lasts for the scene.

The Laibon may also stamp, paining the earth-spirits with his tread. The spirits react with a violent shock wave that affects all within 100 feet of the Laibon. Those in the vicinity (including the Laibon) must make Dexterity + Athletics rolls to remain standing (difficulty 5 for the Laibon, 6 if expecting it, 8 if the shock wave is a surprise). The tremors continue for as long as the Laibon "dances."

Some Laibon speak in guarded tones of elder members of the bloodline, who use variants of this power to create even more terrifying effects.

••••• Taking the Skin

By slaying a creature and drenching herself in its blood, the Laibon can enshroud herself in the creature's Beast. This allows the Laibon to transform herself into the slain creature.

System: The Laibon must anoint herself with the creature's blood and then successfully invite the spirit of the creature into herself (Charisma + Occult, difficulty 7). If successful, the player makes a frenzy check. The creature in question must have at least one Blood Point's worth of vitae (i.e., must be as large as a bat or large bird) and must be a predatory or omnivorous animal (no elephants or rhinos). The blood must be fresh. The Laibon gains all physical traits of the creature (so a Laibon transformed into a vulture can fly, and a vampire transformed into a leopard has claws and increased speed). Humans and supernatural creatures may be duplicated in this fashion, though such changes are limited to appearances (no Disciplines, Numina or Rage may be gained from such transformations). The transformation lasts until sunrise or until the Laibon "sheds" the skin taken.

••••• • Predator's Mastery

The Laibon may confront any other creature that possesses a Beast (for a basic list, see "Predator's Communion," above). She may attempt to use her Beast to dominate the opponent's and, if successful, the "subdued" Beast must obey the "dominant" Laibon.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Courage (difficulty 5 if the victim is less powerful than the Laibon, 6 if of equal power, 8 if of greater power. Animals are typically less powerful, though there are exceptions). If the roll succeeds, the creature grudgingly obeys the Laibon. This is not a willing vassalage, but the servitude of an animal cowed into submission. The dominated creature bears no love for the Laibon, but is too fearful to act directly against her. The forcible servitude lasts until the Laibon relaxes her vigilance. A botch sends the Laibon into Rötschreck.

Ogham

The Ogham Discipline is unique to the Lhiannan, though there are rumors of similar script-based magics that are practiced elsewhere. Ogham allows its practitioner, through attunement to her blood and knowledge of the ancient names of things, to inscribe runic glyphs and thereby evoke various effects.

• Consecrate the Grove

By bleeding widdershins (in a spiral pattern) onto an area of vegetation, the Lhiannan awakens the spirits of the immediate area, rousing them to her defense.

System: The Lhiannan opens a vein and bleeds one to three Blood Points of vitae onto the earth. One Blood Point affects a 10-foot-diameter area; each further point doubles the radius (it is 40 feet with three points). This process takes one turn per Blood Point spent.

After the circle of blood has been drawn, the player must roll Charisma + Survival (difficulty 6). Success enables the Lhiannan to awaken the plant- and soil-spirits of the area to attack those whom she designates: Tussocks blast outward like earthen geysers, roots reach upward to trip foes, and branches whip at enemies. Victims in the area subtract two from all Dice Pools and must make successful Stamina + Dodge rolls (difficulty 6) each turn or suffer three dice of normal damage.

The power lasts for a scene. A botch angers the spirits, turning them against the Lhiannan.

•• Crimson Woad

The vampire may summon spirits of blood and battle into her body by inscribing mystical characters on herself.

System: The Lhiannan must spend a scene inscribing her body with runes. The player rolls Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 7). For each success, the Lhiannan may ignore one point of wound penalties due to pain, and may subtract one from the difficulties of rolls to avoid Rötschreck and frenzy. Additionally, the Lhiannan may, once per scene, make a "wrathful strike": a brawling or melee attack. If this attack succeeds, the number of successes on the inscription roll is added to the damage Dice Pool of the attack.

The glyphs maintain their power for the duration of one combat, or until the vampire takes four or more Health Levels of damage (at which point the glyphs are obscured).

••• Inscribe the Curse

By writing a foe's name on his own body, the Lhiannan gains great power over that foe.

System: The Lhiannan must know the foe's true name. The player spends three Blood Points for the vampire to inscribe a runic version of that name on his body; this name must be displayed on a spot that is visible to the foe. The opponent must roll Wits + Occult (difficulty 8) or be affected by this magic. The effect is chosen by the Lhiannan and may include any one of several curses:

Body: The Lhiannan renders the foe impotent (or, if a vampire, unable to use Blood Points).

Mind: The Lhiannan causes the foe to be addled or confused. Whenever attempting to invoke a Knowledge, magical power, Discipline or other product of concentration, the foe must spend a Willpower point.

Voice: The Lhiannan renders the foe mute.

Soul: The Lhiannan renders the foe intensely susceptible to frenzy; all difficulties to avoid frenzy increase by two.

The effect begins when the foe sees his name, and lasts until the glyph is erased (or the Lhiannan takes four or more Health Levels of damage). Note that unless he is familiar with the Lhiannan's runic writing, the foe may not recognize his name as it is written on the Lhiannan's body.

•••• Moon and Sun

The Lhiannan may use her blood to inscribe the ancient symbols of moon or sun on her forehead or that of a subject. In doing so, the Lhiannan channels the power of a celestial spirit, creating a form of talisman.

System: The Lhiannan must spend 15 minutes inscribing a symbol. The player spends three Blood Points. If the Lhiannan inscribes the moon sigil, the effect depends on the current phase of the moon:

New Moon: add one die to Stealth rolls

Crescent Moon: add one die to Wits rolls

Half Moon: add one die to Perception rolls

Gibbous Moon: add one die to social rolls

Full Moon: add one die to damage rolls

Whenever the Lhiannan inscribes the moon sigil, regardless of lunar phase, the subject's difficulty to avoid frenzy increases by one. Additionally, any werewolf who sees the subject bearing such a glyph is enraged (if the presence of a vampire isn't enough to anger him).

If the Lhiannan inscribes the sun symbol on herself or another vampire, the subject may make a Stamina roll (difficulty 8) whenever damage from fire or sunlight is taken; for each success, one level of aggravated damage is considered normal damage instead.

••••• Dragon Lines

The Lhiannan may inscribe powerful runes to invoke the magic of ley lines — the "dragon tracks" of pagan lore — and thereby channel mystic energy though her body.



System: The Lhiannan must be in an area where mystic "ley lines" of power lie close to the surface (Storyteller's discretion, though werewolf caerns or mage Nodes are almost certain to be repositories of mystic energy). Caerns, mage Nodes, haunts, changeling freeholds and the like are generally rated from 1 to 5, with 1 being the weakest and 5 being the most powerful. The Lhiannan must spend a scene (and the player must spend five Blood Points) inscribing glyphs on the site.

For each success on a Perception + Occult roll (difficulty 7), the Lhiannan may convert one level of the mystic site into two dice which may be added to any Dice Pool the vampire chooses to use in a single turn (so long as the vampire remains in direct contact with the site). This mystic energy is siphoned from the site each turn. A site has a repository of mystic energy equal to 10 times its level. When that many dice have been channeled, the site is irrevocably drained (the area turns barren and wasted, grass dies, trees wither and soil turns to ash). Partial draining reduces the level of the mystic site proportionately. Dice gained are not cumulative over the turns that siphoning occurs.

Example: A Lhiannan stands on a powerful werewolf caern (Level Five). She inscribes the Dragon Line glyphs and gets three successes, enabling her to channel energy from the site. The caern could provide as many as 10 dice of mystic energy in a single turn, but because the vampire received only three successes, she may siphon only six dice per turn. If they are not used in the turn that they are gained, the extra dice are lost, and can only be replenished in a subsequent turn spent siphoning. Once 50 dice have been drained from the caern, the site is destroyed.

Additionally, some sites dedicated to specific deities or purviews (War, Death, Love) provide the vampire with appropriate powers; the Storyteller adjudicates all such "bonus" powers.

••••• • Inscribe the Forgotten Names

At this level, the Lhiannan knows the names of some of the dread beasts that walked the Earth in ancient nights, and may summon them to her.

System: The Lhiannan inscribes the appropriate name. The player spends three Blood Points and rolls Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 9). On a successful roll, a mythic beast appears before the summoner within a scene. The beast is probably unique and quite powerful (use stats comparable to those of major demons or *vozhd* war ghouls). The Lhiannan has no direct control over the beast and must appease it (sacrifices of children work well in this regard).

Deimos

The Lamia share the Cappadocians' obsession with the world beyond, though they express it in a different fashion than do their more scholarly counterparts. The Deimos Discipline represents the Lamia's devotion to thanatology through the auspices of the Dark Mother Lilith.

• Whispers to the Soul

The Lamia may whisper one of Lilith's secret names in a victim's ear. Nightmares plague the victim, and fearful thoughts of doom torment her waking hours.

System: The Lamia must whisper the name (it may affect only one foe at a time). The victim must then roll Willpower (difficulty 8) or suffer hideous visions and nightmares for one day and night per point of the Lamia's Perception. The victim loses one die from all Dice Pools during the period of effect.

•• Kiss of the Dark Mother

The Lamia, through her studies of death, is able to evoke an entropic, life-draining force. She may transmit this through a bite, slaying foes with remarkable swiftness.

System: The Lamia expectorates a Blood Point and coats her lips with blood, turning her bite into an even deadlier weapon. Creatures bitten take twice the normal amount of damage, which is aggravated.

••• Ichor

Lamia routinely use cadavers as objects of study and veneration. In the process, they have gained knowledge concerning the corpselike body of the Cainite. The Lamia who has reached this level of Deimos may transubstantiate one of her four bodily humors into a vile substance.

System: With the expenditure of two Blood Points, the Lamia may secrete a tainted version of one of her four bodily humors: a phlegmatic, melancholy, bilious or sanguine ichor. This ichor may be placed in an unsuspecting mortal's beverage, or simply used as a contact agent. (Skin contact is all that is needed; the substance need not enter the bloodstream to take effect.) The victim must make a Stamina roll (difficulty 8) or be affected by the ichor. Only one type of ichor may be secreted per scene, and the Blood Points spent provide only one dose.

The types of ichor are:

Phlegmatic: induces lethargy; victim's Dice Pools reduced by two for the rest of the scene

Melancholy: induces visions of death; victim is unable to use Willpower for the rest of the scene

Sanguine: induces excessive bleeding; any cut, slash or puncture wound suppurates, causing the victim to lose an additional Health Level next turn

Bilious: deadly toxin; the victim takes a number of levels of normal damage equal to the vampire's Stamina; this damage can be soaked.

•••• Clutching the Shroud

The Lamia, through forbidden study of cadavers, gains an understanding of his own corpselike state. By imbibing blood from a cold corpse, the Lamia may mystically transubstantiate his own humors, thereby gaining powers related to death.

System: The Lamia must drink at least five Blood Points' worth of vitae from a cold corpse, and must expend those Blood Points during the act of invoking the power. The player may

add two dice to all soak rolls and may completely ignore wound penalties for the duration of the scene. The Lamia may peer into the Shadowlands with a Perception + Occult roll (difficulty varies — 6 in a haunted site, 8 normally, up to 10 in a sanctified area). Finally, the vampire gains the ability to sense the relative health of beings she scrutinizes (whether they are wounded or diseased, and how badly; whether they suffer from mystic ailments, etc.).

••••• Black Breath

The Lamia may breathe the Lethean fetor of the grave on her victims. Victims engulfed in this black mist are overwhelmed by hopelessness and depression.

System: The player spends two Willpower points and rolls Stamina + Archery (difficulty 7). The breath can be dodged. Mortals (including Lupines and mages) caught in the Black Breath are instantly overcome with a powerful death-urge; unless they score more successes on a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) than the Lamia received on the attack roll, they immediately commit suicide by the most expedient means available. Even if the Willpower roll succeeds, the victim rhapsodizes about death; for the remainder of the scene, all Dice Pools are reduced by two.

Vampires are affected differently by the Black Breath. An engulfed vampire makes a Willpower roll as above, but if the vampire fails, he sinks into torpor for a length of time dependent on his Via rating, just as if he had been forced into torpor. Vampires are likewise consumed by morbidity if they succeed; they suffer a Dice Pool reduction of two as well.

••••• • Lilith's Summons

The Lamia's blood may be smelled in the world of the dead. By spitting blood on a target, the Lamia can "mark" that target, causing Spectres (malevolent wraiths) to home in on the target. The Lamia can also use the blood in a more ritualistic manner, to summon Spectres, though this power offers no control over the Spectres called.

System: The player spends three Blood Points and the Lamia spits on the target (Dexterity + Archery, difficulty 7). The blood may be washed off, but the mystic taint remains for the duration of the scene. The Spectres arrive within the scene. Statistics for Spectres may be found in **Dark Reflections: Spectres** or **Wraith: The Oblivion Second Edition**. Storytellers without these books should use the Gaunt statistics in Chapter Nine of **Vampire: The Dark Ages**.

Valeren

This Discipline was first manifested by Saulot, who refined the raw power of healing gifts. The secondary uses of this Discipline are lost for the most part to vampires in the 20th century, who would recognize the Discipline as Obeah. Some Salubri learned the secondary uses of this Discipline for martial and darker purposes, and the Tremere may have encountered these powers when they went after their first victim. The Discipline is almost never taught to outsiders as it makes rigorous demands of its users, and the Salubri wish to preserve their usefulness.

The third eye appears about the time the Salubri masters the second level of Valeren. The eye opens when she uses any power above second level. Even the Salubri are uncertain why this is. The most common theory purports that the third eye grants "sight-beyond-sight," literally examining the tenuous threads of life and death. What the Salubri actually see is a secret.

A Salubri must decide which path (Healer or Warrior) she studies before purchasing levels of Valeren. Once she has started down a path, she may only make use of the powers listed for her path. If she wishes to study a secondary power, the initial cost is the same as for purchasing a new Discipline, and subsequent costs are at + 1 to reflect that she is studying something that is at odds with her initial path (and quite possibly her Nature). Where two powers for a given level of mastery are listed, the first belongs to the Healer path and the second belongs to the Warrior path.

• Sense Life/Death

The Salubri may "see" the ebb and flow of a person's life force (though this does not open the third eye) after touching the subject. Sense Life/Death may be used to determine how much damage it would take to kill a person by measuring the strength of her life force. This is useful in sizing up a potential enemy, if the Salubri can touch her.

System: The Salubri must touch her target to determine how close to death she is (roll Perception + Empathy, difficulty 7). She may determine how the subject arrived at such a state on a second roll. For each success on the second roll, the player may ask one question of the Storyteller pertaining to the subject's health or Health Levels. ("Was she poisoned? Are her wounds aggravated?") This power identifies a subject as a vampire with the first successful roll.

•• Gift of Sleep

The vampire causes any living thing to fall asleep with but a touch. This ability is quite useful for advancing the body's own healing process, or for helping someone sleep through pain.

System: If the subject is willing, the player need only spend a Blood Point to put her to sleep. If the subject is unwilling, a Blood Point is spent and the player must make a contested Willpower roll with the target. Success indicates that the target is granted a period of peaceful sleep equal to her normal pattern of rest (usually five to eight hours), though she may be awakened normally.

Cainites are unaffected by this power.

••• Healing Touch

The vampire lays her hands on a wound and channels her inner energies to speed up the healing process. The target feels a warm sensation as he heals.

System: This works on any creature, but the vampire must touch the wound itself. The player spends a Blood Point for each Health Level to be healed. Aggravated wounds may be healed this way, but the player needs to spend two Blood Points per Health Level so healed.

••• Burning Touch

The vampire lays a hand on her opponent, and searing pain courses through the victim. This causes no physical damage to the subject, but prolonged contact may leave her traumatized.

System: The player spends a Blood Point and the vampire keeps her hand in place for as long as she wishes to cause pain. Extra Blood Points may be spent to intensify the effects, at the Storyteller's discretion. Each Blood Point spent reduces the subject's Dice Pools by two.

•••• Shepherd's Watch

The vampire may protect herself and those under her care by using this power. The Salubri physically prevents hostile characters from approaching her and those close to her by invoking a mystical barrier. Legend holds that Warrior Salubri were able to discharge eldritch energy from barriers, wounding and even killing antagonists who came too close.

System: With the expenditure of two Willpower points, the vampire erects an invisible barrier around herself and others near her. No one may come within 10 feet until she voluntarily drops the "shield." Anyone attempting to approach must engage the Salubri in an extended contested Willpower roll (difficulty 8), and score three more successes than the Salubri. A Salubri may move and maintain the barrier, but if she takes any offensive action, the barrier drops. She may not leave the barrier around others and go off to fight.

•••• Ending the Watch

The "watch" in this case is the death watch. An apocryphal story of the Second City describes two Salubri who walked the streets on certain nights, looking for the sick, aged, suffering, those for whom life had become a burden. If a person truly wished to die because of illness or terrible loss and could answer the pair to satisfaction, they would grant the gift of death. Their particular charges were children of the streets, who called them "The Kind Ones" and honored them as angels who would save the miserable from their lives. Saulot did not approve of such use of the gift, and banned its use (and the pair) from the city. Today, one who possesses this power risks being outcast by the outcasts. However, Salubri who follow the Warrior path may have and use this power without being condemned.

The Salubri using this power grants a quiet, painless death to a willing subject.

System: To End the Watch, the vampire places her hand on the subject's chest. The player spends a Willpower point. The subject must be willing to end her life. If she struggles or refuses, the attempt fails. Her heart slowly ceases to beat, and the subject appears to go into a deep, peaceful sleep. Curiously, an individual affected by this power may not be subsequently Embraced, nor will she become a wraith.

••••• The Ailing Spirit

The Salubri using this power whispers soothing reassurances to her subject, in effect removing a Derangement from that subject. Some Salubri claim that Saulot developed this to provide Malkav some relief from his madness. Remember, in the Dark Medieval world, insanity is seen as demonic possession, and curing a person of insanity might arouse undue interest from the local Church.

System: This power requires two Blood Points to activate. The player rolls Intelligence + Empathy (difficulty 8). Success cures the subject of one Derangement of the Salubri's choice. This will not remove a Malkavian's one permanent Derangement, but it can provide periods of lucidity. A botch indicates that the Salubri has temporarily drawn the Derangement into herself, and suffers from its effects for the remainder of the scene. In this case the subject continues to suffer her own Derangement as well.

••••• Vengeance of Samiel

By invoking the power of her own blood, the Warrior Salubri guides her weapon infallibly toward her foe. This power causes the third eye to open and glow a righteous red. Some Salubri who use it close their normal eyes, taunting and horrifying their opponents simultaneously.

System: Using this power costs three Blood Points. Any single attack automatically hits its target as mystic forces guide the blow. Attacks made in this manner cannot be dodged or otherwise evaded, though they may be blocked and soaked normally. In addition, the attack bites deep and does two extra dice of damage.

••••• • Warding the Beast

This power allows the vampire to pull the soul of another from his body and take it into her own body, where she works powerful healing magics on it. Salubri suspect that this power is the reason why so many Tremere have dubbed them "soulsuckers." If the Tremere understood the true nature of the power, they might not sneer.

System: To activate this power, the player rolls Stamina + Empathy (difficulty equal to 12 minus the subject's Road rating). Botching this roll means the Salubri acquires a Derangement for the duration of the scene. Note that this power may not be used on subjects with Road ratings of 1 or less, nor will it work on followers of Via Diabolis; some souls are too far gone to save. The soul becomes part of the Salubri's as she does her work, and she may release it back into the proper body at any time. To keep the soul for overlong is considered heinous and cruel, and the Salubri risks straying from her Road if she does so. Once the soul is within her, she may spend a permanent Willpower point to restore a point of the soul's Via rating, though she may not exceed the level of the subject's Road as dictated by that subject's Virtues. (For example, a follower of Via Humanitatis with Conscience 3



and Self-Control 3 may not have his Road score raised above 6 in this manner.) The vampire may only spend as many Willpower points as she has dots in Empathy.

While a soul is within the Salubri, its body is a shell, still alive, but without motivation or will. A soul whose host body is killed immediately vanishes; no one knows what happens to these disenfranchised spirits (though Storytellers with access to **Wraith: The Oblivion** are encouraged to make them Spectres). Killing the body of a harbored soul demands a Degeneration roll of the Salubri's player (unless the vampire follows the Warrior path).

If a soul does not wish to be so detained (as is often the case if this power is used offensively or on a subject in frenzy), it may attempt to break free and return to its own body. Doing this requires a contested Willpower roll with the Salubri, wherein the difficulty equals the opponent's Wits + Empathy.

Note that though the spiritual condition of vampires is unknown — whether they have souls, spirits or anything of that nature — Warding the Beast does affect vampires. Perhaps that is proof that Cainites do retain souls after mortal death.

••••• • Loving Agony

A Salubri may dispense pain, as in Burning Touch, but may continue to do so after she has removed her hand. She may also tailor the intensity of the pain to "manageable" levels. It is believed that application of this power was originally intended to desensitize individuals to pain by gradually building levels of tolerance. If applied with enough intensity, this power can send vampires into frenzy, can incapacitate werewolves, and can kill mortals.

System: The procedure begins with a successful Willpower roll (difficulty 8) and the expenditure of one Blood Point. Subsequent rolls are required to prolong the effect by up to one scene per success. Failure means the effect simply fizzles out or refuses to work. A botch on any roll results in potentially dangerous backlash for the user.

At the Salubri's option, she may cause actual physical damage to her subject at the rate of one Health Level per Blood Point spent (though touch must be maintained in this case). Any damage incurred by vampires or other werewolves in this manner vanishes at the next sunset, but mortals must heal from it normally.

To induce frenzy in her subject, the Salubri must cause physical damage in excess of that subject's Willpower. At that point, the subject must pass a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) or enter frenzy.

••••• •• Safe Passage

The vampire may invoke this power to pass safely through a crowd without fear of harm. It is not a matter of actively hiding in the crowd, but of the vampire making her spirit seem pleasant or inoffensive. People move out of the way, nod

politely, treat her with respect, and offer her shelter without any conscious idea of why they do so. Activating this power also means that people are unfriendly to anyone who pursues the vampire or wishes her harm.

System: This power is always considered "on," although Salubri may selectively shut it off. If there is someone in a crowd who actively wishes to harm the vampire (such as a hunter or other pursuer), then the vampire and hunter must make contested Willpower rolls (difficulty 6). If the Salubri wins, the hunter's interest in chasing his target fades somewhat ("What am I doing here?") and he suffers Dice Pool penalties based upon the number of successes gained by the Salubri while following her. (For example, if the Salubri won the contested Willpower roll by a margin of two successes, the hunter would lose two from all his Dice Pools until he gave up the pursuit.) If the hunter wins, he is unaffected by the attempt.

This penalty fades at the next sunrise, though if the hunter resumes the chase again, he will likely come under it's effects once more.

Note that this power affects only those with casual or minimal knowledge of the Salubri in question, such as those whom she passes in a marketplace. It does not affect anyone who has known her long enough to form an opinion of her.

••••• •• Aversion

Warrior Salubri have discovered that Safe Passage can be subverted to cause the opposite effect, inciting a crowd to move away from a target out of dislike. This can be used best against someone who pursues the vampire, by having people avoid him or refuse to answer his questions. A person who is open to suggestion may even be inclined to harm the target, especially if the target is rude. Not surprisingly, a number of Tremere have been victim of this power.

System: The Salubri must touch the subject. The player spends a Blood Point. The subject suffers the effects described above for the remainder of the scene.

••••• ••• Purification

This ability can be used to cleanse a person, place or thing of taint. It is vitally important that the Salubri be of strong character and humanity (a very high Via rating — no less than 8), since he pits his own goodness against whatever evil or unclean thing has corrupted another. This can be used against demonic possession or infernalism, but failure promises a terrible fate.

System: The player spends a Willpower point if the subject is willing and the corrupting agent does not fight back. If the subject is possessed, a demon or evil spirit fights very hard to hold onto its plaything. The player and demon make an extended and contested Willpower roll (difficulty equal to the opponent's permanent Willpower); the winner must beat the other by three successes. If the contest fails, the attempt to Purify fails. If the player botches, the demon now possesses the Salubri's body. Purification cannot be self-administered, and has no effect on the Beast.

••••• ••• Shadow of Taint

This extension of Purification was preserved from ancient times by Salubri scholars. It was known as one of the Warrior path's most formidable weapons. The Salubri Warrior may use the Purification power to remove the taint from one subject *and* project it onto another.

System: After Purification is performed (as per the rules, above), the Salubri's player spends a second Willpower point. The vampire thrusts the evil spirit into a nearby object, animal or person. Timing is critical; if the would-be vessel is too far away (outside physical reach), the demon either goes free or finds another vessel to inhabit (most likely the Salubri herself). If the Salubri does "bottle" the demon in an object, her Via is unlikely to drop. If she places it in an animal or other living host, however, the player must succeed at a Via roll (difficulty 8) if the Storyteller believes that this is contrary to the vampire's morality; a botch results in the automatic loss of a Via point, and the demon in question may break free.

Infernal Disciplines

Infernalist Cainites have learned ways to turn the inherent powers of their blood to infernal ends. These Disciplines are only available to characters who open themselves to infernal influence (see Chapter Five for more details on infernalism).

With the exception of Dark Thaumaturgy, these Disciplines are not inherent Cainite abilities; rather, they are demonic augmentations of the Blood. As they have no true vampiric foundation, these abilities only extend to the fifth level of mastery. Dark Thaumaturgy combines the worst of both infernal taint and Cainite blood magic, and is quite powerful.

Dark Thaumaturgy

Dark Thaumaturgy is the infernally powered Discipline similar to regular Thaumaturgy, though they are entirely independent of each other. The most frightening aspect of Dark Thaumaturgy is that anyone can learn it once they have made a deal with the Devil — the power is not limited to the Baali.

Dark Thaumaturgy differs from "traditional" Thaumaturgy in that it is not a creation of Clan Tremere, and in that it draws on infernal power as much as it does the Blood. It is not "interchangeable" with normal Thaumaturgy; a character wishing to use these Paths must possess Dark Thaumaturgy, while a character who wishes to learn "normal" Paths must possess knowledge of normal Thaumaturgy.

Acquiring and improving levels of Dark Thaumaturgy and its Paths and Rituals demands a Supplicium of the student; success indicates that the new level is learned, while failure continues the character's inexorable slide into damnation. Rules for Supplicii may be found in Chapter Seven.

Dark Thaumaturgical Paths

Dark Thaumaturgy is practiced in the same manner as regular Thaumaturgy is (detailed in **Dark Ages**, page 164). Each time one of these infernal powers is invoked, a Blood Point must be spent and a Willpower roll is made against a difficulty of the power's level + 3. A failure on the roll indicates that the magic fails. A botch indicates that a permanent Willpower point is lost, though the Storyteller may also wish to confront the Dark Thaumaturgist with a visitor from the nether world....

Rego Venalis (Path of Corruption)

It is said that this Path was developed by Set himself as a gift to his childer. If so, they have made sure to spread it.

• Night's Terror

The infernalist can strike fear into opponents by reaching into the depths of their souls and pulling forth images of personal damnation. Even the strongest mortal can be cowed by this power.

System: Successes gained are subtracted from all the target's Dice Pools until the target can shake off the power's effects with a successful Road roll (difficulty 6), which may be attempted once per night. Vampires and other supernatural creatures may be driven into frenzy by this power; if the roll to shake off the effects is botched, the character frenzies, tormented by his own inner demons.

•• Poison Heart

Infernalists believe that all beings have dark sides. With this power, an infernalist may bring such darkness to the surface. The Dark Thaumaturgist may cause a victim to act on her dark impulses by meeting the victim's eyes and whispering a temptation.

System: The number of successes gained indicates the strength of the evil impulse. This power may be used on a Cainite, but it costs a Willpower point to do so. The target may resist with a successful Road roll (difficulty equal to the Dark Thaumaturgist's Willpower).

••• Fool the Heart's Eye

The infernalist can assume the image of a victim's loved one by reaching out with his thoughts. This power is used to plot betrayal and bring about corruption.

System: Successes gained indicate the verisimilitude of the impersonation: One success yields a rough impression, while five successes result in a completely convincing simulacrum.

•••• Name the Crime

The infernalist suggests a sin to the target. This sin may consist of a single evil act, or a general attitude. Unless the target is very strong-willed, he is unable to prevent himself from acting on the suggestion.

System: Successes gained determine the duration of the urge to commit sin. By spending a Willpower point, the victim may roll his permanent Willpower (difficulty 6) to resist this urge; successful resistance requires more successes than the infernalist gained.

1 success	One turn
2 successes	One hour
3 successes	One night
4 successes	One week
5 successes	One month

••••• Unleash the Dark Soul

No longer content to merely manipulate, the Dark Thaumaturgist with this power the may rip the shadow from a living mortal and imbue it with temporary, physical presence. The mortal is destroyed by the experience, and a diabolic servant is gained for one night.

System: To use this power the character must slay the mortal victim and project the remnant of the victim's *anima* into her shadow. The mortal's heartblood provides the animating force for the shadow-wraith, which is under the vampire's control. The shadow-wraith is a nearly-invisible servant that can spy on enemies, pass through material objects and communicate mentally with its creator over any distance. The shadow-wraith fades with the next day's dawn.

Those Lasombra who are familiar with this power are unsettled by its similarity to their own shadowy Discipline, Obtenebration.

Video Nefas (Path of Evil Revelations)

This Dark Thaumaturgy Path was created to pry secrets from demons and mortals alike. Demons are often unwilling to teach it for that reason. Parts of this Path were taken from the magic of pagan oracles, and there is a pagan version of it known as Video Pellis.

This Path will fade into obscurity in the late 16th century, though it will re-emerge as the Path of Secret Knowledge, under the guidance of Sabbat infernalists. The "Path of Evil Revelations," as practiced by the Sabbat, is a corruption of Video Nefas' tenets, whether by intent or the ravages of time. By the 20th century, the Path of Evil Revelations has very little to do with Video Nefas.

• See the Unseen

The infernalist can gaze into the spirit world.

System: No roll is necessary, and the infernalist can see all nearby spirits, including demons and wraiths, as if they were physically manifest. Due to the mental concentration that this power demands, all difficulties are at + 1 while gazing into the shadow world.

•• Learn the Heart's Pain

The infernalist looks into someone's heart and determines what grieves him the most. This is useful in deciding how to destroy a foe.

System: The successes gained indicate how much knowledge reveals itself to the infernalist; one success reveals whether or not the target feels guilt, while five successes reveal specific details of sins, enemies and failings.

••• Seize the Moment

The infernalist may reach into the mind of his victim and draw forth his memories and thoughts.

System: For each success gained, the infernalist may pull forth one specific memory. For example, to learn the plans of a local bishop, the infernalist Seizes the Moment. He gains three successes and discovers the bishop's immediate plans, what troops he has available, and whether he knows anything of the infernalist's existence.

•••• Casting the Bones

This power allows the infernalist to part the mists of time and gaze into the future. To use this power, the infernalist must carve runestones from the bones of a sentient being (a new set of bones is required each time this power is used).

System: The successes gained indicate how far into the future the infernalist may look to find an answer to her question.

1 success	Only the immediate future can be seen
2 successes	Up to a week
3 successes	A lunar month
4 successes	A season
5 successes	A year

The future is not fixed, so the infernalist's vision may be inaccurate — it merely shows the likeliest course of events and so is more accurate when dealing with large groups (for example, "Will the crusaders recapture Jerusalem?") than with individuals.

••••• Recall the Bloody Deed

The infernalist raises a spectre of vengeance to uncover past misdeeds. This power may only be used in a place where blood has been shed in anger.

System: If the roll is successful, the infernalist gives physical form to a minor demon (use the statistics for Custodes from Chapter Seven) which appears as the victim of the violence, and bears the victim's wounds. This demon has the power to track "its" murderer across land and sea to avenge itself. The only constraint on this pursuit is the number of successes gained by the infernalist: each success allows the demon to continue the pursuit for one day and night.

Rego Dolor (Path of Pain)

Though the Baali created this dark magic, the masters of Rego Dolor are infernalists of Clan Tzimisce who use it to enforce discipline among their twisted creations.



• Strike the Broken Limb

With this power, the infernalist may reopen an old wound in the target if he can touch her.

System: If the infernalist successfully touches his target, he inflicts one Health Level per success rolled; this damage can be soaked. This wound appears as an older one that has reopened.

•• Phantom Pain

The infernalist can wrack an opponent's body with pain.

System: The target suffers the penalties of lost Health Levels, without actually losing those Health Levels. The successes rolled to use this power determine the Health Levels "lost." These phantom wounds can even knock a foe unconscious, if the foe suffers enough of them to bring her to Incapacitated. Vampires and other supernatural creatures can resist the infernalist's roll by rolling Willpower as if soaking. Any supernatural healing (spending Blood Points or regeneration) removes imposed penalties as if they were wounds, at a rate of one phantom wound per Health Level. The effects of this power last until the end of the scene.

••• Curse the Senses

The infernalist can attack a victim's senses, rendering him blind, deaf and dumb.

System: Each success gained temporarily deprives the victim of one of his senses; sight is generally the first to go. This effect lasts for one scene, though a vampire so afflicted can spend a Blood Point to restore each lost sense. A variation of this power allows the infernalist to numb the target's sense of pain, reducing wound penalties by the number of successes gained (someone under the effects of this power may not even know he is being wounded).

•••• Feed the Corruption

The infernalist calls upon minor imps and demons to infect the victim's flesh. Flies bite at her and maggots grow in soft tissue.

System: For each success the infernalist gains, vermin grow in the victim's flesh for one day. (If two successes are gained, the victim is afflicted for two days.) For each day of infection, the victim suffers one Health Level of damage from the biting flies, and the burrowing maggots inflict a number of Health Levels equal to the number of days that the process has continued (on the third day the victim suffers one Health Level from the flies and three from the corruption). This damage may not be soaked, and mortals are likely to be consumed, dying in agony. Vampires are able to heal the damage with Blood Points, but the corruption does not end until it has run its course.

••••• Eternal Torment

This power inflicts wounds that cannot be healed by normal means.

System: The infernalist opens bleeding and pustulant sores on her victim's body. For each success gained, one Health Level of aggravated wounds is inflicted. Mortals cannot soak this damage or heal the wounds, but supernatural beings can resist with Fortitude (or similar powers) and heal as with any other aggravated wounds. In addition, so long as the wounds remain, the target suffers an equal amount of normal, soakable damage each night as she sleeps (or each day, in the case of vampires), as the wounds fester. For example, an infernalist uses this power on the Brujah Gregor. Gregor suffers two Health Levels worth of aggravated damage, and will suffer two more, non-aggravated Health Levels of damage (though he may soak these additional wounds) each night until the initial wounds heal.

Rego Manes (Path of Spirit)

This may be the oldest of all the Paths. It dates back to pagan times preceding civilization, when the spirit world was closer to the physical world. Though many ancient vampires know this Path's secrets, infernalists have turned it to its most potent use — the raising of Hell itself. A demon who answers the infernalist's call may remain on Earth until the sun rises or until it hears church bells.

The older, pagan version of this Path is called Rego Mentem and allows the summoning of the spirits of nature rather than infernal creatures.

System: This Path has two powers. The first allows damage to be inflicted upon any spirit (demonic or otherwise) through ritual incantation (the player rolls Path rating as a damage Dice Pool against the target; this damage is resisted with Willpower rather than Stamina). The damaging powers of this Path take place immediately upon their use, and only require a few spoken words to enact.

Secondly, this Path allows the infernalist to summon beings from the spirit world. Rego Manes rating determines the power of a summoned demon:

- • **Insignificant** (Attributes 4/3/2, Abilities 3/2/1, no Disciplines)
- •• **Least** (Attributes 5/4/3, Abilities 4/3/2, two points of Disciplines and/or Investments)
- ••• **Lesser** (Attributes 6/5/4, Abilities 5/4/3, four points of Disciplines and/or Investments)
- •••• **Minor** (Attributes 7/6/5, Abilities 6/5/4, six points of Disciplines and/or Investments)
- ••••• **Specific demon** (such as those presented in Chapter Seven), who demands sacrifices and serves only if it is in his interests.

The number of successes gained determines how much control the infernalist has over what he calls up:

1 success — The demon attends, but listens to the infernalist only if it can benefit. It may leave at will.

2 successes	The demon arrives and listens to requests, and answers simple questions.
3 successes	The demon is well-disposed toward the infernalist, and answers questions with some accuracy.
4 successes	The demon is willing to serve the infernalist on simple tasks.
5 successes	The demon is pleased with the summoning and serves the infernalist faithfully for the night.
Failure	The ritual is wasted and cannot be attempted again that night.
Botch	The demon is angered by the infernalist's clumsy attempts, and attacks.

Rituals of Dark Thaumaturgy

Like regular Thaumaturgy, Dark Thaumaturgy has its own Rituals (use the system from **Vampire: The Dark Ages**, page 168). The following are only examples; infernalists constantly seek new uses for their powers, so do not hesitate to surprise players with new and innovative Rituals.

The Knotted Cord (Level One Ritual)

This Ritual has saved many an infernalist from trial and execution, by silencing accusers.

System: The infernalist must knot a length of rope while reciting the name of whomever she wishes to silence. Unless the target beats the infernalist in an opposed Willpower roll, he is unable to denounce her.

Bind the Familiar (Level One Ritual)

This Ritual calls and binds a familiar to the infernalist.

System: This hour-long ritual calls up a minor imp that possesses an animal's body and serves the infernalist faithfully. Details on familiars are given in Chapter Seven.

Bring Forth the Hell Beast (Level Two Ritual)

Through the use of this Ritual, an infernalist may infuse an animal with corruption and rage. The beast becomes twisted and evil, seeking to wreak the Devil's own havoc on humanity.

System: An infernalist who knows this ritual merely needs to lay his hands on any beast and thereby infuse it with a little of his blood (one Blood Point). The animal flies into a rage and attempts to kill anyone and anything it encounters, until slain. This trace of infernal taint provides increased strength (Potence 1), and the animal becomes so frenzied that it feels no pain (is not affected by wound penalties).

Warding Circle (Level Two Ritual)

This Ritual prepares an area for infernal magics by creating a protective circle to defend the infernalist from a demon's anger.

System: The warding circle is a complicated diagram of astrological symbols that has to be drawn with special chalks while an incantation is intoned. The infernalist can either create a temporary warding circle, which takes 30 minutes to complete, or makes a permanent circle, which takes several nights. Once the circle is completed, the infernalist must stand inside it and activate the ritual magic with a prepared phrase or prayer. So long as the infernalist remains within the enchanted space, she is protected from any attack by an infernal creature unless the creature can beat her in a resisted Willpower test.

Botching the roll to enact this Ritual can be fatal and damning. A botched Warding Circle offers no protection at all, though the infernalist will believe that her ward is sound.

Blood Imp (Level Three Ritual)

This strange Ritual allows the infernalist to distill an obedient homunculus from his own blood. The homunculus assumes the form of a small animal, often a jackdaw or monkey, and can be used as a spy or thief.

System: The Blood Imp is created from vitae and shaped by the magic of the ritual. It has a Strength Attribute (for carrying things only) equal to the Blood Points spent on its creation, and Health Levels equal to the number of successes gained on the die roll. It has no combat abilities (though it may serve as a distraction) and lasts for one night. Its method of locomotion is based on its animal form (jackdaws can fly, monkeys climb, etc.).

Bloody Bones (Level Three Ritual)

This Ritual is cast over an area. The infernalist must bury a specially prepared bag of bones in the area of casting. Once this is done, the place is cursed — plants wither and die, stillbirths are common, and tempers flare easily. The cause of the curse is a spirit that is bound into the bones.

System: The spirit bound into the bloody bones has influence over an area as large as a village. The area is cursed so long as the bones remain buried. Vampires can easily find the bag of bones with Heightened Senses; scattering the bones frees the spirit. While the curse is in effect all frenzy rolls are at + 1 difficulty, in addition to the effects imposed upon mortal life.

The Leaden Heart (Level Three Ritual)

An infernalist uses this Ritual to bind a target to the spot so that he cannot flee the fate in store for him.

System: The infernalist must not only know the name of the target but must use some personal token (a piece of clothing, a lock of hair) to work the magic. After a 10-minute Ritual, the victim finds himself unable to flee the area, unless he can beat the infernalist's successes in a Willpower roll. Should the victim botch this roll, he grows paralyzed with fear and cannot act in any way until the magic expires. The Ritual's power ends either at cockcrow or if the victim's name is called out by a true love. This Ritual is not limited by any distance;

as long as the infernalist has a personal token she may affect her subject. Luckily for that subject, the token is consumed each time this Ritual is enacted.

Vile Swarm (Level Four Ritual)

Infernalist Nosferatu have learned many secrets in their deep catacombs. This Ritual allows entire swarms of vermin to be commanded and used on missions of destruction.

System: The infernalist performs the Ritual to summon a horde of creatures (insects, bats or rats), and then feeds them her blood. These bound creatures swarm at the infernalist's command, overwhelming foes and destroying crops and property. As long as the infernalist concentrates, the swarm is disguised as if by Cloak the Gathering (such intense concentration requires the player to spend one Willpower point each hour). Hundreds, even thousands of creatures compose the swarm, and only fire or some other massive form of destruction can halt its rampage.

Lethean Chains (Level Four Ritual)

The infernalist may erase memories from his target by using a special potion, thereby concealing his evil actions.

System: This Ritual allows the infernalist to distill a potion that causes the imbiber to forget all that happens for the space of one night — in her amnesiac state the victim is easily led astray and can even be blamed for the crimes of the infernalist. The Ritual itself is simple, taking only a few minutes of preparation time; however, the potion's ingredients include the tears of a demon or water from an Underworld river, so are hard to obtain. Each preparation of the potion contains a number of doses equal to the infernalist's successes.

The Hand of Glory (Level Five Ritual)

This Ritual allows the infernalist to put all the inhabitants of a building into a deep slumber.

System: The infernalist must ritually prepare a hand cut from the corpse of a hanged man. By lighting the fingers of the hand and using it as a torch, the infernalist causes all the inhabitants of any place he enters to fall asleep (if the infernalist enters a massive building such as a castle, only those in his immediate vicinity will sleep; those in distant parts of the structure are unaffected and are likely to notice the disturbance). Once those within slumber, the infernalist can move about freely.

Ward Versus Demons (Level Five Ritual)

This Ritual works in a manner similar to Ward Versus Ghouls (Level-Two Ritual), but affects demons and other infernal creatures.

System: The requirements of this Ritual are the same as those of Ward Versus Ghouls, except the required component is the blood of an innocent (non-infernalists learn a variant of this Ritual that requires holy water).

Maleficia

The Maleficia Discipline is the power to use the evil eye, to bestow curses and to invoke plagues. Maleficia inflicts madness and misfortune on its targets. It is said that infernalist Malkavians developed this Discipline with the aid of demonic patrons.

Maleficia's effects may be turned on the infernalist. Should the target of this Discipline realize she is being affected, she may make an opposed Wits + Occult roll (difficulty of the infernalist's Willpower); if the roll is successful, the infernalist suffers the effects of the Discipline. This can only be done if the victim knows that she is being afflicted and can confront the infernalist. Likewise, if the inferalist's attempt botches, she suffers the effect herself. The victim can also flee to the Church, where an exorcism or blessing ritual will free her from a curse. All of the powers of Maleficia are dispelled if the infernalist is killed.

• Evil Eye

This power allows the infernalist to afflict someone's life with a minor mishap. This may prove fatal in combat.

System: The player must roll Wits + Occult (difficulty 6) and spend a Blood Point. Each success cancels one success from the victim's next die roll.

•• Minor Curse

This power causes the victim a string of mishaps and accidents.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 6) and spends one Blood Point. For each success gained, the target suffers the curse for one hour. Ignore the highest die on any roll that the affected character makes for the duration of the curse. This can be disastrous for characters with low levels in critical abilities.

••• Psalm of the Damned

By chanting strange verses, the infernalist causes her foes to be distracted and unable to concentrate. Once begun, the psalm is heard by the victim wherever he flees, so long as the infernalist keeps chanting.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Music (difficulty 6); each success reduces the victim's Dice Pool by one. The victim must be within earshot of the infernalist when the power is activated, but as long as the infernalist chants, the victim remains penalized. This power may be used on a group, in which case the infernalist's successes indicate how many individuals lose one die from their Dice Pools.

•••• Barrenness

The target of this power is rendered barren. Given the importance of children to medieval people, this power is dreaded by all.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Occult (difficulty equal to the victim's Stamina). If the roll is successful the target is stricken barren, unable to produce children. This



power affects even vampires, rendering them unable to sire, and so is greatly feared. The effect may be removed only through exorcism, high-level Thaumaturgical Rituals, or the slaying of the caster.

••••• Greater Curse

The target of this power suffers torments night and day; her skin breaks out in boils and she is shunned by others.

System: The curse is invoked with the expenditure of three Blood Points. This power requires a resisted Willpower test (difficulty 8) between the infernalist and victim. Whoever loses is afflicted by the curse, the effects of which last for one year. During this year the victim is unable to sleep comfortably (suffers + 1 to all difficulty numbers), takes on the appearance of a leper (Appearance drops to 0), and suffers all the effects of a Minor Curse. Vampires are able to resist the effects of a Greater Curse by spending an extra four Blood Points as they sleep each day.

Striga

This Discipline is associated with secret witch-cults of Europe. It draws on traditional folk powers and twists them to evil purposes. Its practitioners are often called strigmaga, or "nightwalkers," and they virtually comprise a bloodline unto themselves among infernalists.

• Strix

The reputation of the strigmaga for knowing all things is based on this simple power of governing the night winds to carry gossip to the infernalists.

System: The infernalist calls the night winds with a roll of Charisma + Intimidation (difficulty 6). Only one success is needed for the winds to transmit the words of anyone talking in the open air within one mile. The strigmaga does not necessarily understand the language in which the words are spoken (she is limited by her own knowledge).

•• Scobax

The strigmaga is able to influence the actions of swarms of vermin and insects. This power neither calls nor controls the vermin, but incites them to harass others.

System: The player must roll Charisma + Survival (difficulty 6) to determine the response to the infernalist's call. The vermin are incapable of doing any real damage, but are greatly distracting and can spoil foodstuffs. Characters plagued by the swarm add two to the difficulties of any actions they undertake.

1 success	Vermin gather, but act normally (eating food, scurrying about, but not attacking people)
2 successes	The vermin swarm, concentrating on a single target, whom they bite

3 successes	The vermin swarm through an area, attacking anyone in it
4 successes	The vermin attack any designated targets, following them as best they can
5 successes	The vermin swarm in a mad rage. Hundreds of insects respond, biting and stinging everyone in the vicinity

••• Masca

The name of this power derives from both the Latin for eating and from the word for a mask. By drinking the blood of a bird or beast, the infernalist can mask herself in the creature's form and carry out her dark business. The transformation lasts until the next dawn, and the infernalist gains all the advantages of the animal form. However, the infernalist cannot use any other Disciplines while wearing the mask.

System: No roll is necessary and the transformation is automatic, but Blood Points must be spent depending on the animal form assumed. Transforming into a small creature such as a bird or mouse costs only one Blood Point, whereas changing into a large beast like a wolf costs three. Becoming a huge animal such as a bear costs five or more Blood Points. Only animal forms may be assumed, though any inherent traits of a beast (claws, poisonous bite) are available to the strigmaga.

•••• Hexe

This power curses a single individual. It is said that in ancient times, this power was strong enough to strike a person dead.

System: The infernalist must spit blood on the target (requiring a Dexterity + Archery roll in combat). The character coughs up a Blood Point, and the player rolls Stamina + Occult (difficulty equal to the target's Stamina); each success inflicts one Health Level of aggravated damage. This damage manifests in a hideous fashion as the victim's body twists and mutates.

On a botch, the strigmaga swallows her own poisonous blood and suffers three levels of aggravated damage.

••••• Fractura

This power allows the strigmaga to control her own blood in strange ways. Her vitae bubbles out of her skin to form barbed tentacles that surround and protect her.

System: A Stamina + Occult roll (difficulty 7) must be made; each success costs one Blood Point and enables one tentacle to be extruded. Each tentacle is six feet long and has Strength and Dexterity scores of 5. Additional Blood Points may be "fed" to the tentacles to increase these parameters (each Blood Point spent increases either Strength or Dexterity by one). A tentacle does Strength + 2 slashing damage and has four Health Levels (though the "parent" does not suffer any wound penalties from damage suffered by the tentacles). The strigmaga may choose to make a soak roll for a tentacle; should this roll fail, however, she takes the damage instead of her tentacle. The blood spent on creating tentacles does not return to the infernalist's Blood Pool when the power ends. There are rumors that a infernalist can be diablerized via her tentacles, but few are willing to test the theory.





Chapter Five: Matters of Faith

Religion is a potent force in Dark Medieval Europe. From the monolithic Catholic Church, to the Spanish Moors, to the crumbling vestiges of pre-Christian paganism, the denizens of this dark world are motivated by the faith which keeps them going and gives them hope for a better life.

Note: Judaism is thoroughly intertwined with the practice of Kabbalah. It is covered in greater detail in Chapter Six.

Christianity

Except the Lord build the house: their labour is but lost that build it. Except the Lord keep the city: the watchman waketh but in vain.
— Nisi Dominus, Book of Common Prayer

The Church is all things to all people. To some it is the last repository of knowledge in the Western world, to others a repressive organization that seeks to crush all rational understanding. Some go to the Church to seek out redemption and salvation, the only paths to Heaven; others curse it as the manifestation of the Antichrist's final victory. Whatever one's views, the Church is the fixed center of the Dark Medieval world. No other body rivals it for power and influence; no other organization can be said to hold the world in its hands. To the Cainites it is both enemy and friend: the one fixed point in centuries of unlife, and the center of resistance to their very existence. In any event, it can not be ignored.

The History of Christianity

Though it seems impossible now, the fledgling sect of Christianity was very nearly extinguished at its beginnings. So insignificant was it to the Roman Empire that the authorities who crucified Christ neglected to make any records of the event. It was only chance — or Divine will — that allowed Christianity its time to grow.

In the first centuries of the first millennium, Christianity was but one of many mystery sects fighting for survival and influence. Ancient gods spoke to their followers through the ecstasies of the mystery cults, and it seemed as if the Cult of Mithras would rule the Roman Empire. However, in 311, Emperor Constantine I was stunned by a vision of a cross in the sky and promised that should he win the battles he was undertaking, he would dedicate himself and his empire to the crucified god.

Win he did, and the dying Roman Empire turned to the new faith. It took root in the surviving courts of Byzantium and was spread by zealous missionaries into the pagan and barbarian lands of Europe. The faith took hold in many centers: in Rome, where the Popes followed the tradition of Saint Peter; in Constantinople, where the Empire continued its slow spiral into decadence and the Church was ruled by Patriarchs; in Ireland, where missionaries impressed the barbarian chiefs with their courage. At this time the Christian faith was interpreted in many different ways. Eastern denominations introduced ideas of personal reincarnation, of a dualistic universe, of a feminine god; free will was debated fiercely, as was the doctrine of Christ's human nature and His divine spirit. In each area new versions of Christianity emerged, as the simple faith was translated through the prior experience and beliefs of new parishioners.

Christianity could have continued in this organic way, becoming a broad and all-encompassing faith, were it not for the actions of the Byzantine Emperor Julian, known to history as the Apostate. Julian turned from his Christian faith and sought to embrace the beliefs of his forefathers — he reinstated paganism, encouraged heresy and schism, and, with the might of the Eastern Empire behind him, prepared to sweep Christianity away forever. In his fear, the Pope prayed for the salvation of his flock and was answered. In a dream, he saw the Archangel Michael trampling Julian into the ground and stabbing him through the heart with a spear. As Julian died he whispered, "Thou hast conquered all, O pale Galilean!" and none of his successors dared doubt his judgment, or the power of the Christian faith.

The Roman Church and the Dark Ages

It was in these times that the Dark Ages truly began — the Roman Empire was but a memory, Rome itself had been sacked by Alaric and the Vandals, the Eastern Empire seemed decadent and fragmented by national and political battles, and all Classical scholarship had been lost. It was an age of new gods brought into southern Europe from the barbarian northlands, and of heresies brought out of the East. The old order had gone forever and the lights of civilization went out across the continent.

During this time, the Church became a recognizable entity. Fearing that Christianity would be swept away in a tide of heresies, and that Christian would fight Christian over articles of faith, a succession of Popes laid down the Orthodox and Catholic beliefs that would govern the Christian world for centuries. St. Augustine is perhaps the most famous of these lawmakers, but many other talented Popes and churchmen sought to impose order on the chaos of the Dark Ages. The idea of orthodoxy that developed, though extremely complicated and subject to much debate over the ages, can be summarized easily — the official Church in Rome was the only true church, salvation could only be found by following the tenets promulgated from here, and all else was heresy.

Ironically, the actions of Italy's vampires helped to preserve the Church in Rome — Ventrue, Lasombra and Toreador all needed strong political systems to support their aims and challenge the power of Constantinople. Other clans also supported the Roman Church — Nosferatu seeking salvation, and Brujah hoping that classical scholarship could be restored. Despite their similar aims, the clans never moved toward a true alliance and often worked at cross-purposes as they battled for control over the Church hierarchy.

Not only did the Roman Church survive these dark years, but it prospered. Due to the collapse of most civil, legal and national authority across Western Europe, the Roman Church was able to fill this void and provide order in people's lives. The Roman Church became the repository of knowledge and wisdom, the arbitrator of disputes, the wealthiest and most powerful organization in Europe, and, eventually, the final legal authority, with dominion even over emperors. This last power was assumed

when, in the ninth century, Pope Leo III crowned the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne III, cementing the right of the Church to determine the actions of state. This was a great coup for the Toreador, who delighted in seeing the Ventrue-influenced emperor bow down before the Pope.

In the four centuries since the crowning of Emperor Charlemagne, the Roman Church has grown full and mighty, dominating Europe from Spain to the Balkans, from England to Italy. The Orthodox Church retains its power in the lands of the Eastern Empire but cannot spread, contained as it is by the growing force of the Roman Church and the threat of the Infidel. The Irish Church — which might have spread a different Christian faith, one more accepting of the pagan ways — has been bought into the fold and, with the Norman invasion of Eire, the hold of Rome on even those distant islands is secure.

Worship

The public worship of the Roman Church is its liturgy, principally the Eucharist, which is also called the Mass. Recitation of prayers and readings from the Bible take place in Latin (which is seldom understood by the parishioners); these sacraments are followed by the faithful receiving communion, understood as sharing in the sacramental presence of Christ. The worship of the Church is also expressed in rites of baptism, confirmation, weddings, ordinations, penitential rites, burial rites, and the singing of the Divine Office.

The Roman Church also fosters other public devotional practices, including the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary, novenas (nine days of prayer for various special purposes), pilgrimages to shrines, and veneration of saints' relics or statues. Christians are not encouraged to practice private prayer; the Church dictates the practice of worship, considering privacy in this matter to be dangerously close to heresy.

In addition, the Church has an impressive array of holy days, following a cycle of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost, as well as a distinctive cycle of commemoration of the saints.

Some vampires have adopted a few of the Church's practices for their own — they hold holidays in mockery of the holy days and practice blood magics in place of communion (see the **Book of Storyteller Secrets** for more details on these practices).

Orthodox Church

The main rival of Roman Christianity and the major Christian faith across the Levant and Eastern Europe, the Orthodox Church claims to have preserved the original and apostolic Christian faith.



The Orthodox Church is a fellowship of administratively autocephalous (self-governing) local churches, united in faith, sacraments, and canonical discipline; each enjoys the right to elect its own head and its bishops. Traditionally, the Patriarch of Constantinople is recognized as the "first among equal" Orthodox bishops, though he has great direct doctrinal and administrative authority. He also wields great power through his direct connection to the Imperial Court; many decisions and much of the politics that earn the name 'Byzantine' derive from the Patriarch. The other major heads of autocephalous churches, in order of precedence, are: the Patriarch of Alexandria, Egypt, with jurisdiction over Africa; the Patriarch of Antioch (while the Patriarch of Jerusalem remains in exile) with jurisdiction over Palestine; the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia; the Patriarch of Serbia (Yugoslavia); the Patriarch of Romania; the Patriarch of Bulgaria; the Archbishop of Cyprus; the Archbishop of Athens and all Greece; and the Metropolitan of Prague and all Czechoslovakia. This fluid structure of authority means that many of the clans are fighting over control of the Orthodox Church through ghouls and puppets in their home region. During the election of a new Patriarch of Constantinople, tensions between the clans can explode into open conflict.

Historically, the Orthodox Church stands as a direct descendant of the earliest Christian communities founded in regions of the Eastern Mediterranean by the apostles of Jesus. The subsequent destinies of Christianity in those areas were shaped by the transfer of the imperial capital from Rome to Constantinople by Constantine I in A.D. 320. As a consequence, during the first eight centuries of Christian history, most major intellectual, cultural and social developments took place in this region. Missionaries from Constantinople converted the Slavs and other peoples of Eastern Europe to Christianity (Bulgaria, 864; Russia, 988) and translated the Scriptures and other liturgical texts into the vernacular languages used in the various regions.

The Orthodox Church's refusal to accept the primacy of the Pope and Roman law has led to a seemingly endless conflict between the rival branches of Christianity. The first major breach came in the ninth century, when the Pope refused to recognize the election of Photius as Patriarch of Constantinople. Photius in turn challenged the right of the papacy to rule on the matter. The mounting disputes between East and West reached another climax in 1054, when mutual anathemas were exchanged. This split in Christianity will lead to the sacking of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade of 1204, which will intensify Eastern hostility toward the West. Rival Cainites are behind much of this tension, as Eastern vampires seek to expand the influence of their holdings over their Western brethren and vice versa. In the Dark Medieval world these secret politics exacerbate natural tensions and bring the rival Churches of Christendom into great conflict.

Doctrines and Practices

The Orthodox Church recognizes as authoritative the decisions of the seven ecumenical councils that met between 325 and 787 and defined the basic doctrines on the Trinity and the Incarnation. The Orthodox Church accepts the early traditions of Christianity, including the same sacraments as the Roman Catholic Church — although in the Orthodox Church infants receive the Eucharist and confirmation — yet married men may become priests, though not bishops or monks. The veneration of Mary as Mother of God is central to Orthodox worship, and the intercession of saints is emphasized. After an early controversy on the subject, which almost led to outright war within Europe, the Orthodox Church has accepted the Roman practice of the veneration of icons of Christ, the Virgin Mary and the saints.

The tensions between the Byzantine Patriarch and Emperor, the growing hatred of Rome for Constantinople, and the influence of the East on the Orthodox faith have created a veritable playground for the vampire lords of Europe. Cainites have hidden many of their intrigues under the cover of the schisms, promoting their own ends while disguised in the trappings of religions. Certain Cainite elders whisper that the iconoclast heresy grew not from a disagreement over the images of God that could be venerated in Church, but from mockeries of grace produced by Tzimisce craftsmen and insinuated into the churches.

Church and State

Though the Popes claim full dominion over emperors and all the acts of state, this power is often challenged by growing national authority across Europe. Kings and emperors have their own agendas, which sometimes conflict with those of the Church; indeed, there is an ongoing battle between the Holy Roman Emperor and Pope over their respective authority. This battle began with Emperor Henry III in 1046 and will continue until the Concordat of Worms in 1122.

The power of the Popes is based on a document called "The Donation of Constantine," in which the great emperor willed his empire to the church. Secular circles hotly debate the veracity of this document, especially as it was only produced by the Church centuries after Constantine's death. The few vampires who have been able to enter the Vatican libraries and study the document have claimed to sense an odd aura to the document — a Lasombra elder of Venice has said it carries the taint of the Malkavians, but the mad ones are not talking.

Whatever the truth, the Church has waxed strong, and even emperors and kings bow to the Pope. The Papal Seal, which shows the crossed keys of Heaven and Hell, enforces the will of the Church. A Pope is not only a prince, the lord of the Papal States, but also carries the power of the Divine and can either open the gates of Paradise or plunge the recalcitrant into Perdition. It is through this final and absolute authority that the power of the Pope is held, like the Sword of Damocles, over the heads of state.

Popes use this power sparingly, for they do not want to upset the delicate balance of power across Europe — it will be centuries before the Borgia Popes play the games of princedom

and politics that bring the Church into so much disrepute and lead to the sacking of Rome by Christians. The Church plays the role of negotiator and diplomat, resolving conflicts between the emergent nations and sanctifying the marriages that bind noble houses together. The treasury of the Holy See is greater than that of any mere king, and the Church also acts as banker to the powers of Europe, giving the Pope yet more power over the world.

More potent than this temporal power is the spiritual might wielded by the Pope. A rebuke bearing the Papal Seal would be enough to stop most kings, because such censure is strengthened by the ultimate power of the Church. The Pope (or a council of bishops acting *ex cathedra*) may declare excommunication or anathema. Excommunication is a spiritual and real exile from the Church. People, places, even entire regions may be declared excommunicant, and once this is done, no Christian may lift a finger to help the cursed ones — indeed it becomes fully legal, almost a duty, to drive those under such a ban from Christian lands and seize their property. The ritual of excommunication also places the victim beyond salvation; the excommunicant's soul is doomed to Hell and there can be no redemption, even on the Day of Judgment. Worse still is the judgment of anathema, which can be made upon an action or thing — once anathema is pronounced, any Christian who uses the object or skill, goes to the place, or has dealings with those so pronounced becomes immediately and irrevocably excommunicant. The Church has pronounced as anathema all dealing with the Devil and his minions, and this includes vampires. Therefore, a revealed vampire curses not only himself but also any estates or property he holds. The Church has also declared all prophesying and necromancy anathema, for its own reasons.

Crusades

The Church has turned its attention beyond the borders of Christendom — the mission of the Earthly church is to bring all peoples into the light of divine grace as taught by Jesus Christ. Beyond the limits of Europe, the pagan lands seem infinite, from the growing Muslim threat, to rumors of distant Cathay and the Golden Horde. The impetus behind the Crusades is therefore to extend the borders of Christendom into these unknown lands, as well as to direct the military might of the European princes toward outsiders rather than squandering it in internal bickering. The vampire lords of Europe support this endeavor, for it brings them closer to the ancestral lands of the Assamites and a chance at rooting out their fortress of Alamut.

The Crusades actually grew out of popular movements within the war-torn states of Europe — holy men like Peter the Hermit gathered people to their banners and led them to war against the infidel, eventually gaining the respect and, more importantly, the blessing of the Holy Father. As these bands of crusaders traveled across Europe, they purged and pillaged the domains of resident infidels — Jews, pagans, and heretics



— on the road to Constantinople. These initial crusaders, not being trained men of war, had little success in their venture; after flooding across the straits of the Bosporus, they were quickly massacred by Muslim forces. However, their doomed action served to spur all of Christendom to war. Under the auspices of the Church, the kings of Europe gathered, and effective, armed expeditions were led into infidel lands.

The early Crusades were remarkably effective, serving not only to penetrate deep into Muslim lands and reclaim the Holy City of Jerusalem, but also to challenge the might of the Orthodox Church and Byzantine Empire. The city of Constantinople, most threatened by the Muslims, was forced to accede to the crusaders' travels through its territory, thereby tacitly acknowledging that the might of Rome was unstoppable. The Crusades also served to unite the princes of Europe under the banner of the Church, reinforcing the power of Rome to make decision that could sway emperors. During these heady nights, European vampires swept into the Middle East behind the mortal forces, establishing new territories and sampling the delights of Eastern civilization.

However, in 1187, Saladin, Sultan of Egyptian territories, reunited Islam and recaptured Jerusalem. Two years later, the futile Third Crusade began, uniting Frederick Barbarosa, Richard the Lionhearted, and Phillip Augustus (the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire, England, and France respectively) to reclaim Jerusalem. This crusade was the epitome of chivalry, with Saladin and Richard being particularly praised in song and story. However the action was futile and the power of Christendom was broken against the rock of Islam. Many of the new territories established by European vampires were swept away as the Assamites reclaimed their lands. These disenfranchised vampires lost not only their new territories but the holdings they had neglected in Europe. Returning home as vagabonds, many of these vampires have thrown in their lot with the Furores or turned Autarkis. Just as many failed crusaders have become *condottieri*, or bandits, so have these vampires — seeking to seize land to replace what they have lost.

In a few years' time, in 1202, Pope Innocent III will declare the Fourth Crusade, leading to the sack of Constantinople by the crusading forces. This fiasco not only breaks the power of the Eastern Empire, but also opens Eastern Europe to future invasions of Ottoman Turks. Following this disaster, the eyes of Rome turn inward to the territories it controls, and Crusades are launched within Europe — first against the Cathari in southern France, then against the Lapps, Latvians and Russians, as well as Orthodox sites in Greece and Eastern Europe. The great success of these internal Crusades is the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors, but the curse of war takes a deep root in Europe, and the next centuries are torn by continual wars and border disputes among the kings of Christendom.

Life in the Church

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

— 1 Corinthians 15:58

From humble monks to proud bishops, from the politics of the cardinals in Rome to the battle-scarred knights of the Crusades, the Church governs a multitude of people.

Monastic Orders (The Church Spiritual)

Monasticism refers to the way of life adopted by those individuals who have elected to pursue an ideal of perfection or a higher level of religious experience. Monasticism embraces both the life of the hermit, characterized by varying degrees of extreme solitude; and the life of the cenobite, the monk living in a community. This rejection of the world always entails asceticism, or the practice of disciplined self-denial, which may include fasting, silence, a prohibition against personal ownership and an acceptance of bodily discomfort. Almost always it includes poverty, celibacy and obedience to a spiritual leader. The goal of such practices is usually a more intense relationship with God; some type of personal enlightenment; or the service of God through prayer, meditation, or good works such as teaching or nursing.

Christian monasticism grew out of two impulses separated by the length of the continent. In the south, in the deserts of Egypt, Syria and Cappadocia, men would go into the desert and mountains alone and become hermits, or anchorites, purifying their faith through the mortification of the flesh. Saint Anthony the Great was connected with the first Egyptian hermits; Saint Pachomius, with the first communities of cenobites in Egypt; and Saint Basil the Great, bishop of Caesarea, placed monasticism in an urban context by introducing charitable service as a work discipline. In the north, holy men gathered together to protect themselves from the wilderness and the barbarians and, more importantly, to form a community in which faith might be kept strong and taught to others.

The importance of the anchorites is that in their loneliness they showed so great a purity of faith and purpose that their example drew others into the fold. Though mocked by the decadent and falling Roman world, these men of faith displayed a simplicity of purpose that was compelling. It is sad to relate that many anchorites met their end at the fangs of vampires — their isolation meant they were beyond the protection of society should their faith waver. The early Irish monasteries were more important; not only did they preserve much classical knowledge that was otherwise lost (for a time

the Irish universities were the greatest in all of Europe), but they actively sent out missionaries to convert the rest of the British Isles.

Monasteries in the Dark Ages

It was the example of these Irish monasteries, combined with the discipline of the anchorites, that prompted powerful Church lords to create monastic communities from the fourth century onward. The organization of western monasticism is due primarily to Saint Benedict of Nursia (sixth century), whose Benedictine rule formed the basis of life in most monastic communities until the 12th century. The early monasteries were local affairs — part of no established order — until recently; Rome has began to reorganize the monasteries into monastic orders and regiment the lives of monks and nuns. Among the principal monastic orders that are evolving are the Carthusians and the Cistercians; the mendicant orders, or friars — Dominicans, Franciscans, and Carmelites — will arise in the 13th century. With central control established and Europe entering a time of prosperity, these new monasteries will grow into huge concerns governing the lands around them and rivaling the feudal lords in power. Monasteries already have grown into vast fortresses, the largest supporting thousands of people — from the monks and nuns, through their servants, scholars and teachers in the great libraries, to the warriors who protect them and enforce the Church's will. Along with the cathedrals, abbeys and monasteries stand as centers of the Church's will and influence, enforcing its power and providing centers of faith and learning across Europe.

It should be noted that monasteries are not yet austere institutions. They are not only centers of faith and scholarship, but also centers of community. Traders go to monasteries to sell their goods, fairs take place in their precincts, and the poor can go there for alms or healing. Many scions of the nobility have entered monasteries; some have great reserves of wealth and display an unholy opulence. Many monks of noble background display too deep an interest in politics and maneuver with their neighbors for power and influence; also, some noble sons have been sent into the monastic life to resolve inheritances and never take seriously their role in the Church, continuing to pursue lives of pleasure. The rise of these "noble" monks has led to such scandals as abbots and abesses owning brothels and hunting dogs or even selling their novices into slavery.

Whereas a monastery that was strong in faith and holiness would be shunned by Cainites, these new monasteries run by dissolute nobles provide excellent hunting grounds and centers of political power. A surprising number of younger vampires have moved from the traditional fortresses of their elders into these new sites of trade and mortal life. As many nobles deed land to the Church in exchange for assurances of the afterlife, some of these monasteries rival the feudal lords in power and provide a springboard for ambitious Cainites to advance in the Jyhad. A few monasteries have been turned over to sin entirely by their undead masters — such scandals will call down the might of the Inquisition upon many upstart vampires.

Military Orders (The Church Militant)

Growing from the need to defend the borders of Christendom (especially the newly reclaimed Holy Land) and channel the warriors of Europe into Christian endeavors, the Church has instituted several military orders of Christian knights who combine the power of faith with that of arms. For more information on religious military orders, see Chapter Six.

Siccarri

The existence of the Siccarri, or "dagger-men," is one of the great secrets of the Church, known only to the Pope and select cardinals. The Siccarri, also known as Red Monks for its members' customary garb, is an elite military force responsible for directly enforcing the papal will in secret.

The Siccarri was created in the early centuries of the Church, drawing its membership from splinter Christian sects that had not only learned wisdom from Gnostic philosophers but also violently resisted persecution by the Roman Empire. As Christianity united under Rome, these groups came together and appealed to the Pope for their survival. A deal was reached: The Siccarri could continue to practice their rituals, but they would be subservient to the will of the Papacy. It is said that Siccarri rituals purify the mind and body to create unstoppable soldiers, though this is likely to be mere rumor. Nevertheless, the group's list of successes is impressive.

On the surface, Siccarri appear similar to other monks — they take vows of chastity, obedience and poverty, relying on the Church for their support. However, unlike monks, they train in the arts of war, deception and assassination. They have seldom taken to the field *en masse* as a military order, generally preferring to work behind the scenes and pursue tactics of terror against the enemies of the Church. They are used within Europe to suppress heresies, and entire villages have been razed to the ground by their actions.

Recently they have suffered the one great setback in their history. Following the crusaders into the East, they sought out mortal assassins and their leader Hassan-i-Sabah — and found instead the Assamite fortress of Alamut. Their forces were destroyed, and this event is never spoken of in Rome. Rumors have emerged from the secret places of the East; these rumors state that not all of the Siccarri were killed, and that pale-skinned Christian Assassins now stalk the borders of Europe.

Within Europe the Siccarri hold several citadels where their forces are trained. One is in Rome, the others closer to the borders of Christendom. They also maintain a network of informers and safe houses across Europe allowing them to know of important events before even the Holy Father. They



have refused to take action against the Cathari in southern France, and the Pope fears that the seeds of rebellion have been sown among his holy killers.

In truth the Red Monks are less loyal than the Pope would hope. Many, remembering their origins, feel sympathy for Gnostic heretics, and some cardinals have begun to speculate that the Red Monks' principles are too close to the Islamic idea of submission to the divine will. Rumors state that Siccarri rituals appeal to the infernal powers and that there is an internal purge within the Siccarri to prevent the spread of corruption.

Outside the Church - Heresies of the Dark Ages

Then shall ilka wicked wight
On my left side for fearedness flee.
This day their dooms have I dight
To ilka man as he hath served me.
— Tony Harrison, *The Mysteries*

For all its monolithic facade, the Church is not so secure in its control as it believes.

The term "heresy" comes from the Greek word meaning "to choose" and refers to the willful rejection of the Church's doctrines. From its beginnings in the dying Roman Empire, Christianity struggled with powerful religious movements — like Gnosticism and Marcionitism — which were similar to it in some respects but different in others. The result of these early struggles was the emergence of the rule of faith, embodied in what is now called the Apostles' Creed and enforced by the will of Rome. Almost every line of this creed is directly aimed at some important heresy.

After Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, the Roman emperors and the bishops of the church frequently convened ecumenical councils to resolve major doctrinal disputes. These councils formulated orthodoxy and declared all other beliefs to be heretical. Penalties for heresy depend on specific instances; as the Church can and will call upon the state to enforce Christian law, they are often severe. Heretics risk exile and excommunication, confiscation of property, loss of civil rights and death.

The major heresies of the Dark Medieval world derive from the remnants of the sects involved in these early battles with the Church.

Manichaeism

Manichaeism is a Gnostic religion that originated in Babylonia in the third century. Its founder was a Persian of noble descent named Mani who received a special revelation from God, according to which he was called to perfect the

incomplete religions founded by earlier prophets — Zoroaster, Buddha and Christ. In approximately A.D. 242, he undertook an extensive journey as an itinerant preacher, proclaiming himself the Messenger of Truth. Traveling throughout the Persian Empire and as far as India, he gathered a considerable following. He met with increasing hostility from Zoroastrian priests and was finally executed.

The essence of Manichaeism was the principle of absolute dualism: the primal conflict between God, represented by light and spirit; and Satan, represented by darkness and the material world. Human beings, created by God, were divine in spirit; however, they carried within them seeds of darkness, sown by Satan, because of their material bodies. Salvation, as taught by Mani, required liberating the seed of light, the soul, from the material darkness in which it is trapped. This is achieved by strict celibacy and ascetic practices. Those who would become perfect are to set three "seals" on their lives: on the mouth, to speak only truth and to abstain from meat or impure food of any kind; on the hands, to refrain from war, killing, or injuring life; on the breast, to render impossible the works of the flesh. This triple seal applies only to the elect or pure; hearers follow a less demanding code. The imperfect are destined to continual rebirth in a world of material bodies.

The Byzantine emperor Justinian issued an edict against the Manichaeans which led to their destruction in about the sixth century, although Manichean doctrines would reappear in the teachings of the Bogomils, Albigenses, and other sects. Manicheans' teachings are also taken up and reversed by the monk Procopius, founder of the Cainite heresy, which holds that the indestructibility of the vampire form is a sign of divine blessing. These corrupt Manicheans throw themselves into the worship of vampires with a passion, spreading their faith across Europe and deep within the Roman Church.

Albigenses

The Albigenses are the members of a religious sect in southern France. Their name is derived from the French town of Albi, where they are centered. Similar groups in other parts of Europe were called Cathari, meaning "pure ones."

Following the dualistic principles of Mani, Albigenses consider the material world as evil — redemption means the liberation of the soul from flesh. This leads them to condemn marriage and sex; meat, milk, eggs, and other animal products are also forbidden. They also reject the Church's teachings on Purgatory and the sacraments because of the material elements involved. Their own sacrament, the consolamentum, or baptism of the soul, is administered by laying on of hands. Only the "perfect" (*perfecti*) receive it, and they are expected to live by a rigorous ethical code. The majority of the sect remains in the state of "believers" (*credentes*) and lives less rigorously. The sect's efficient organization, with bishops and clergy supported by the local nobility, helps it to survive and gain power in the face of Rome's opposition.

Official countermeasures, such as the preaching efforts of the Cistercians and Dominicans, or decrees of the Church, have proved only partly effective. Throughout the 13th century, the remnants of the Albigenses, together with other Cathari and the Waldenses, will be the main targets of the Inquisition.

The Cathari are particularly significant in the Dark Medieval world because the crusade against them uncovers evidence of vampirism and the Order of Hermes. Rumors that the Albigensians were the guardians of a secret bloodline descended from Christ are, in fact, corrupted revelations of their protection of some of the last Salubri. When this fact is realized, the Tremere enter the area in force to continue their persecution of Saulot's childer, leading the Crusaders to uncover not only a Hermetic Chantry in the nearby mountains but also many of the local Cainites. The Albigensian Crusade can be said to be the beginning of the Church's direct war on the supernatural.

Waldenses

The Waldenses (Vaudois) trace their origins to the "poor men of Lyon," founded by Peter Waldo, a wealthy Lyon merchant who gave his goods to the poor and became a traveling preacher in about 1173, advocating voluntary poverty for the sake of Christ. He attracted a large following in southern France and sought Papal recognition for his fellowship. Instead, he was excommunicated for heresy in 1184. Waldo's followers promote religious discipline and moral rigor, and are intensely critical of unworthy clergy and the abuses of the Church. In 1209, the crusade against the Cathari will sweep up the Waldenses in its path — after the burning of 80 of their number at Strasbourg in 1211, the majority of them will flee into the Alpine valleys in northern Italy to lead a marginal existence. Here they are preyed upon by bandits and harassed by the Inquisition.

The Inquisition

Generally neglected by historians, the Inquisition has a far older history than is often revealed. The roots of the Inquisition go back to the early centuries of the Church, soon after Constantine's conversion, when it become necessary to settle doctrinal disputes. These early "Roman Inquisitors" were scholars and messengers who carried the papal word to the fringes of Christendom. They acted as missionaries and helped to forge the Christian empire. Following the actions of Julian the Apostate they were given greater powers and allowed armed escorts to protect themselves. In the dangerous times of the Dark Ages, these escorts were further expanded, and Inquisitors often traveled with members of the Siccarri and the Simonites, an order of Christian mystics. Their missions became broader in scope, and some of these early inquisitors acted on their own discretion against pagans and heretics, using their own forces and those raised from local

lands to purge areas of taint. Some massacres have had to be hidden in Church records, as more militant inquisitors have taken their missions into pagan Lithuania and against the Orthodox Church in the Balkans and the lands of Russia.

Throughout the Dark Ages, inquisitors were given great latitude in their operations. As the emerging feudal princes of Europe became more secure in their power, the actions of the Church were sometimes questioned, and in the 10th and 11th centuries the Inquisition was primarily a passive force, spreading the word of the Church and will of the Pope but lacking the power to enforce it. Part of this weakness was due to the deeds of vampires, who feared the strong-arm actions of the Church and wished to contain the threat of holiness.

The Future of the Inquisition

Following the continuing obduracy of the Cathars and the beginning of the crusade against them, the Pope will officially create a new Inquisition with far-ranging powers and the right to root out sin and heresy across Christendom. The Simonites will be made subservient to this new power; its members either leave the Church or go into hiding as mundane priests and monks. In 1231, the Inquisition begins and will lead to revelations about the extent of vampire society, bringing Cainite affairs into the open and launching the Anarch Revolt; pagans and followers of old powers will be attacked, beginning the Burning Times and the fall of the Mythic Ages.

If anyone needs proof that supernatural forces do not command humanity's destiny, this is it. The actions begun in 1231 will reverberate across Europe and into the New World, Africa and Asia for the next six centuries — the Inquisition is only formally disbanded in the 1880s. The Inquisition will raise the level of human misery to new heights, trample many hopes, and corrupt the Church itself. In 1197, no one can see the storm on the horizon, but the old ways are about to be swept away in a tide of blood and fire.

Faith

True Faith is described in **Vampire: The Dark Ages** (pages 236-239). Some further details on holy ground, miracles and relics are offered here.

Holy Ground

One power of True Faith is the ability to sanctify an area. This is most common in places associated with the beginnings of that faith and seldom found in any recent structures. Many sites in the Holy Land possess very strong Faith ratings, while in Europe only the Vatican and a few dwindling pagan sites possess any residual power.

Holy ground works like True Faith, except that it applies only to a specific area and works passively. Rather than calling divine power against an intruder, the holy ground "pulses" with power, making supernatural creatures uncomfortable and possibly even damaging them should they continue to venture forward.

Holy ground is rated in a similar way to the Faith Numina:

• Any supernatural creature attempting to trespass upon holy ground must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) to proceed. Many old churches have this rating.

•• The Disciplines of Auspex, Dominate and Presence (or similar powers possessed by other Awakened creatures) simply fail to work here. Any place associated with a saint or similar holy person and at which worship is regularly conducted has this rating.

••• All within the area sense something "unnatural" whenever a vampire or infernal creature attempts to enter. Any attempt at Obfuscate or Chimestry is at +1 difficulty. Only places of great and active holiness have this rating.

•••• No Disciplines (or other powers) that affect anyone other than the being using them may be employed within an area this holy.

••••• To even enter such a sanctified place, supernatural creatures (including ghouls) must spend a Willpower point and continue to spend one point each scene or flee in terror. Should they fail to pay this cost, they must make Stamina rolls each round (difficulty of 5 + their own Intelligence) or break and flee.

Should vampires or infernal beasts spend any length of time (over a day) in an area possessing holy status, they begin to suffer: Each day beyond the first that they remain, they suffer a number of aggravated wounds equal to the area's Holy Ground rating.

This is the main reason that, for all the politicking that goes on within the Church, few vampires dare to approach the Pope directly. A trip within the Vatican is a distinctly unnerving experience for any such tainted being. It is rumored that Clan Nosferatu knows of secret Roman ruins that extend beneath the Vatican and are free of the presence of holiness. If this is true, then that clan may have great access to the secrets of the Church and its princes. It is said that, for an exorbitant fee, they will lead travelers into the Vatican's secret catacombs.

Miracles

It is one of the great concerns of the Church in this period that the age of miracles is done. Successive Popes have declared that though, in the early days of the Church, God vouchsafed miracles so that Christianity could spread across the world, He has now withdrawn this sanction, forcing a pure faith that does not require direct proof.

As such, the fabled miracles of legend are seldom, if ever, seen in the Dark Medieval world. The arising of a person of true holiness who could wield the legendary powers of the Divine should be the focus for a chronicle rather than limited to a strict system.



Minor miracles, however, are possible and, though more reported than factual, do occur. Most of these are similar to the stories of guardian angels and psychic experiences common in the present day (for example, warnings about danger, a sense of loss when a relative dies, and so forth). Such events are far more common in rural areas than in the cosmopolitan cities. Other common miracles include visions (which can spark off Crusades and riots, but often lead to the heretic's stake, notable examples including those of Peter the Hermit and Joan of Arc); mysterious appearances and disappearances of objects and people; and proofs of faith, including stigmata and bleeding statues.

Many such miracles are associated with the relics of saints and other luminaries of the church. Most churches in Dark Medieval Europe contain one or more such relics (which are often fraudulent) and the clergy shows them to the people on holy days. Such events inspire a great deal of pageantry and celebration; at times, even the relics and statues of the saints themselves are paraded through towns and villages.

The intercession of specific saints is best handled in a way that seems appropriate to the legends surrounding them — for example, St.Francis can be appealed to for protection from savage beasts. As a general rule, roll a petitioner's Faith Numina against a difficulty based on the impressiveness and unlikeliness of the miracle. For example, a saint praying for rain is likely to succeed, as this is a fairly mundane event (unless he was in the middle of a desert), but asking God to strike Paris as He did Sodom and Gomorrah is unlikely to happen, even within the Dark Medieval world.

Legends and Fables of the Church

Many tales in Medieval Europe relate to the Church. Such stories range from accounts of local miracles, to suspicions about the master architects of the Cathedrals.

The Wandering Jew

It is said that Caiphas or Castaphilus, a Jew who was either Pontius Pilate's doorkeeper or a humble carpenter along the route of the Crucifixion, was cursed by Jesus to await His return to the world. This humble and broken man wanders Europe, awaiting the end of the world and bearing witness to the truth of the Scriptures.

He has been met by many famous men who bear witness to his simple faith and the power of his words. No vampire is known to have met this man, though the Cappadocians fervently seek out rumors of his appearances. They wish not only to question him about Christ, but also to wrest the secrets of immortality from him.

Pope Joan

Though all discussion of this topic has been banned by Rome, it is whispered that one of the ninth-century Popes was a woman. Disguised as a man, she became the lover of many cardinals, binding them to her secret and blackmailing them into electing her Pope. Her reign was a short one, however, as she died in childbirth during a processional between the Vatican and other churches in Rome.

Reports say her child was not human and spoke dark prophecies before being killed by the shocked populace. This is never spoken of in Rome, but no Pope will set foot on the street where she died giving birth to a monster. The Nosferatu of Rome, who might be expected to know the truth of this tale, stay silent on the issue. However, the Malkavians of the Eternal City claim that the Nosferatu spirited the child away and have raised him in the darkness of their catacombs. Those who seek out the truth beneath the streets of Rome are turned away, or destroyed should they press their inquiries too far.

Prester John

Beyond the borders of Christendom, there is said to be a great and holy kingdom ruled by a Christian wizard of great power. This is Prester John's kingdom, the great hope of the Christian world and an illusion that has led many travelers to the death in the wilderness. Prester John is said to have communicated with Popes and emperors, either promising support in the crusades or condemning the decadence of the European Church. No one knows the veracity of these claims, but travelers in distant lands bring back stories of a fabulous kingdom where gold is as common as dirt and faith is true and pure.

Originally this kingdom was said to be beyond the steppes of Russia, in distant Cathay, or on the borders of Arabia; with the coming of the Golden Horde, though, its location is now suspected to be in Africa, perhaps in Ethiopia.

Prester John's kingdom should remain an enigma in any chronicle. As a fable, it possesses far greater impact than it would should it be discovered. Emissaries sent from Prester John (whether real or false) can be used to stir up Church politics anywhere in Europe. Such emissaries should be mysterious and able to use strange powers to escape confrontations. The messages they carry should be cryptic, containing revelations and prophecies. Characters could become embroiled with such an emissary — especially if rumors spread concerning a message which reveals the existence of Caine's childer sent to the Pope. Or a vampiric messenger from Prester John's kingdom could arrive carrying messages to the clans of Europe, threatening war should they not accord with Prester John's demands.



The Cathedral Builders

The magic of new cathedrals stuns the folk of Europe. The dedication required to raise these massive structures to the glory of God is a light to the faithful and a thorn in the side of the faithless. There are rumors, though, that human skill and simple devotion alone are not enough to build such marvels — that the master architects (perhaps learning skills that have been passed down since Solomon's Temple) call on infernal power for aid.

Magic

The Church has had a problematic relationship to magic throughout its history. The first heretic was Simon Magus, who challenged St. Paul before the Emperor Nero to a contest of magics, arguing that magic was a sword God had put into the hands of the faithful. St. Paul condemned him for placing his power above faith; when Simon tried to fly, St. Paul's faith brought him crashing to the ground. However, Simon Magus' argument carried much weight, and the early Christians needed whatever power they could muster merely to survive. Many early Popes practiced magic, and the Grimoire of Pope Honorius is one of the greatest texts on high ritual magic available in the Dark Medieval world. As the Church became established it collected works of magic and prophecy from across the Roman world, and Popes and cardinals studied them for the truth they contained.

These scholars discovered many disturbing things — in all the works of magic they found and in all the summonings they attempted, there was little trace of the Divine. Spirits from the world beyond seemed to know no more of God than a peasant; magi could put miracles to shame while they cursed God and all His works; the Jews used magics which could not come from Christ; and in recent centuries, the Islamic world has demonstrated that it too can produce magic and miracles. The Church has condemned all these miracle-workers as tools of Satan, just as they have condemned other pagan practices. To this end the Church has divided magic into two categories: goetia, which is magic approved of by Rome; and maleficium, which is magic that comes from the Devil. Maleficium, including such arts as necromancy and prophesy, has been declared anathema because its use is so disturbing to faith. The so-called natural sciences of alchemy, astrology and chirurgy (which includes folk healing, herbalism and various mystical formulas, as well as basic first aid and surgery) are broadly accepted and dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

The Iacerian Order

It is a lifetime's task to become a member of the Simonites. Children who seem different or strange are taken by monks when they are young and bought to the colleges of Rome and Ravenna. The selection is not infallible, and some children who are taken do not have the gift of magic — these are trained as helpers to the White Monks, as their companions and servants. The children who do possess the gift are trained simultaneously as churchmen and magi. Some are limited in ability and can learn only the most basic rituals; others have no such limits and awaken into True Magick as their gift grows.

The White Monks are divided into different schools based on their individual abilities. The lowest school is that of the Vestamentari, "those who wear the robes," who can only support the magic workings of others; next are the Exorcists, who possess the Numina of Exorcism and can learn simple rituals; following them are the Liturgists, who can use the full range of goetic ritual; the Sanctified, who use high ceremonial magic; and, finally, the Farae, "those who walk," who possess the full range of magics available to those without True Magick.

True Mages and White Monks

Some of the children taken by the Church possess the gift of True Magick. These children are taken by a group of magi who keep their existence secret even from the Pope. This group is a loose affiliation of divinely inspired mages who work to bring all humanity into the light of True Faith and the worship of the One (a conglomerate ideal of the Divine). These mages cross the lines of faith in medieval Europe; there are agents among Muslims, Jews and even enlightened pagan groups. Some of the children have a bias toward the Hermetic Arts and are given to apprentice under allied Hermetic mages who support the Church.

For more details on mages and their role in these times, see **Mage: The Ascension** and its supplements. If you do not have these books, assume that the average holy mage has powers of healing, divination, purification, and the ability to call on divine fire that inflicts unsoakable aggravated damage. The mage player will have between three and five dice for these tasks.

The Moors

Al-Andalus

The first Muslim intrusion into the Iberian peninsula was carried out under a commander named Tariq in 711. Tariq's forces routed those of the Visigoth king Rodrigo at Guadelete, and in 712 Muza ben-Nosair completed the destruction of the Visigoth kingdom. At that moment, the southern half of the Iberian peninsula (called al-Andalus by the conquerors) settled in for centuries of occupation by those whom history would come to call the Moors.

In reality, the so-called Moors were hardly a monolithic culture. Almohads, Almoravids, Umayyids fleeing the Baghdad caliphate, Hausa warriors serving under the Almoravids — all of these and more helped comprise the Islamic presence in Iberia, one which lasted in some form or other until the fall of Granada in 1492.

The Moorish culture in its various incarnations was in many senses the most advanced civilization in the world. Within the boundaries of al-Andalus existed a golden age of

learning, science, art, architecture and religious tolerance — at least some of the time. However, it is undeniable that Iberia under Moorish rule produced seminal works of art, scientific knowledge and philosophy centuries ahead of the European learning curve, and a startlingly peaceful coexistence of Muslims, Jews and Christians, all under the aegis of those who bore the word of the Prophet into Europe's westernmost lands.

Moors and Berbers

Many of the Muslims lumped in under the catchall phrase "Moors" were in fact Berbers. Technically, the term "Moor" referred only to the descendents of marriages between Berbers and native Iberians. The term was derived from the Latin word "Mauri," which was used for the Berber inhabitants of Algeria and Morocco.

Pure-blooded Berber Cainites are likely to take great offense if mistakenly identified as Moors. While intermarriage between Muslims, Jews and Christians was common and Moors in fact made up the vast majority of the Islamic inhabitants of al-Andalus, incorrectly identifying a pure-blooded Berber as Moorish could be fatal.

Military Matters

The pattern of investiture was repeated multiple times during the Islamic period: Zealous religious conquerors invaded and subdued the "decadent" inhabitants of al-Andalus ("the Paradise"), only to acclimate, assimilate and gradually sink toward that same "decadence" themselves. Later variations on this theme included having the fanatical newcomers invited in by their "soft" Islamic brethren in order to fend off the encroaching Christian kingdoms. Such invitations were not issued lightly, as the Islamic rulers of the *taifas* (little kingdoms) recognized that their more devout brethren would probably have little more sympathy for them than for their Christian foes. Indeed, the poet-king of Seville, al-Mutamid, bitterly remarked that "...faced with the choice, I would rather drive the camels of the Almoravids than be a swineherd among Christians," eloquently expressing the unpalatable nature of his choice. Inevitably, the disdain the newcomers felt for those requesting their aid never lasted long. Even in the face of the relentless *Reconquista*, the richness of al-Andalus seduced even the fierce Almoravids to the point where their descendents found themselves forced to turn to the even more ascetic Almohads for protection from the encroaching Christians.

A Brief Tale of Conquests

While Tariq and ben-Nozair may have the first generals of Islamic armies to conquer the Andalus, they were hardly the last. Abd al-Rahman (I), fleeing the victorious Abbasids in Baghdad, brought the tattered remnants of the ruling Umayyad family to al-Andalus in 755 and rapidly assumed control of the region. He and his descendents, at first content to ignore and be ignored by the usurpers in Baghdad, spent two centuries embroiled in feuds and revolts. It wasn't until 928 that Abd al-Rahman (III), having put down the Hafsunid revolt, assumed the title of caliph that had once belonged to his ancestors. The Cordoba Caliphate, though wracked with the usual dynastic wars and baggage, survived as the political center of Muslim Andalusia for a century.

However, as early as 718 (with the battle of Covadonga, a minor skirmish that was blown out of proportion, held significance only as the first time a Christian army won any sort of victory against the invaders in Iberia, and spawned the epic *Song of Roland* as a much-distorted account of the action) the Christian kingdoms of Léon, Castile, Navarre, Aragón and Catalonia began the work of the *Reconquista* — the reconquest of the entire peninsula. Furthermore, while the Caliphate may have rested at Cordoba, the map of al-Andalus was a patchwork of *taifas*, the equivalent of city-states that spent as much time warring among themselves as they did fighting the Christian enemy. In 1085, the Christian armies recaptured Toledo, and the *taifa* kings found themselves forced to ask for help from fellow Muslims.

By this time, a group of Berbers, recent converts to Islam, had acquired the name Almoravids (in Arabic, *al-Murabitun*, Those Who Live in Religious Retreats) for themselves and established themselves as the major military power in North Africa. After much deliberation, al-Mutamid of Seville invited the Almoravids into al-Andalus; as thanks for his pains he and his wife were eventually exiled into poverty by those whose held he had requested. Furthermore, while the Almoravids under Yusuf ibn Tashafin were initially successful at driving back the Christians, the Moorish army did not consolidate its initial gains. Instead, a second campaign became necessary, during the course of which ibn Tashafin seized and consolidated Islamic territory as well as Christian. This second assault was temporarily contained, if legend is to be believed, through the efforts of a single man: El Cid.

El Cid

While his very name, El Cid, is derived from the Arabic of those he nominally opposed (*sayyed*, lord), the historical figure Rodrigo Diaz de Bivar cannot be easily classified. Exiled from Castile-Leon by Alfonso VI, de Bivar found himself at the head of a mercenary band that served Christians and Muslims alike. Eventually de Bivar and his troop (heroes one and all, according to the legends) found themselves facing and holding off the assaults of ibn Tashafin's troops. By the time of his death in 1099, El Cid had reconciled with Alfonso VI and held the lordship of Valencia.

The legends of El Cid, in the form of popular songs and stories, began circulating not long after his death (and the collapse of the defenses against the Almoravids, who went on to sweep through all of what is now Portugal and southern Spain). By 1197, highly organized song and myth cycles (the *Carmen Campidoctoris* and *Cantar del mio Cid* among them) had begun the work of creating the myth of El Cid.

Song and Story

Characters in Christian kingdoms bordering Moorish ones — or in Christian communities in Moorish lands — are likely to be inundated in tales and stories of El Cid. The body of legendry sprouting around the hero and his followers (Alvar Hannez, Minaya, Martin Antolinez and others) is both extensive and universally known. Characters in territory where the stories of El Cid are common may meet bandit or mercenary bands claiming to be El Cid's heirs, and knowledge of the El Cid body of myth often serves as a watchword for telling Christian from Muslim.

The valor, skill and ferocity of El Cid and his troops were such that many unnatural observers speculated that de Bivar and company must be the ghouls of some extraordinarily potent vampire. However, while this accusation was never proven, it is known conclusively that de Bivar rests peacefully in his tomb. Young Lasombra, particularly those of Castilan heritage, are often instructed to spend a night's vigil by the tomb, as an exercise in self-discipline and courage. Unfortunately, the vigil can be fraught with great peril should a Lasombra with Moorish leanings learn of it.

Within decades, the Almoravid rule fell into the same sort of intrigue-ridden chaos that had heralded opportunity to the local Christian kings, and soon the petty caliphs were calling for the fanatical Almohads (Asserters of the Unity of God) to come and rescue them, even as their ancestors had "rescued" the *taifas*' caliphs. Once again the holy warriors unified Muslim rule in al-Andalus and pushed the Christians back, but this was to be the last wave of Muslim intervention. Relentlessly, the Islamic territory was squeezed until, in 1248, Seville fell to Christian troops supported by the soldiers of the Islamic *taifa* of Granada, which was to be the last stronghold of Islam in Iberia.

Religion

Religious life under the Islamic kings is often portrayed as a harmonic convergence of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, wherein all three faiths dwelled in perfect ecumenical balance. The truth, as always, is a bit messier. While religious tolerance was more or less common in al-Andalus, the levels of tolerance tended to rise and fall depending upon which group was in power, and how recently they had seized the reins of governance. While the Cordoba caliphate produced notables such as Rabbi Hasdai ibn Shaprut, who served as physician and vizier to the caliphate, the Almohad incursion in 1147 provoked a mass migration of Jews to Christian-held areas.

The religious landscape of al-Andalus was suitably complicated. Among the elements of the mix were the long-standing Jewish community, the Christian community of those Hispo-Romans who refused to convert to Islam (called *Mozarabs*), the Berber and Moorish Muslims, and *Muwallads* — Hispo-Romans who converted to Islam. Jews and *Mozarabs* made up sizeable minorities in even the most thoroughly Islamic of the Iberian cities; Cordoba, Zaragoza, Seville and Granada all hosted large mixed-religion populations.

Under the Umayyids, Jews and Christians held the status of *dhimmis* — protected persons — and had many privileges, though excessive taxes limited the abilities of non-Muslims to own land. Still, a remarkable degree of religious tolerance existed, a tolerance that was only eaten away by repeated Berber incursions.

In truth, the Muslims' motives for not interfering in conquered Christian and Jewish communities were as much pragmatic as anything else; administering the conquered population was simply beyond the conquerors' capacities. It was far easier to let the Jews and Christians continue to manage themselves, within certain limits.

The Jewish population assimilated and was accepted more fully than the Mozarabs did; after all, there were no Jewish kingdoms nibbling at the borders. Many Jews were trilingual and served as accountants and administrators in Islamic governments; a good number continued to hold those positions under Christian rule as well, as knowledge of both Arabic and Arabic-style mathematics were necessary for keeping things running administratively. This is not to say that there was no cooperation between Christians and Muslims in al-Andalus; when Toledo was captured by the *Reconquista* in 1085, the entire Mozarab population spoke Arabic, and churches graced the streets near mosques in Seville.

Furthermore, the Moorish conquest was not without its ugly moments of religious strife. Cordoba, Zaragoza and other major cities all saw mass attacks on the *almajas*, or Jews. Still, for the most part the religious climate of the al-Andalus was open and tolerant enough that Islam, Christianity and Judiasm all more or less flourished.

Behind the Scenes

Some of the greatest scientific and intellectual achievements of the Cordoba caliphate were the products of collaborations between Islamic and other scientists, or resulted from intellectual freedoms extended to non-Muslims. The work of Maimonedes, the translation of the seminal medical text the *Taysir*, and many more were the direct products of religious tolerance under the Islamic rulers of Spain and Portugal. This fragile balance, however, would seem to fly in the face of common sense; what force could induce peaceful coexistence?

The prevailing thought among younger Cainites of a philosophical bent is that elder vampires, for reasons of their own, enforced the fragile peace. Speculation as to why, however, runs dry. Some point to the scientific, artistic and magical advances that resulted from the era of religious tolerance as being sufficient reason for the truce's existence; others have less credible theories.

The Ways of Cainites

Three clans predominate in al-Andalus. Lasombra himself traveled widely in Africa, in addition to Embracing frequently among the Hispo-Romans. Thus, the master of shadows found his childer on both sides of the *Reconquista* — a drama which would not play itself out fully for centuries, until Lasombra had become ash and even the kingdom of Granada was but a memory. In the meantime, the Magisters play games with the Christian kingdoms and the *taifa* realms alike. There is extensive communication and polite discourse between Christian and Muslim Lasombra; current gossip has it that the Lasombra have decided to support the *Reconquista en masse*, and that they are merely using the *taifa* kingdoms as training grounds for their youngsters.

The Brujah first entered Iberia with Hannibal's troops, but a new wave of migration came with the Almoravids, whose origins lay close to the ruins of shattered Carthage. Concentrated primarily in Portugal, the Brujah would seem to be interested primarily in preserving the religious detente of the peninsula, even in the face of the *Reconquista*. Younger Brujah often fight with the Alhomads and their allied Assamites, but more out of dislike for the encroaching Christians than out of any love for the retreating Muslims. Brujah, particularly survivors of Carthage, are also heavily involved in the mystical Sufi Islam movement, though they leave the Kabbalistic schools of the Jews to the few Cappadocians who have dared to travel this far.

The Assamites are the third clan with a strong presence in Iberia, and each of the great assaults on al-Andalus has contained any number of *hashishin*. The inevitable softening of the mortal armies as they settle in to the creature comforts of Iberia, however, is less than pleasing to the Assamites, who despise members of the devout who go "soft" or "native." As such, Assamites in Iberia are busy propping up devout local rulers, countering the machinations of the Lasombra wherever they find them, and encouraging the lax among the faithful to correct their behaviors. An increasing number, however, view the decadent Alhomads as a lost cause, and as such are retreating into Northern Africa, where the faith is purer and the Empire stronger.

Paganism

In wondrous beauty once again
Shall the golden tables stand mid the grass
Which the gods had owned in the days of old

— from the Elder Edda, "The Wise Woman's Prophecy"

By the end of the 12th century, the Catholic Church has established its domination over most of Europe, but its reach is neither universal nor are Christian clerics the only ones to bear the title "priest." In the deep forests of Germany and Eastern Europe, the icy dark of Scandinavia, the endless steppes of Russia and the lonely places of Ireland and northern Scotland, dwell enclaves of people who worship gods and enact rites far older than Christianity. These are the pagans.





The Meaning of Paganism

The Latin word "pagus" refers to those who dwell in rural places and, although it has come to apply to any non-Christian religious belief, it more accurately describes the gods worshipped by rural folk — the spirits of the earth and sky, the harvest, celestial phenomena, and the forces of nature. Christianity resulted in the removal of God from the natural world, placing Him and His Son above and outside of creation. The emphasis placed by the Church on the world of the spirit (as opposed to the world of the flesh) left little room for those who venerated the gods whose forms and essences emanated from nature.

The Church teaches that there is only one God, but pagans believe otherwise, honoring a pantheon of deities. For them, the God of the Christians may be only one among many gods, and while He may determine the disposition of the soul after death, other gods replenish the harvest, bring water to the fields and wells, and ensure the safety of women in childbirth. Thus, while they may not necessarily deny the reality of Christ, neither do they accept Him as the only true god.

Where the Old Gods Dwell

Throughout the Dark Medieval world, pockets of paganism still flourish. Although most worshippers of nature find themselves forced into hiding — practicing their rites in secret or under the guise of Christianity — a few places remain where the Church has yet to exercise its iron grip over the minds and hearts of the people. Even in places which have been thoroughly Christianized, the old gods still have followers who remember how it used to be and who continue to maintain the sacred places and practices that honor them.

The British Isles (England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales)

The Celtic pantheon revolves around the harvest year. The original Celtic tribes who migrated from France to the British Isles considered themselves the children of Dana or Danu, the earth mother, but also honored a host of gods and goddesses. Among their deities are Bridget, the goddess of fire; Lugh, the god of arts and skills; Manannan mac Lir, god of the sea; the Morrigan, goddess of war and death and Cerunnos, the lord of animals. Often, the worship of Bridget, Danu and the Morrigan took the form of ceremonies venerating the three-fold goddess in her aspects of Maid, Mother and Hag. In addition, numerous sacred places such as wells, caves, hills and hot springs had their own local deities.

Pagan priests known as druids presided over the rituals honoring these gods and goddesses, usually conducting elaborate rites in sacred groves. Trees were holy to the druids, who developed a runic script known as *ogham* (not to be confused with the Lhiannan Discipline of the same name, though there are certainly numerous parallels that may be drawn between the two) based on the names of various trees.

Four major festivals marked the changing of the seasons for Celtic pagans. Samhain, held on the eve of October 31, marked the beginning of the winter half of the year and the end of the grazing season. Imbolc, celebrated on February 1, heralded the change from winter to spring, the customary time for the birthing of lambs. Beltaine, May 1, ushered in the summer half of the year and honored fertility of all kinds. Lughnasadh, held on August 1, honored the harvest and the strong light of summer.

The Roman invasion of Britain resulted in the wholesale slaughter of the druids, whose leadership spearheaded the resistance to the legions of the Empire. Until the 6th century, however, druids still prevailed in Ireland, which the Romans failed to conquer. The coming of Christianity to Ireland, however, ended the reign of these priest/lawgivers.

The worship of the Celtic gods did not perish with the last druid. Instead, it went underground. The people who once worshipped Brigid, the goddess of fire, now venerated St. Briget, while Danu, the earth goddess, became in their minds synonymous with Mary, the mother of Christ.

By the 12th century, Christianity has established a firm base in the British Isles. Nevertheless, many pagans still practice their rites in secret while paying lip service to the customs and rituals of the Church.

France

The Gallic Celts, who remained in France and Brittany, also worshipped a triple goddess. In addition, these pagans venerated many deities associated with animals. Epona, the horse goddess, proved so popular that many Roman cavalry officers adopted her worship and brought it to other places throughout the Roman Empire. Other animal deities included Arduina (wild boars), Nehalennia (dogs), Artio (bears) and Damona (cattle).

Throughout Brittany, elderly women called *Fatuae* instructed younger women in the ways of divination and shamanism at shrines, usually centered upon sacred wells. Women usually held honored positions in France and Brittany, serving as healers and seers.

Christianity came early to this region of Europe, and the Church worked hard to convert the local pagans, enacting laws forbidding pagan practices such as the ritual consumption of horseflesh, part of the rites of the cult of Epona, and outlawing participation in pagan funeral ceremonies. Where they could not prevent certain customs, such as harvest and lambing festivals, the Church incorporated these celebrations into their calendar, giving them a Christian gloss. Holy wells were still sought out for their healing properties, but now they were sacred to St. Anne or the Virgin Mary, rather than the original pagan goddesses once venerated there.

Scandinavia

The Norse pantheon included two families of gods, the Aesir and the Vanir. Odin Allfather, the god of battle, ruled over the Aesir, a contentious and warlike family of deities. Among these were Thor, the god of thunder; Baldur, the god of beauty and rebirth; Tyr, the god of justice; Heimdall, god of dawn and the waters; Loki, the god of mischief; Frigga, goddess of fertility and Idun, goddess of youth. The Vanir consisted of Frey, god of rain

and harvests; Freya, goddess of fertility and the noble dead; Njord, god of the seas and the wind; Nerthus, the earth mother and other deities of growth and healing. Less bellicose than the Aesir, the Vanir represented the gentler aspects of nature, although they, too, could be moved to anger and spitefulness. In addition, the people of northernmost Europe also venerated the Norns, the three goddesses of fate. Urd governed the past; Verdandi ruled the present; and Skuld, presided over the future. Like the trio of Greek Fates, the Norns were weavers, whose web contained all the threads — or *wyrds* — of humanity in its intricate designs.

Like the gods of the Celts, many of the Norse deities had an affinity with nature or natural phenomena, and their priests exercised a great deal of influence over the tribal chiefs. Holy women frequently served as seers among many Scandinavian and Icelandic tribes. Entering a trance, these priestesses sat upon raised thrones from which they would prophesy, often in the form of a series of questions and answers. Norse cultures also embraced the practice of magic, though the exercise of personal (as opposed to divine) power was carefully regulated and its abuse harshly punished.

Christianity came relatively late to the cold regions north of Germany. The warlike raiding tribes that inhabited those unforgiving lands proved difficult to convert. The followers of Odin (or Woran) had little use for the priests of a God who preached submission and repentance. By the 10th century, however, Christianity had moved as far north as parts of Norway, and the followers of the "white Christ" and their priests were numerous. The Swedes were the last of the Germanic cultures to adopt Christianity as their official faith.

Even when many of the Norse tribes converted, their worship of Christ still retained vestiges of their old customs. Festivals such as Summer's Day and Winter's Day survived in the celebrations of Easter and Christmas. Choral songs that formerly celebrated the changing of the seasons evolved into Christianized "carols." Images of Christian saints replaced pagan statues in shrines, thus legitimizing the continued veneration of many of the Aesir and Vanir under new names. In this fashion, Freya assumed the identity of Mary, the mother of God, retaining her nature as the patron of fertility. Baldur became St. Michael, the beautiful archangel and leader of the armies of heaven, while Thor adopted the guise of St. Olaf. By adopting the outward appearance of Christianity, many Norse pagans persisted in the clandestine worship of the old gods, now transformed into saints.

The Baltic Region

The area which includes Old Prussia, Lithuania, Livonia and southern Estonia worshipped a pantheon which included the sun-goddess Saule, the moon-god Mehnesis, and a host of other deities. Among these were Austrine, the morning and evening star, Perkunas, the god of thunder, Lytuvonis, the rain god, and Zemyna, the goddess of the earth and the ruler of the dead. Theirs was an animistic worship which looked down on the exploitation of animals and honored the spirits of sacred trees as reincarnated spirits of the dead.

The pagans of the Baltic lands celebrated a midwinter's festival called Kaledos, which involved burning the *Blukis* (the equivalent of the Yule log), masquerading as animals and feasting on roast pork. At the midsummer festival, Ligo, worshippers lit a bonfire atop a pole located at the crest of a hill or on a mountainside, thus commemorating the World Tree. Singing and dancing accompanied a feast of cheese and mead.

Although larger villages sometimes contained temples to these deities, most worshipers held their rites at outdoor shrines throughout the countryside. These sacred places, called *Alkas*, consisted of groves of trees protected from cutting, special fields that were left fallow, and wells where sacred fish were kept. Like the Celtic druids, Baltic pagans venerated certain trees as sacred to particular gods; the linden tree belonged to Laima, the goddess of life, while the elder (or alder) tree served as a shrine to Puskaitis, the god of the faeries and other spirits of the "Underworld."

The Lithuanians and Livonians, among other Baltic tribes, honored Pergrubius, god of growing things, in a spring celebration similar to the Green Man festival of the British Isles. The feast of Zazinck marked the start of the harvest while O Zinck commemorated harvest's end. A special festival, Vaizgautis, celebrated the flax harvest, considered sacred to Saule, the sun.

Baltic pagans, most of them peasant farmers, held a special devotion to Zemyna, the earth mother, and regularly demonstrated their veneration of her in their daily routine. Before beginning work or going to bed, many pagans would kiss the ground. Striking the earth in anger or spitting upon her constituted sacrilege.

Here, the Christian Church met with little success in spreading its blanket of faith over the indigenous religion of the people. The Kingdom of Lithuania grew up around the need to resist the advances of the militant orders of the Church which besieged them from one side and the invading hordes of Tartars from the Russian steppes. This is perhaps the one spot in all of Europe, in the Dark Medieval setting, where non-Christian polytheists are able to worship without fear of reprisal or persecution. (Of course, they must adopt the state gods in order to do so.)

Finland and Lappland

The pagans who resided in the cold, dark regions of northernmost Europe, near the Arctic Circle, belonged to a linguistically separate group from their Indo-European neighbors. The Finno-Ugrians (Finns, Laplanders, and norther Estonians) of the icy tundras honored their own deities, who mirrored the harsh, forbidding lands of lightless winters and summers without night. Finnish pagans worshiped Akko, ruler of the gods; his consort Akka, goddess of fertility and the harvest and Jumala, the sky god. The Saami, or Laplanders, honored Ibmel, god of the sky; Horagalles, the god of thunder; Pieve, the sun goddess; Mano, the moon god and Leib-Olmai, the god of the reindeer.



Ancestor-worship and practices to honor nature spirits occupied a central place in Finnish and Lappish paganism. The Saami venerated a "family" of ancestral spirits which consisted of Radien-ahttje (the father), Radien-akka (the mother), Radien-pardne (the son) and Rana-neida (the daughter).

The priests and priestesses of the Finns and the Saami were often shamans who knew the secrets of traveling between the worlds, entering sacred trances to free their spirits for mystical journeys in search of knowledge to help their tribes. These shamans also practiced healing and weather magic. Bear cults also proliferated among the nomadic hunter-gatherer tribes of the region.

Funerals among the Estonians, in particular, were lavish ceremonies involving long wakes during which relatives and friends gathered for feasting and games to commemorate the deceased, whose ice-packed corpse rested in its home until the time for its cremation. Burning a corpse, rather than burying it, prevented the spirit from remaining bound to its earthly body, thus enabling it to journey quickly to the land beyond the "hill of heaven" (the sky).

Although Christianity has made some inroads in this region during the 12th century, many tribes continue to resist conversion. Often, pagans practice a dual faith, adopting Christian rites when necessary but continuing to venerate their ancient gods. The wandering life style of many of these tribes makes this duplicity easier than it would be in more settled lands.

Russia and the Balkan Peninsula

The gods worshipped in Eastern Europe and Russia, along the shores of the Black Sea and as far west as the Ukraine, included deities that resembled those of their Baltic neighbors as well as the early Greeks and Persians whose settlements once extended into that region. The Slavs and Russians honored Svarog, the sky god; Svarogitch, the god of fire or the sun; Bielbog and Tschernobog, twin gods of good and evil (or light and darkness) and Jarovit, the god of war, as well as gods of the winds, seasons, ancestors, and other aspects of nature and culture. In addition, they honored the Zorya, triple goddesses of dawn, dusk and midnight. The Slovaks worshipped Praboh as supreme deity; Zivena as goddess of life; Morena as goddess of death; Uroda as goddess of agriculture; Lada as goddess of beauty and Parom as the god of thunder. In addition, there were other local deities peculiar to certain small groups or tied to particular holy places.

All of these cultures recognized the warring duality of light and darkness or good and evil. Among the Slovakians, the Bieloknazi, or White Priests, served the gods of light. Their counterparts, the Black Priests, practiced sorcerous magic in obedience to the gods of darkness. Both were honored as part of the eternal balance. In Russia, the *volkhv*, or shaman, had power over the local spirits, including the leshy or tree-spirits, and the *vodanyoi* (malicious spirits of water).

In this region, the Eastern Orthodox Church represents the Christian faith. In Russia, the involvement of pagans with politics and the existence of an anti-Imperial nationalist party

made up of pagans resulted in the outlawing of paganism brought about by the triumph of Prince Vladimir in the early 11th century. Orthodox churches replaced pagan sites and statues of the gods were publicly flogged before they were destroyed. Within the vast forests and expansive tundra of Eastern Europe and Russia, however, pagan enclaves still persist, although their worship has now become denigrated to the status of superstition and folk customs.

Russia's Dark Goddess

Worshiped throughout Russia as the goddess of death and the dead, the ancient Nosferatu Cainite Baba Yaga occupies a central place in the hearts of Russian pagans. Seen as both cruel and whimsical, the "Little Grandmother" (as she is euphemistically referred to) dwells in a magical hut which walks about on huge chicken legs. A fence of skulls and bones surrounds her haven. As part of the pantheon of the gods of darkness, Baba Yaga identifies herself with the Russian earth and viciously opposes the forces of Christianity — closely allied with the light — attempting to subdue her homeland.

Although her influence wanes as the fortunes of Christianity rise in Eastern Europe, tales of her fierce and often brutal protectiveness continue to instill righteous fear among the common people of Russia. At the same time as they fear her, however, many Russian peasants believe that so long as Baba Yaga still moves within the darkness, their land will never completely forget her ancient gods.

The Old Religion

Although pagan practices differ from region to region throughout Europe, a few general ideas permeate almost all non-Christian, polytheistic faiths. The cycles of nature are central to pagan worship, and the mysteries of birth and death are seen as part of this endless process of emergence and return. While some pagan religions have a primary male deity, as many honor a female goddess as central to their belief. In any case, most pagan religions accord women (and female deities) a higher position in their hierarchy than does Christianity.

In the Dark Medieval world, paganism survives in many guises and under many names, but most people who know of its existence refer to paganism as "the old religion." Its continued appeal to the farmers and peasants of Europe lies in the fact that paganism is a practical religion, giving the people what they need to understand the world and survive its hardships. It has developed from the lives of the people and their interactions with the natural world and, since it addresses these concerns, it continues to have meaning and import for the peasantry.

Regardless of their location, most pagan religions follow similar practices. Recurring deities (though with different names) are found among Celts, Norse, Slavs and Balts. This is



due both to the widespread migration of early tribes throughout Europe, bringing their gods with them to their new homes and assimilating the existing gods of the people they encounter, and to the relevance of paganism to the lives of the common folk, whose needs and concerns remain the same regardless of where they live. Farmers concerned with the planting and harvesting of crops honor the patrons of the seasons. Women anxious to bear healthy children look to goddesses of fertility and childbirth for succor and good fortune. The spirits of the dead require guides to convey them to the Otherworld and to prevent them from haunting the living. Although the names by which these gods and goddesses are addressed may differ from culture to culture, the aspects of life and death that they represent remain universal.

Followers of the old religion tend to behave in ways that differentiate them from non-pagans, including Christians, Jews and Muslims. Because they place so much emphasis on this world, rather than the next, pagans are often prone to boasting of their prowess, indulging in feats of drinking and feasting to celebrate their bounty, and dressing in elaborate, beautifully adorned clothing for festivals. Like their heroes, Cu Chulainn, Siegfried, Beowulf and other larger-than-life folk legends, they act impulsively, often becoming quarrelsome and contentious when slighted or when their courage is doubted. The qualities which paganism values in its worshippers — loyalty, bravery, toughness, endurance, fighting skill, willingness to die and, over all else, a passion for living — are downplayed by Christianity. The medieval Church, with its emphasis on preparation for the afterlife, places more importance on the passive virtues of meekness, self-denial and abstainence from worldly pleasures.

The actual religious practices of paganism concern themselves with rituals to aid in battle, childbirth, or the harvest. Divination by various means, such as reading the entrails of animals or interpreting the movements of birds, clouds, fire and water, play a large role in the old religion, as those who know the future can plan for it. Pagans rely on their gods and goddesses to guide them, protect them from natural disasters, foes or terrifying monsters and bring them prosperity and luck. Because they honor both male and female aspects of nature, most pagan religions give equal or near equal status to women, who act as priestesses, hold land, fight in battles (and sometimes lead the armies) and participate in most political and social arenas.

Sacrifices to the gods consist of offerings thrown in water, laid to rest in tombs, lobbed into peat bogs, or hung on trees. Most often, bread, meat, beer, fabrics, jewelry, weapons, pottery, oil or other valuable items form the sacrificial gift. Animals provide the most common living sacrifice (usually coupled with a feast in which the part of the beast not given to the god is consumed by the worshipers), but in times of great need, human sacrifices take the place of animal offerings. In most cases, these victims are either criminals or else are chosen by lottery. In extreme circumstances, important leaders may sacrifice themselves to emphasize just how great the desire is for divine intervention.

Places holy to the old religion include rocks and hills, burial mounds, volcanic clefts, fields, waterfalls, strangely shaped stones, sacred groves, forest clearings, open hilltops, places alongside springs or lakes, islands, and, in general, any area that is outside of and somehow set apart from the daily world. In these places, the sacred can manifest itself. Many of these sites also function as safe havens, for violence within their confines is not permitted. Burial mounds are considered sacred because of the belief that the dead act as emissaries to the gods. Priests and lawgivers enact their rulings within holy ground so the gods will help men choose wisely in governing their lives. Feasts, on the other hand, take place nearby rather than in these holy places.

Elysium: The Sacred Haven

The Cainite practice of forbidding violence within Elysium shares its origin with the pagan custom of protecting important places from worldly or temporal concerns. Cainites who were pagans before their Embraces understand the need for places of neutrality, exempt from the petty rivalries that so often occupy the attention of the undead. During the height of Greek and Roman civilization, Elysiums existed in the major population centers of these cultures. Although such neutral ground is difficult to find in the Dark Medieval setting, some Cainites still manage to uphold the custom of designating certain secular buildings or, in warmer climes, outdoor plazas as places of respite and sanctuary.

Pagans hold their rites of worship in a specifically defined place, using a ditch, a grove of trees or a ring of stones to set it apart from the everyday world, but usually not enclosing or walling in their "temple." Inside that place reside representations of the gods such as statues or rocks carved with faces or symbols and a hearth on which sacrifices can be offered.

Often a special stone, carved or uncarved, marks the center of a pagan shrine, to symbolize the center of the earth. Such stones, like the Lia Fail of Tara, might also serve as a focus for kingmaking ceremonies. The one who would lead the tribe would swear to protect the stone — and, by extension, those whose center it is. In other areas, there might stand a central tree, symbolizing Yggdrasil, the center of the cosmos. For pagans, the whole idea of a blood sacrifice serves to open communications between the community and the gods, letting the gods realize the seriousness of the situation through seeing the spilling of lifeblood. In times of sacrifice, the animal or person offered might be ritually slain upon the stone or hung from the tree. Sunk deep into the earth, tree and rock both touch the four major elements, earth and air, water (through rain or the tree's roots) and fire (since it was thought that lightning was attracted to both stones and trees).

Water, as well, holds a special meaning for pagans. Seers and priests frequently use wells, springs, lakes or any form of deep water as an aid to divination. Drinking the water of these

windows into the future provides inspiration, like a draught of pure, fresh thought. Certain springs are revered for their healing qualities.

Christianizing the Pagans

With the coronation of Charlemagne in 800, Christianity became inextricably wedded to the political restructuring of Europe along national lines. As the new "Holy Roman Empire" sought to bring the various tribes of Europe under its banner, the Christian religion became a weapon in the hands of political leaders. By the end of the 12th century, most European rulers subscribed to the Church and forced their peasants into conversion, calling pagans devil worshipers and identifying them as dangers to their authority. Following practices as old as (if not older than) the Roman Empire, which also required the acknowledgement of an official religion, the Christian kings of Europe insisted on religious uniformity as a means to political unity.

Believing that they possessed a mandate from both spiritual and temporal authority, zealots among the Church sought arduously to eradicate paganism by any means possible — by cutting down sacred groves, tearing sacred stones from the ground, and taking over lands and planting monasteries atop former sites of worship. The patriarchal structure of both Church and State proved particularly detrimental to women, who found themselves bereft of many of their former rights.

Where they were unable to eradicate all vestiges of pagan worship, the Church developed a more pragmatic approach, coopting local heathen rites and giving them the sanction of Christianity. Thus, the old spring rites of Beltaine in celebration of the eternal maiden became transformed into a feast honoring the Virgin Mary, while the Norse wheel of light evolved into the four-candled Advent wreath heralding the onset of the Christmas season. Likewise, pagan gods and goddesses acquired the status of "saints," thus enabling the peasantry to continue their veneration without "worshiping" false gods. For some, this was enough. Others, however, felt differently about having their worship proscribed and declared anathema. Many staunch pagans took their worship underground.

The Survival of Witch Cults

Despite the overwhelming presence of the Church, many pockets of paganism still flourish in the Dark Medieval world. Most commonly, small groups of people gather together in what the Church terms "witch cults." These groups usually focus around a woman versed in pagan lore. In an earlier time, she would have been considered a priestess, wise women, healer or seer.

Calling themselves wiccans (or "the wise"), these followers of the old religion represent a threat both to the patriarchy of the Church and to the emerging political kingdoms. Temporal and spiritual power unite to propagate their own existence, and unrepentant peasants who do not bow to their authority



represent the loss of wealth and power to both Church and prince. Further, it is in the Church's best interests to reserve miracles for themselves; they want the people to look to them for healing, forgiveness and spiritual fulfillment. Because many pagans are well-versed in folk remedy, midwifery and occult lore, the church cannot allow these herbal healers to make folks well without appealing to Christ to cure them.

Since the Church stands as the ultimate authority over the distinction between the "miraculous" and the "demonic," they brand the wiccans as "witches" — feared traffickers with demons — and claim that these foul creatures fly through the air for trysts with Satan and call down curses upon good Christian folk. Paganism, in its form as a witch cult, devolves in the eyes of the Church from being a deviant religion, the practitioners of which need to be led to the light of Christ, to an infernal sect full of heretical minions of evil who need to be eradicated by all right-thinking folk. Though wide-scale hangings and burnings will be more prevalent in the future, many wiccans are persecuted, driven from their homes, killed or locked within monasteries. That their lands (if they own any) and property are forfeit to Church or state is an incidental, though profitable, consequence to the ruling powers.

Despite their treatment, many members of these witch cults or wiccan groups never desert the old religion. Inside hidden caves, beside sacred pools, atop mountains, or within deeply hidden forest clearings, the old rites are still practiced. Maiden and corn king consummate their eternal dance, the stag king challenges the hero, the mother bears the king-who-will-be and the crone buries the old one.

Pagan Practices in Medieval Europe

Being a practicing pagan is dangerous, and pagans insistent on continuing to adhere to their beliefs take care not to draw untoward attention to themselves or unwittingly betray their existence to those who might report their activities to the local priest. Recognition signs, such as hand gestures invoking the horned god Cerunnos (using the thumb and little finger) or the three-fold goddess Dana (using the three middle fingers), serve to identify pagans to one another. Occasionally, the lintels of houses will bear some discreet symbol indicating that its residents follow the old religion: a sheaf of wheat, an iron horse shoe (in honor of Epona, the horse goddess) or a clump of three-leafed clovers, for example.

Many pagan rites take place under the nose of the Church, making use of the similarities in time between the liturgical festivals and feasts honoring pagan deities. The four great pagan celebrations of Samhain, Imbolc, Beltaine and Lughnasa (or their equivalents) provide greater challenges, for these usually include practices frowned upon by the Church. Only in the most remote places, far from the prying eyes of Christian neighbors, do followers of the old religion dare to light the Beltaine fires and engage in the joyous couplings that take place in the glow of its dying embers. The rites of Samhain, likewise, occur in secret using the feast of All Saints' as a shroud for the ceremonies that honor the dead.

Most often, however, the practice of paganism pertains to daily life. Villagers who hold to the old religion seek out wise women and herbal healers for potions, salves, amulets and other assistance for everything from curing boils and easing or preventing childbirth to obtaining wealth or love. Many households set aside a portion of their foodstores as gifts to the gods of the harvest, either burying them in the ground, throwing them in a pond or burning them in the hearth. Sometimes these sacrifices are given instead to the local pagan priest or priestess as payment for the vital services rendered.

The fear of discovery hangs over the head of every practitioner of the old religion. When members of a pagan group uncover a traitor among them or sniff out a nonmember who knows their greatest secret, swift and uncompromising action usually follows, sometimes in the form of a sacrifice, with the potential betrayer as the victim.

Pagans and Cainites

Relations between pagans and Cainites differ from place to place, ranging from open hostility to tenuous cooperation. All pagans have a profound respect for the dead, honoring them at Samhain, and seeking to propitiate them whenever possible. Nevertheless, the presence of the walking dead strikes most pagans as an affront to nature and an interruption in the grand cycle of life, death and rebirth that forms the heart of most pagan religions.

On the other hand, some Cainites share the same resentment of the Church as followers of the old religion and occasional alliances form between pagan villages and their anti-Christian Cainite protector. Although a number of Cainite clans (notably the Lasombra, Toreador and Ventrue) have concentrated their efforts on gaining power over Church and state, most Cainites respect pagans and their beliefs. Many Cainites were, themselves, practicing pagans during their mortal lives and have as much difficulty (if not more) adjusting to the upstart Christian monopoly as their herds. Throughout Europe, but especially in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the Gangrel most often find themselves in sympathy with local enclaves of pagans, who share with them a closeness to nature.

In Eastern Europe, where the Tzimisce exercise their bloody hold over a cowering populace, some Cainites form the center of pagan cults devoted to the dark gods (as opposed to the gods of light). Entire villages in the Carpathians or deep within the Kingdom of Lithuania find that their "gods" have assumed physical reality and walk among them by night. Many Eastern European Gangrel and Ravnos have an affinity for pagans, seeing in them a hardier spirit than in their pallid Christian counterparts.

For the most part, however, pagans fear those who refuse to die, whether they call them *vampyr* or by some other name. Persecuted by a Church that refuses to recognize their convic-

tions and outlaws their practices, they often stand alone and unprotected against the lords of darkness who demand blood sacrifice with more regularity than any of their gods or goddesses ever did. At the same time, pagans are often better prepared than Christians to deal with Cainites, since their folk wisdom contains many methods for protecting themselves from the undead. The widespread pagan practice of cremating the dead, as opposed to interring them in the ground or in elaborate crypts, serves as one means of making certain that a beloved relative will not return as one of the walking dead.

Pagan Cult: (5 point Merit)

You have managed to acquire a following of pagan worshippers who believe that you are the personification of one of their deities. More than simply a herd from which you can feed, these devoted followers can also perform a variety of services for you, from administering your lands during the day to procuring vessels to satisfy your hunger. In order to ensure their devotion, however, you must make regular appearances to your priests so that their faith in you continues unabated. In all likelihood, you have assumed the identity of a local death god or war deity, who requires regular sacrifices of blood. You have likely created ghouls from your most fervent cultists, thus assuring yourself of a loyal cadre of protectors during daylight hours.

True Faith

Like their Christian neighbors, some pagans possess a strength of belief that serves them as a shield against Cainites and their predations. Especially effective against Cainites who themselves once practiced the old religion or who still hold to many of its beliefs, True Faith can protect those pagans who possess it from Cainite intrusion or control. Cainites who fear the judgment of Odin or Thor and tremble at the thought of Lugh's shining wrath will react to a symbol of these gods even if the power of a crucifix leaves them untouched.

True Faith works in the same fashion for pagans as the True Faith of Christians, Jews or Muslims (see **Vampire: The Dark Ages**). It differs only in the trappings used to enact it. With this form of Numina, devout pagans can keep Cainites at a distance, make themselves immune to Cainite Dominate or Presence, sense the presence of the undead or even cause a Cainite to flee in terror. Pagan priests who possess True Faith can also place protections around sacred places such as groves, stone rings or pools of water, preventing Cainites from setting foot on this "holy ground." In Eastern Europe, pagans with True Faith may very well be able to use garlic as a ward against Cainites (though it is actually the Faith, not the garlic, which repels the vampire).

Pagan Magic

Ritual magic performed by pagan priests (or druids or witches) constitutes a form of hedge magic. Most individuals capable of producing real effects through the use of rituals and prayers to pagan deities are, in some cases, potential but untaught practitioners of True Magick. In other cases, they are simply people whose faith is strong enough that they are able to tap into the magical energies that still hold forth in the medieval world. Most commonly, these miracle workers possess only one type of pagan magic; occasionally, a particularly talented and devout person may excel in two different areas of power. The practice of pagan magic is time-consuming and most people do not have the luxury to devote long hours to practice and preparation, particularly if the crops need tending or the sheep need to be shorn.

Forms of Pagan Magic

The following descriptions illustrate the various types of magic practiced by druids, shamans and other pagan holy persons. Storytellers can use these as guidelines for fleshing out pagan populations in **Dark Ages** chronicles. They are not intended for use by Cainite characters, who have their own Disciplines.

• **Herbal Ways** — This type of magic allows the pagan priest to use her knowledge of herbs and their properties to produce salves, poultices, powders, potions and other medicinal or toxic substances imbued with magical energy. This makes them more effective than most types of herbal medicine or treatment. A knowledge of Herbalism is a requirement for this path, as well as access to the numerous natural ingredients used in making such things as potions for easing pain, elixirs capable of soothing a cough and poultices to stave off or, in some cases, cure bubonic plague. Midwives, wise women and herbalists are the most common practitioners of this magical form.

• **Nature Ways** — Those who practice this form of pagan magic are able to exercise some control over the weather, calling rain to dry fields or encouraging crops to grow. Additionally, nature priests are able to ensure the fertility of flocks and herds and can predict the best times for planting or reaping. Most pagans prefer to work with nature rather than against her. Calling weather is a serious matter than can have far-reaching consequences elsewhere. Rain doesn't just arrive out of thin air; it is summoned from another locale, which might, therefore, undergo serious drought as a result of a witch's weather-working. Pagan priests who serve elemental or earth deities most often practice this type of magic.

• **Omen Ways** — Practiced by diviners, seers and shamans, this power allows its followers to read true signs of the near future in a variety of ways. Usually some sort of ritual must precede the act of divining, such as the sacrificial slaughter of an animal, the purification of the diviner through fasting or bathing, or the burning of certain herbs. Methods of extracting omens include casting runes or straws, gazing into still water, watching the skies or studying the movements of animals or clouds. Visions of the future are usually hazy and indistinct. Occasionally, a seer will clearly view what is to come. Such instances are rare and always run the risk of changing the particular future thus scried.



• **Warding Ways** — This path of pagan magic enables the practitioner to ritually protect certain areas or individuals from unwanted influences, including Cainite, Christian, faerie or other supernatural agencies. This form of magic takes a considerable amount of time, both in gathering the substances to construct the ward — special powders, blessed water, wood shavings from a sacred tree — and in performing the ritual that sets the ward in place. Warded areas keep out those who are designated at the time the warding is constructed. In most cases, wards are intended to keep out general groups, such as Cainites or Christians, but occasionally a highly specific ward may be created to keep out the tyrannical landlord or some other specific individual. In some cases, wards may prevent supernatural creatures from using their powers within its confines. Druids who still maintain sacred groves often learn to master the creation of wards.

Pagan Relics

Just as the Christian faith possesses holy relics that store divine power, some pagan symbols act as repositories of True Faith, and are thus effective in protecting against Cainites. These relics or talismans are exceedingly rare and are usually created only at certain times, or else have survived from the centuries before the arrival of Christianity to pagan lands. Storytellers may use these examples or design their own, culturally appropriate, relics.

• **May Crown** — This crown of flowers and leaves, worn by the "spring maiden" at Beltaine, will, if preserved and blessed by a pagan priest with True Faith, protect a believer who wears it from attacks by hungry Cainites. Its power is equal to the True Faith of the one who blessed it.

• **Imbolc Candle** — Blessed by a pagan priest at an Imbolc ceremony, the flame from this candle will protect a house from intrusion by Cainites. A family will usually bring a number of candles for blessing at Imbolc. So long as a flame is transferred from one candle to another one specially blessed, its power will not diminish.

• **Samhain Bread** — This cakelike bread, part of the Samhain feast, can injure a Cainite in the same fashion as the bread and wine of the Christian mass. Any vampire who ingests even a small portion of the bread or who feeds from someone who has just eaten of it takes from one to three dice of aggravated damage at the Storyteller's discretion.

• **Lughnasa Coin** — A coin blessed by a pagan priest, druid or witch during the ceremonies in honor of Lugh, the god of light, possesses the power to wound a Cainite who comes into contact with it. The coin inflicts aggravated damage similar to weak or indirect sunlight. In addition, any vampire so touched must make a Courage roll to avoid Rötschreck.





Chapter Six: Dark Medieval Europe

Nightlife in the Dark Medieval World

With the hazards of nocturnal existence and travel, no modern communication, and a rigid social hierarchy, it appears that Cainites would have almost no chance against the forces of the Dark Medieval world. What do vampires have that could possibly give them an edge against the night? What do they have that could allow them to gain power, maintain a lifestyle, or even travel to see friends? There are more options than you might think, and there is nothing that can't be fixed by a judicious application of brains and Disciplines.

General Difficulties

Some things just can't be avoided. Havens, travel and feeding are necessities that no Cainite can afford to ignore. There is more to choosing one's haven than picking out the most likely looking castle on a hill, and feeding troubles never go away, they just change form.

Country Living

Most Cainites look for havens in the areas where they grew up (and were probably Embraced). People do not venture beyond the safety of familiar towns and territories in the Middle Ages, and it takes extraordinary courage to move out into the unknown world. A vampire encounters special difficulties in doing so, and unless circumstances dictate otherwise, most prefer to stay in familiar territory.

Some vampires are able to keep their mortal homes, but the presence of family and servants can make life difficult, as mortals, unlike vampires, grow inexorably older and eventually die. Cainites, the passionate creatures that they are, find it hard to endure these losses of companions so close to them. Likewise, neighbors may wonder at the changes in a new vampire's behavior. Certain necessities do need to be seen to, such as taxes and rent. Failure to pay can result in a lax vampire being roused in the middle of the day to be served an eviction notice. Domestic repairs certainly need to be addressed (such as the seasonal rethatching of the roof) and very few tradesmen would undertake such work at night. The development of glass was a great blow to Cainite havens. While it makes little difference in a peasant cottage, homes owned by the wealthy are expected to have at least one glass window. Despite the murky quality of most glass at this time, it is still enough to let some light in, and any amount is too much. As any vampire can attest, glass is much less effective at blocking the lethal rays of the sun than a sturdy wall....

Those who inherited or owned castles or manors in their mortal lives may find that while they sleep more comfortably, the castle nonetheless carries its own problems and responsibilities. Castle-dwelling Cainites must also find some way to manage the lands and the peasants who farm them. Riding out at dusk will allay suspicions for a while (after all, who ever gets to see the lord and lady but on rare occasions?), but after a while, some might wonder why the lord is never seen during the day, or about his strange pallor. A vampire who is fortunate enough to take over a castle should be ready to run it and the lands; noble neighbors or errants with sights set on the nobility may try to take it away and "do it right."

Shelters may be acquired through several means, mostly by repossessing them from the previous inhabitants. Cottages are best acquired this way, since there are fewer people to deal with; however, the people within may be well-known in the area. Their sudden disappearance will arouse suspicion. Other buildings that can serve as shelter include windmills, gatehouses, stables, barns, outbuildings of manors, and pilgrim's huts along the road.

Feeding in the country does not appear to be a problem at first, with all the myriad little towns and villages dotting the landscape. However, this is not the case in wilderlands like the Schwarzwald or the Scottish Highlands, where a vampire might wander for nights without seeing another soul, living or otherwise. Vampires who prefer this sort of setting must learn to hunt animals or starve while waiting for a passing traveler. There are other creatures looking for human flesh, too. Redcaps and other Unseelie fae, Black Spiral Dancers and the occasional unbalanced human may be fierce competition for scarce sustenance.

Hunting animals may fare a Cainite little better. Wherever a vampire goes, she is surely trespassing on *someone's* land, most often that of a noble. Being caught hunting on a noble's lands often results in charges of poaching, which can have penalties ranging from a fine to death, depending on the noble. Sometimes, Cainites manage to divert such charges to the peasants, who are certainly hungry and desperate enough to be capable of such acts.

The fae also keep particular care over stretches of forest they consider to be theirs, and they will exact their own revenge — their punishments are also known to be exceedingly "creative." Of course, there are also the Lupines, who have scattered villages and settlements across Dark Medieval Europe. Occasionally a vampire and Lupine discover the other's existence while running down the same deer. The Lupines are notoriously poor at sharing with their Cainite neighbors, and if they suspect one is living on their lands and feeding from their Kin, they will not rest until the offender is brought to ground. If that means trampling other Cainites along the way, all the better.

Some Cainites learn to drink exclusively from animals, going so far as to keep them only for their blood. The presence of animals can make a haven look "normal," but this practice has resulted in a new social classification for such vampires: the Farmers.

Famines and pestilence are very hard on the peasants and animals, and thus on the countryside in general. Men are driven to desperate acts, and to find scapegoats for misfortune. If the smaller animals die, the larger predators have nothing to eat and start competing with vampires for what little game remains. If plant-eaters die from lack of food, the predators turn on each other. During the worst famines, those vampires who do not migrate to the city or other locales risk falling into torpor from hunger or resorting to diablerie of other Cainites.

Monastic Living

Some vampires try to continue their lives in the monasteries or convents to which they previously belonged, or that they joined in their unlives. Such vampires will typically find monastic unlife very difficult. Such communities have fairly small numbers; abbots and abbesses usually believe in getting

to know their charges fairly well. The amount of Faith found within the walls can be most uncomfortable for many, no matter how strong a Cainite believes herself to be.

It is easier to find havens in monasteries than it is in secular realms, but harder to maintain them. Many monasteries and abbeys are built with several outbuildings used as bakeries, breweries, wineries, storage, smithies, guesthouses and for various other functions. While it may be no small matter to burrow into the potato bin or to curl up in an empty barrel for the day, a monk or nun who does not follow the order of the day will be sought after and disciplined. Some Cainites, who manage to survive in religious communities numbering 100 members or more (one community was recorded to have 900 at its fullest), move their shelters nightly. They usually perform chores or tasks before bedtime to spare themselves from trouble. Still others move invisibly among the tenants of the monastery, feeding and sleeping where they may safely do so.

Feeding takes special skill in a monastic setting. While some lazy Cainites think to save themselves trouble by feeding on their fellow monastics, a monk or nun who wakes up noticeably weaker will suspect disease for only so long. The animals kept at the community (such as cows, goats or geese) may also be fed upon, but if a cow dies because a vampire overate, the abbey will suddenly be in need of a new cow (which costs quite a bit) and the abbot may wonder why a healthy cow just up and died one night. The wise Cainite learns to hunt outside the monastery, going into the surrounding towns and villages. He may run into competition from his own kind, but that can be dealt with; a nosy abbot is more difficult.

Communities may become used to strange occurrences after a while, perhaps seeing them as God's tests or simple bad luck. Faith may grow stronger (such that a vampire may have to leave), or an exorcist may be brought in at special request or by chance. Those who are not part of a community may notice things that the inhabitants have grown accustomed to or too dispirited to care about, and newcomers may be able to recognize the activities of the supernatural.

Those abbeys, convents and monasteries that serve the Cainite heresy or related vampiric denominations are often built or furnished with the vampires' needs in mind. Such places sustain their followers through proximity to a city or by livestock and travelers.

City Living

Cities are natural habitats for many Cainites. The Nosferatu make great use of ancient catacombs and viaducts, as well as sewer systems. Many Cainites have managed to become so wrapped up in city life that living elsewhere would be a shock to them.

Havens can be found in a number of places, from cramped alley spaces where the sun does not penetrate, to the rooms over shops or in palaces. Vampires who lived in the city during their mortal days often attempt to maintain their old residences, albeit



with a few modifications. Windows can be shuttered and covered, rousing only mild curiosity, if any, from residents. Of course, taxes and rent do have to be paid; even *The Book of Nod* admonishes Cainites to "render Caesar his due."

One of the greatest problems facing city-dwelling vampires is the curfew. At around nine o'clock in the evening, the curfew bell rings, signaling people to get out of the streets and go home, and for shopkeepers to close their doors. The night watch is not known to be forgiving to those who are out past curfew, since such people are usually up to no good. Someone on official business must carry something that denotes his special status, like a badge depicting his employer's crest or seal, or livery. Vampires on business at such late hours must learn to be stealthy, procure crests to help them pass the watch, or learn Disciplines that will be of assistance. During the summer months, rising in time to get out before curfew can be difficult, if not impossible.

Feeding or meeting in a city with a curfew brings its own special set of problems. Those Cainites with ghouls usually task them to have blood ready for their masters' awakening, or to find likely victims. Those vampires who are not so fortunate must hunt on their own, often stalking the night watch itself or mortals out late for whatever reason. A great many become Cauchemars (vampires who feed on the sleeping) or Footpads (who feed on derelicts and beggars). Meetings may take place in guildhouses, shops or anywhere a few vampires can crowd in without drawing attention to themselves. Many of these meetings are held in the dark, after each person has been identified in some way.

In cities without curfews, a vampire may move about with some ease, but must be even more watchful for cutpurses and thieves. Vampires here have a number of choice vessels to feed upon, spawning a number of new types of feeding vampires: Succubi and Incubi (those who seduce mortals and drink only enough to sate the hunger), and Rakes (those who haunt inns, taverns or other gatherings of mortals), in addition to Footpads and Cauchemars. Elysiums and other meetings are much more grand affairs, owing to less of a need to hide.

A problem that faces vampires in any city is the ratio of Cainites to mortals. A city with 9,000 people is remarkable and rare. Many vampires feed within the city limits to save time or for other reasons, and end up running into each other. Add a curfew and a prince's orders, and things can become very tense very quickly. The risk of discovery increases each time a new vampire enters a city and tries to compete for scarce resources. Stories of two Cainites who coincidentally choose the same victim, then wake their victim with the ensuing argument are becoming nigh apocryphal. A wise vampire learns to hunt the suburban areas of a city to ensure that he will be successful.

Life on the Road

The open road in the Dark Medieval world is frightening for mortals and vampires. For Cainites, life on the road is a nerve-racking experience, usually best undertaken by the sturdiest of the breed. Sometimes travel cannot be put off, however, and there are myriad reasons why a vampire would take to the road, whether wanderlust, business or escape.

It is difficult for modern people to imagine the blackness that envelopes the Dark Medieval world at the close of day. The night sky is a canopy of ebony, dimly illuminated by tiny stars. When the moon is waning or hidden by clouds, a vampire is not be able to see her hand in front of her face. A bird flying overhead sees a landscape of almost total blackness, occasionally relieved by beacons for sailors or night-fires. Crossroads near cities have lights on occasion, but beyond the flicker of the traveler's own lantern is often only the vast empty night.

A vampire on the road at night is alone for the most part. Travel is not undertaken much during the day, much less at night. Still there are others on the road: merchants traveling to reach a market or fair; troubadours, bards or jongleurs who have not reached the safety of a town or castle before night; soldiers or crusaders returning home; and pilgrims returning from shrines, their cloaks and hats rattling with souvenir brooches from their travels. Highwaymen, bandits and other human predators also prowl the darkness, looking for such unlucky souls. If travelers are lucky, they might only be robbed, or perhaps beaten if the bandits want sport. Less fortunate ones are murdered for as little as their bags of provisions.

Most highways are remnants of the old Roman roads, which are often in disrepair. They dwindle into track roads, used by king and commoner alike, and a traveler will have to stand aside as a carriage or oxcart rolls past. Track roads connect tiny villages and isolated crofters, and those trails are often scarcely visible at night and no wider than a man's arm span. A traveler is considered lucky to walk 20 miles in one day (under good conditions — no snow or rain; roads passable).

Many roads and lands are said to be haunted by supernatural guardians, some more fearsome than vampires. Most ignore travelers; others attack without warning or cause. Such things include the black dogs of the English moors; the *Aufhangen* (meaning "leap upon" in German); or the giant, headless human torso that patrols the lands of a Scottish clan.

Convents and monasteries maintain guesthouses for travelers, and none can refuse a traveler in need without reason (such as sickness within the walls). Inns are found within the boundaries of towns and villages, and either cost coin or something tangible in exchange for shelter. Stopping along a road is not usually advised unless the traveler is prepared to kindle a fire and sit up all night watching for predators. Shelter might be found at a manor or castle if one is a successful beggar, but some lords are known for their lack of hospitality. (In the case of a vampire lord, the traveler, whether Cainite or mortal, could be in for a rude surprise.)

Havens on the road are difficult to find. Some vampires prefer to find a cottage and take it by force. Roadside shelters, little more than lean-tos, are built along certain, well-traveled roads, but they offer little protection from the daylight, not to mention frequently having mortal guests. Those with the

Protean Discipline have the option of sleeping in the earth. Abbeys where the Cainite heresy is practiced offer very comfortable quarters for their guests. There is, however, no way to find out in advance if one is along the road; such things are usually only spread by word of mouth.

Ravnos often stay with bands of tinkers or other Gypsies, or, at the very least, keep their own wagons for havens. Few people are likely to bother a Gypsy camp, and a single wagon with a horse gazing nearby is not a sight for alarm. However, Ravnos risk not only the prejudices of princes and other high-born vampires, but mortal authorities as well, who frequently roust Gypsies out of a city at the first sign of them. Gangrel sometime shelter with Gypsies, as well. A few non-Ravnos vampires have tried using the colorful wagons as a means of travel, with mixed results.

Feeding on the road has been compared to trying to make a chicken fly, according to one Ravnos — a difficult proposition, but not impossible. Most transient vampires feed on travelers in roadside shelters or in the guesthouse of monasteries. The latter option can be dangerous. Sometimes, a vampire may happen upon a lonely crofter's cottage or a solitary traveler. It is not wise to feed on pilgrims; such people are often returning from or are currently on a pilgrimage, and their Faith is likely to be higher than usual. Rumor has it that one ragged pilgrim left a vampire writhing in agony from brushing against her cloak, which was said to be so decorated with rattling badges and brooches from her travels that she could be heard before she was seen.

The Itinerant Salubri

Of late, strange writing has appeared in many roadside shelters, on a few trees and on the walls of cottages and monasteries. Sometimes it is pure Hebrew; sometimes it is writing that resembles Hebrew. Few have been able to read it, and even fewer can interpret it. But those who must, can.

The writings are messages. They are left by Salubri as a means of communication with one another. Most are attempting to find out who among them still lives and who does not. Most messages are short, followed by names or sigils, and occasionally news or warnings. Some write in Hebrew, others in Enochian, but they all understand the meaning and purpose behind the words.

Ship Travel

Most Cainites find ship travel to be one of the worst inconveniences, but one of the most necessary. Almost any great journey involves some water travel, especially travel from England or Ireland. Those who travel by water must simply grin and bear it.

Finding passage can be an exercise in patience, though sometimes it simply means going to the docks and asking sailors which ship is going to a particular port of call and if it will accept a passenger. One should step warily, though; many dishonest merchants and captains will shanghai their "passengers" and sell them into slavery at Arab ports.

Other details of aquatic travel include finding a place to sleep on the journey, making sure to be on board if the captain likes to sail at dawn or with the tide (which could be the middle of the afternoon), how to explain daylight absences, and most importantly, how to feed. A ship that floats into port with a dead crew, and with only the captain and vampire about will incite a hue and cry. Many captains can be paid enough to leave a vampire to her own devices, but regular sailors can prove troublesome with superstitions and inquisitiveness.

Knightly Orders

Nothing, whether great or small, which is undertaken in the name of the Lord can fail....

— Raymond of Aguilers

While hardly the most numerous soldiers in the service of the Lord, the knightly orders are among the most important. The Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic knights are the best known of the orders, but they are certainly not the only ones. From the shores of the Baltic came the Orders of the Sword and Dobrin. While Spain fosters a trio of knightly groups, England produces the Order of St. Thomas of Acre, and an ancient Hospitaller chapter reinvents itself as the Order of St. Lazarus. While not all of these groups endure (the Baltic orders, in particular, were short-lived), their impact far outweighs their numbers.

Origins and Notes

The knightly orders originate from the loose associations of knights who banded together voluntarily to protect abbeys or other sites. By the middle of the 12th century, certain associations come together into more familiar knightly orders. Some of these groups have more sanction than others; for example, the Templars are supported by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the instigator of the Crusade of 1147. Other groups form independently or rise from the ashes of nonmilitary associations.

The knightly orders are significant because they present the first standing armies in Dark Medieval Europe since the days of the Roman Empire. Before the orders were created, armies were seasonal or mercenary and they acquired their own pay through plunder. Keeping a knight in the field is a ludicrously expensive proposition (one Templar house in France has a staff of over 80 on call to support a single knight); keeping an entire army at the ready is financially suicidal. However, with the impetus of faith (and the gifts of land and coin that such faith inspires in those outside the orders), the knightly orders are able to keep standing armies in the field year-round. Admittedly, the forces that the Templars and others are able to field are small by modern standards, but to the medieval military strategist, the notion of a full-time professional army is stunningly new.

Moral Qualms

Priests with military connections are nothing new. (William of Normandy's half-brother, Bishop Odo, rode into battle at Hastings with a mace instead of a sword so that he "might spill no blood.") However, many clerics have grave reservations about priests in arms, even in the service of the Lord. As most members of knightly orders are lay brothers rather than priests, however, the issue resolves itself nicely; actual priests with groups like the Hospitallers serve only as chaplains, doctors and the like. Furthermore, growing emphasis on the knightly and Christian duty of protecting the weak lends credence to the idea of the Christian knight. "No man hath any greater love than this: that he lay down his life for his friends." This is the passage used as justification for holy military orders.

Life in a knightly order is not one of luxury and sloth. Lazarene knights, for example, are uniformly afflicted with leprosy, and the Templars have severe restrictions on their wealth, attire (hair shirts were mandatory) and personal habits. While kings and popes accuse the Templars of lasciviousness, Satanism and other sensual crimes, in the days of the crusader kingdoms there is nothing soft about knightly existence.

The Leper Knights

Descended from a nonmilitary order of Hospitallers originally established in A.D. 369 by St. Basil of Caesarea, the Order of St. Lazarus was initially a system of hospitals and hospices for pilgrims to the Holy Land. Special attention was given to lepers by members of the order.

The order remains nonmilitary in nature until 1098. With the fall of Jerusalem (and the order's Leper House with it), leprous knights of other orders are placed under the charge of the Order of St. Lazarus. As most of these knights are still more or less able-bodied, the protection of outposts and hospitals of the order in the Holy Land inevitably falls to these chevaliers. At the end of 1098, the society of those who have cared for lepers and pilgrims is reinvented as the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem, a chivalric order.

Regarding themselves as men already dead, the knights of the order are renowned for their ferocity and prowess in battle. "The men who walked alone" and "living dead" are names Lazarene knights have for themselves; death in the service of faith is infinitely preferable to the slow ravages of disease. With concerns of self-preservation essentially banished, knights of the order garner respect from both the Christian king of Jerusalem (Baldwin IV, himself a leper, is a noted patron) and Salah el-Din himself. It is Salah el-Din who, after his reconquest of Jerusalem, allows the poor of the city to exit the walls through the Gate of St. Ladre (Lazarus), and to seek safety in the order's hospital.

The order establishes its seat of power at St. Jean d'Acre, acquiring land outside the city walls as well as portions of the region near Caesarea. Hand in hand with the erection of churches and fortresses in this territory is the recognition of the order as a sovereign, temporal power by the pope and others.



What is to Come

With the majority of the order's men-at-arms killed at Gaza in 1244, and the rest attaching themselves to St. Louis IX of France's disastrous Egyptian Crusade and Syrian expeditions, the era of the Lazarene knights in the Holy Land is coming to an end during the 13th century. St. Jean d'Acre falls to Muslim forces in 1291 and with this setback the order's presence in the Holy Land is ending.

The Nosferatu Connection

The sobriquet "lepers" (and the ease with which clan members can slip into Lazarene hostels unnoticed) make the Nosferatu and the Order of St. Lazarus a natural combination. The combination of religious fervor and disease present among the leper knights echoes perfectly the afflictions of Nosferatu vampires, who see themselves as patrons of the Hospitallers. Many of the Lazarene troops are sustained by Nosferatu vitae, which provides a partial explanation for the "walking dead's" reputation for superhuman bravery and prowess. The most noble, pious and talented leper knights can often expect the Embrace.

Two of the order's masters, Fra' Gerard and his successor, Fra' Raymond, have been Embraced by the Nosferatu as reward for services rendered. Since their "demises," these two leper knights have continued to work with the living members of their order, albeit in secret. Fra' Raymond now dwells in Constantinople, along with a good portion of the order's strength. Fra' Gerard's whereabouts are unknown, but he has been seen at St. Jean d'Acre more than once.

While many Lazarene knights are aware of their order's association with the Nosferatu, very few understand the exact nature of that relationship. Most of those who do are either members of the current master's inner circle, or are former Templars who were involved in that order's dealings with the Ventrue.

The Knights Templar

The most infamous of the knightly orders, the Knights Templar, supposedly dabbles in magic, Satanism and other less-than-Christian pursuits. However, the Templars are among the best disciplined, most fearsome and wealthiest fighting forces of the Dark Medieval world, and Templars are held in high esteem by their Muslim opponents.

As breaking ranks is grounds for expulsion from the order, Templar troops are often placed in the rear of crusader armies. This placement is significant because the Seljuk Turks frequently attack their opponents' flanks or rear. Such tactics are unknown in Europe (where shield-wall bashing and knightly skewering of lightly armored infantry is the rule). Commanders of crusader forces counter these maneuvers by guarding the vulnerable rear with troops who are utterly steadfast.

Origins

The Latin Rule of the Templars, which establishes the basic tenets of the order, dates to 1128. Translated and modified into the French Rule in 1136-1137, the rules and regulations of the order are expanded to 686 articles by the time of the execution of Jacques de Molay, last grand master of the order. The tenets include (unsurprisingly) poverty, chastity and obedience, as well as commandments regarding conduct on and off the field of battle.

A Muslim attack on a band of pilgrims in the Holy Land in 1119 is the impetus for the formation of the order. A group of nine knights, outraged by this attack, respond by swearing oaths and riding for Jerusalem. Quartered in what was once the "Temple of Solomon," these nine are known as The Military Order of the Knights of the Temple of Solomon. Bernard of Clairvaux's support (it was he who drafted the Latin Rule) enables the order to grow rapidly; the combination of glory and salvation is particularly appealing to young sons of nobles who stand to inherit nothing in Europe. The clamor to join the order grows so loud that membership is restricted to the sons of knights.

Templars and Magic

Historically, the Templars' esoteric Rule, extreme secrecy and open communication with the Islamic enemy makes them suspect in the eyes of many other crusaders. In addition, the vast wealth of the Templar banking empire attracts envious eyes, including those of Philip IV of France and Pope Philip, whom Philip IV holds in his pocket. Accusations of homosexual acts, defecation upon the Cross and witchcraft are levied at the Knights Templar, and the order is quickly broken. (The treasure of its main temple in Paris is conveniently confiscated by the crown.) Rumors that the Templars dabble in magic (stories of insidious Grail-seeking are the most persistent, but there are others) remain to this day, but proof of any sort is lacking.

In the Dark Medieval world, there is a significant occult aspect to the inner circle of the order. Most Templars are unaware of the presence of the Cabal of Pure Thought at the heart of their order, and as such have no inkling of any magical doings. On the other hand, those who rank master or above might well know the truth, and either fight, ignored or abet it....

Banks

Among the nonmilitary aspects of the Knights Templar is its establishment of a consistent, reliable banking system throughout Europe and the Middle East. Since the order has been granted certain liberties by the Holy See, temples operate as independent entities, and no king dares lay a finger on the wealth contained within. A pilgrim can deposit his gold in a Paris temple, receive a chit good for the money, and redeem that chit for gold in Jerusalem. Only the Templers' sterling

reputation for honesty allows this system to flourish; there is no doubt that any money put into Templar hands is both safe and retrievable.

The Ventrue Connection

To the Ventrue, wealth, military power and independence from the Lasombra-infested Church, are exceedingly attractive aspects of the Templars. The Ventrue flock to the Templars, seeking potential childer and financial opportunities. While some temples are inaccessible to the Cainites due to the strong faith of its attendants (Templars are lay clergy, and most are quite pious), others are safe houses for Ventrue seeking to travel from Europe and Jerusalem. While stories abound that the Templars guard the blood of Christ, in truth many Templars guard blood of a different kind.

Arms and Armor

A Templar knight's tools of the trade are mandated by the Rule of the order. Each takes identical weapons and armor into battle. Standard Templar armor includes a triangular, curved shield, a mail helm surmounted by a solid helm, chain mail on the legs, and additional pieces of metal guarding both shoulders and feet.

Basic Templar weaponry includes: a straight, two-edged sword; a short, spiked mace (also called a Turkish mace); a long dagger and two knives.

Each Templar is permitted only three horses, though knights who are friends with the master might possess four.

The Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem

Like the Lazarenes, the Hospitallers originally were hospital administrators with an eye toward the care of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. Created around 1080, the order is recognized by the Holy See in 1113 as being devoted to the care of the sick and poor. Military and more formal Hospitaller functions accrete the group rapidly. Before the close of the 12th century, the order's new role in coordinating the defense of Palestine and Syria supersedes its original purpose.

While not so thoroughly entangled in the financial world as the Templars, the Hospitallers do receive massive endowments in Western Europe. These properties are managed to fund the order's activities in the Holy Land. This coordination of efforts in the West and East enables the order to create an international structure that allows it to survive the final expulsion of the Catholic orders from the Holy Land in 1291.

The Hospitallers engage in bitter disputes with the Knights Templar throughout the Dark Medieval period. While the rivalry is usually abandoned in the face of the Saracen foe, it is interesting to note that when Philip IV of France eradicates the Templars and confiscates their property, he hands some of the spoils over to the Hospitallers.

Teutonic Knights

A very real temporal power, the Order of Teutonic Knights establishes the first western-style government in the Holy Roman Empire and replaces collapsing governmental structures in Livonia. The Teutonic Knights also have extensive European and Levantine holdings, and play a major role in the Baltic Crusades.

These knightly orders recruit almost exclusively (unsurprisingly) from the German-speaking peoples of Europe, and in most cases operate in a fashion similar to that of most of the other orders. It is only in eastern Europe — in Prussia, Livonia and briefly in Hungary — that the Teutonic Knights attempt to set up working governments.

Judaism and Mysticism in the Dark Ages

The Jewish population occupies a unique and precarious position in the Dark Medieval world. As biblical prohibitions against usury (theoretically) limit the entrance of Christians into the banking field, Jews become the moneylenders of Europe and are indispensable to any king or nobleman looking to put an army into the field. The most spectacular example of this phenomenon is William the Conqueror's mercenary-fueled victory at Hastings. The gold to hire those troops came from the Jewish moneylenders whom William had specifically invited to settle in Normandy.

On the other hand, the Church, the nobility and the peasant population are all aligned against the Jews of Europe for religious and political reasons. Rulers looking for quick financial fixes exile the Jews from their domains and confiscate their property and possessions. Convicted of the crime of killing Christ, Jews are the victims of pogroms, persecution and the odd crusader looking for an easier foe than a well-armed Saracen.

In spite of this antagonism, the Jewish community flourishes and sets down deep roots in places as diverse as Kiev (seat of the brief-lived Jewish Khazar kingdom), Prague and Spain. Jewish ghettos spring up in many major European cities, particularly those with reputations as centers of learning and commerce. From Florence to Vilnius, the Jewish presence in Europe is established as a permanent fixture.

Among the developments in Judaic thought and culture is the formalization of the school of mysticism called Kabbalah, a study of the holy books of Judaism in search of the true, or spiritual, universe (also called the *En Sof*, or "incomprehensible"). While Jewish mystical traditions have differed from

those of more mainstream religious thought for thousands of years, it is during the 12th century that the name Kabbalah is applied to the most prevalent schools of mystical thought.

A Warning

Kabbalah is a living, breathing mystical discipline that has evolved and changed throughout the centuries. Furthermore, as befitting any school of religious study, Kabbalistic texts are rife with confusion, contradiction and mistranslation (witness the confusion of the angels Samael, originally identified with the Serpent, and Lucifer, once identified with Uriel or "Light of God." There is no "complete and accurate" version of Kabbalah; centuries of study, debate, translation and outside interest have created a large body of interpretation of the original Hebrew texts. What is presented here is a brief overview on period Kabbalah, with notes on other prominent aspects of Jewish mysticism, including *gematria*, golems and amulets.

What Is Kabbalah?

At its core, Kabbalah is a spiritual and symbolic search for the meaning of existence. The core question that every Kabbalist seeks to answer is: If God is perfection, why is His creation (the universe) imperfect? Hand in hand with this query is the idea of achieving or, more accurately, returning to the perfection of God.

According to Kabbalistic thought, this universe is one of many that God created (and allowed to be destroyed), though it is perhaps the longest-lived of any. While God is synonymous with the spiritual universe, a certain portion of God's 10 qualities are missing from critical sections of this perfect existence. These qualities have been removed by God through a process called *tzimtzum*, or contraction, in order to create points of imperfection within the perfect universe where imperfect, physical universes can exist. Our own universe, for example, was supposedly created by God when, in a certain section of the *En Sof*, he replaced Law with Kindness. This was done to engender free will, as opposed to preordained obedience to divine law.

Beyond this, Kabbalah breaks down into a series of emanations through which our universe was created. Called the *esher sephirot*, these qualities or spheres are sometimes assumed to be balanced by evil or destructive forces called *Qlippoth* (shells). The arrangement of the *sephirot* is likened to a tree, and the Tree of Emanations (*Etz Khayim*) is the overriding metaphorical image of Kabbalistic thought.

On an exceedingly simplistic level, Kabbalah is the study of the Tree of Emanations, its components, and the way in which they interact in the four levels of the physical universe. The effects of the *Qlippoth* are also important in Kabbalistic study, but the emanations are in many ways at the core of much Kabbalistic thought.

The *Sephirot* are:

Keter (Crown) — the projection of *En Sof* into the physical universe

Khokhmah (Intelligence) — also known as the "father sphere"

Binah (Wisdom) — called the "mother sphere"

The remaining seven spheres are all derived from *Binah*, and represent the seven days of creation. The first six of these spheres are also known as the "active" spheres. They are:

Khesed (Kindness) or **Gedulah** (Greatness)

Din (Law) or **Gevurah** (Power) — also sometimes identified as **Pakhad** (Fear)

Tiferet (Beauty) or **Rokhim** (Mercy)

Netzakh (Victory or Endurance)

Hod (Glory or Majesty)

Yesod (Foundation) or **Tzaddik** (Righteousness)

The last of the spheres is **Malkhut** (Kingdom), which is also known as **Knesset Yisroel** (The Community of Israel) or **Shekhinah** (God's Female Aspect).

While all of these spheres, being qualities of the divine, are inseparable, they have been categorized by scholars. The first three are often grouped together as the "intellectual triad." *Khesed*, *Din* and *Tiferet* are grouped as the "moral triad," while *Netzakh*, *Hod* and *Yesod* are the "natural triad," due to their proximity to *Malkhut*, the physical universe. Triangle imagery and tree imagery are often used when describing the emanations.

Kabbalists in the Dark Medieval World

Kabbalah, a study of the qualities and emanations of God, is a religious pursuit. Requiring a knowledge of biblical Hebrew (as well as Aramaic in many cases) and a visceral understanding of Judaism, Kabbalah is exclusively a Jewish field of study. In addition, religious prohibitions forbid women or men under 40 (under 20, according to some sources) from studying Kabbalah. While these rules are sometimes honored more in theory than in the observance, the vast majority of Kabbalists that characters are likely to encounter in the Dark Medieval world are observant, middle-aged, male Jews.

Kabbalah, despite its links to traditions of Hermetic magic, is not a solitary scholarly pursuit. While meditation, trances and other hallmarks of multiple magical schools all have their place in the practice of Kabbalah, Jewish religious thought demands debate and community. The hermit, spending his days in solitary religious contemplation, does not fit the Kabbalist identity. The Kabbalist, secure in the community of his peers, studies, argues and works with others in the heart of the Jewish quarter of his city. Many famed Kabbalistic scholars, starting in the late-12th century, attract followers and disciples and, from Slavic lands to Florence, Kabbalistic schools emerged.

In other words, the notion of the lone Kabbalist, cackling to himself in the wilderness as he casts *gematria*, is entirely inaccurate. Any Kabbalist of note is likely to be found in the heart of a city, surrounded by a supportive community and knowledgeable, skilled peers. Furthermore, since Kabbalah is a religious pursuit, students are extremely likely to have True Faith. Many Kabbalah masters (*Baal Shem Tov*, or "Masters of the Good Name") are also reputed to be able to work miracles and wonders of healing, effects which resemble those available to some devout Christian priests with True Faith.

Kabbalah and Vampires

A combination of factors makes it nigh impossible for any Cainite to be proficient at Kabbalistic study. The base requirements — male, Jewish, proficient in Hebrew — apply to only a tiny fraction of Europe's mortal, let alone vampire, population. Biblical injunctions against the drinking of blood make it even more unlikely for a practicing Kabbalist to survive long as a vampire. There is also the fact that most Kabbalistic texts have not yet been translated from the original, and are kept in centers of Jewish worship — places with high Faith ratings.

Some vampires might be aware of Kabbalah, though their information might be garbled by mistranslation or prejudice. Amulets and seals are the one aspect of Kabbalistic magic that is known to non-Jews. As for the more esoteric fields of study, character knowledge is left to Storyteller discretion. Remember, however, that long years of persecution and mutual distrust have made most Jewish communities insular. It is not likely that a dweller in a Jewish ghetto will converse much with a stranger, and he is even less likely to take a stranger to meet the local rabbi or Kabbalistic sage.

Of Jews and Blood

Christian myths have grown up around the uses and abuses of blood in Jewish ritual since the crucifixion. The most virulent and prevalent rumor involves the notion that Jews use the blood of Christian babies to make *matzah* (the ritual unleavened bread used in the Passover holiday). Outraged citizens have stormed Jewish ghettos seeking evidence of this myth on many occasions. They often found planted fakery or, more rarely, vampiric havens. The most famous golem, created by Rabbi Loew of Prague, was given life to defend the Jews of Prague against exactly this sort of treatment.

There is, in fact, a strong association with blood in Judaism, specifically relating to the *Kashrut*, or dietary laws. The *Kashrut* describe "clean" ways of slaughtering livestock that must be followed in order for the meat to be kosher. Ritual butchers, called *shochets*, are responsible for upholding these traditions, among which is the idea that animals are to be slaughtered by having their throats cut and all of their blood drained. Furthermore, the use of blood as a foodstuff is forbid-



den to Jews. Judaism also involves many commandments, or *mitzvot*, relating to menstrual blood: A woman undergoing menses is to be removed from her community for a week, then given a ritual bath (*mikvah*) before being allowed to return home.

Obviously, the religious injunction against blood as a foodstuff has serious implications for any Cainite of Jewish extraction. While assimilationist Jews exist (the so-called "court Jew" phenomenon is prominent by the time of the Crusades), the vast majority of European Jews are highly traditional and would look upon a hunger for blood as anathema. Observant Jewish vampires, assuming the instinct for self-preservation is dominant in their existences, are likely to follow the *shochet* model and drink spilled blood, rather than feast directly from vessels.

Complicating matters is the role of Lilith in traditional and Kabbalistic myth. Linked with the *Qlippoth*, the "giants on the earth," and with demons who supposedly ride the winds of the night, the Lilith myth has decidedly vampiric overtones (and actually features quite prominently in Cainite lore). Jews of a more mystical bent who undergo the Embrace are likely to define their new states in terms of the Lilith myth and service to the *Qlippoth*. As these "shells" are set directly against the emanations of Kabbalistic thought, vampires who see themselves as servants of Lilith, and occasionally take steps down the Cappadocians' Road of the Bones, or penitentially adhere to the Road of Heaven.

Seekers After Death

Questing for all sorts of knowledge, the members of Clan Cappadocian are purported to have extensive links with Kabbalistic schools throughout southern Europe. While inquiries between Cappadocians and Kabbalists are most frequently handled by means of correspondence (for obvious reasons; neither party wants to get too close to the other), there would seem to be an extensive trade in manuscripts, grimoires and treatises on death and the soul.

The two most important links between the Cappadocians and scholars of the Kabbalah consist of a place and a person. The place is Genoa, home of one of the most influential Kabbalistic academies. The academy is located near one of the seats of Cappadocian power. Here, trade in the details of death is carried out face to face, and certain scholars claim that much of the codification of Kabbalistic thought that the Genoa school has produced is inspired — or altered — by Cappadocian insights.

The other documented link between Clan Cappadocian and Jewish mysticism comes in the person of Lazarus, an Egyptian Jew Embraced in the first century A.D. While Lazarus himself is now a recluse, the connections he made with his fellow Jews in centuries of thanatological study remain.

Amulets and Phylacteries

One of the more accessible aspects of Kabbalism and Jewish mysticism is the manufacture of amulets (the Hebrew word for these was later adapted into the vernacular as the word *phylacteries*). Drawn from the biblical commandment in Deuteronomy (6:6-9) which calls for Jews to bind the words of the Lord on the gates of their houses and before their eyes, the original amulets were *mezuzot* (nailed to the doorframes of every Jewish home) and *tefilin* (small wooden boxes containing scriptures, worn during prayer). As the distinction between mystical and holy has blurred in the Dark Medieval world, these religious items have taken on added significance. The belief has developed that these devices ward off demons, and the addition of names and other passages into the amulets are commonplace. This practice is not ignored by the Christian community, and a thriving trade in phylacteries (as the non-Jews refer to *tefilin* and *mezuzot*) now exists.

As amulets acquire more and more mystic properties, their creation moves away from the traditional *tefilin*. Instead, appropriate passages from scriptures are included, in hopes of drawing upon the qualities of the names or passages sealed within. A classic example is an amulet for protection during childbirth; such an item contains the names of the trio of angels who once captured Lilith (who had sworn that she would kill all children).

An amulet can also be used to control supernatural entities if the name of the creature to be controlled is inscribed upon it. While angels and demons are typically the entities controlled through this sort of manipulation, it is entirely possible that vampires can be as well. The power offered by this sort of amulet is imperfect; strong enough to offer protection and a degree of control, but hardly granting a dictatorial authority. Indeed, one school of thought holds that angels obey those who hold their seals not out of need, but out of respect for any mortal capable of learning an angel's true name.

Hand in hand with the notion of amulets is that of seals. Seals are usually in the shape of protective triangles or squares. Biblical passages and individual names are placed within, and the letters of certain names are often rearranged (echoing the teachings of the *gematria*). The line between seals and phylacteries is often blurred, and many amulets are marked with protective or preventative seals.

Note: The six-pointed star, or *mogen David* now popularly associated with Judaism, is not used as a magical seal during the Dark Ages. Rather, the seven-branched menorah serves as the symbol of Judaism and as a mystic symbol and seal during the 12th century.

Gematria

According to Kabbalistic thought, the Torah is humanity's interpretation of God's plan for creation. It is folly to assume that the Torah is a simple outline, and Kabbalists have ascribed meanings to the letters, vowels, musical notations and other markings that make up the Torah's text.

On The Creation and Use of Amulets

The creation of an amulet requires both time and investment, and those capable of manufacturing effective amulets are few and far between. In order to create an effective amulet, the purpose of the amulet must first be described. An appropriate phrase, passage or true name must then be inscribed on a scrap of paper to go within the amulet itself — note that true names are very difficult to run across. The physical amulet, often consisting of a black wooden box attached to a long leather strap, is constructed and consecrated in the next steps of the procedure, with the parchment containing the magical phrase or name being sealed inside the box.

To represent this aspect of the creative process, the artisan must roll Wits + Hearth Magic (specialization: Kabbalah) and Intelligence + Occult, with the difficulty determined by the potential power of the amulet being created. No artisan without some True Faith can create a working amulet.

The beneficial effects of wearing an amulet are nullified if the amulet itself is not being worn. An amulet tucked in a purse still has protective powers; one that is left on a desk elsewhere is useless.

Writing therefore is magical. Each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet are assigned a numerical value, and is identified with one of the 22 links between the *sephirot*. Each word also acquires a numerical (and thus magical) value. By calculating the numerical values of words and phrases and finding correlations with other words, Kabbalists perform a sort of divination about the true nature of the universe. For example, both Pharaoh and the name of the demon Ashmodai have the same numerical value; in the minds of Kabbalists, links between the two are established, and through this correspondence with an earthly ruler, Ashmodai is granted the position of one of the kings of the demons.

Gematria is the name of this numerical magic, and it is a very serious matter. Many Kabbalists will not set out on an action without casting *gematria* for the venture ahead and seeing what correlations they are able to discern. *Gematria* can also be cast for others, usually using the subject's name or names.

Note: Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in addition to having a numerical value, correlates to a host of other items: planets, days of the week, facial features, and so on. The interpretations that are garnered from extensive letter associations can be both exceedingly complex and quite accurate.

The Tetragrammaton

God has many appellations, but His true name is unknowable by mortals, since it is sacrilege, according to Jewish belief, to write something truly holy down on something that might be destroyed. Name magic is an important part of Kabbalah (the Torah is often referred to as another name of God) and the series of names given to God all reflect single aspects of the divinity. The most common rendering of a name of God, YHVH (often mistranslated as Yahweh or Jehovah) is known as the tetragrammaton. Kabbalists frequently link the letters of the tetragrammaton with the emanations, or work with them to create other names with different numerical values.

The Name

The efforts of assorted Cainite mystics to uncover the true name of God, and thus power over the Creator, are a mere footnote in the annals of the Jyhad. Most vampires consider this sort of research a fool's errand, but even so the potential rewards for success are so great that few clans are out of the game entirely. The groups devoting the most energy to this search are the Cappadocians and the Tremere, but the Nosferatu and Ventrue are involved as well. In addition, there is rumored that a collection of vampires that crosses clan lines is working on the problem somewhere in the Swiss wilderness.

Cappadocius himself is involved in this project. The Antediluvian and several of his childer play an active part in researching the name of God, and their work has recently branched out into various aspects of the Lilith legend. Agents of the Graverobbers currently search for a stone tablet, inscribed in Chaldean, that will reveal the true name of God.

Angels and Demons

Angels and demons, representatives of the two trees of existence, are an integral part of Kabbalistic thought. There is no doubt that angels and demons are a part of serious study even in the world of the Cainites.

According to the Kabbalistic paradigm, angels and demons are not independent creatures of good or evil, but animate aspects. Their names give emphasis. The name of Samael, ruler of demons, literally means "Blind to God," while the archangel Gabriel's name translates into "Strength of God." Each angel and demon also has associations with colors, directions, and either emanations or *Qlippoth* , which renders each of them as a collection of attributes. When a Kabbalist calls upon an angel, he is not asking aid of a specific being, but calling for the aid of that aspect of the divine that the angel represents. Beseeching Raphael (Healing of God) for aid is to request mercy and healing; calling upon Gabriel is to ask for strength.

While such prayers are answered on occasion, they are never answered by the descent of an actual embodied angel. Rather, the supplicant simply finds himself with sudden reserves of the attribute he seeks. However, this sort of prayer is answered rarely, and calling upon the *sephirot* is likely to draw the attention of those with links to the *Qlippoth*.

Golems

The Kabbalistic universe is full of creatures that may or may not exist: the *shamir*, or rock-devouring worm; the *takhash*, or unicorn; and the *adne hasadeh*, human figures with umbilical cords that lead down into the earth. All of these creatures have been sighted, though not necessarily by authoritative sources, in the Dark Medieval world.

However, the Kabbalistic creature with the widest renown is undoubtedly the golem. Created from river clay, and prayed over by a *minyan* (10 men gathered for prayer), a golem is a statue of a man imbued with life. That life lasts so long as the word *emet* (truth) is carved into the creation's forehead. As soon as the inscription changes (reports vary as to whether the word needs to be destroyed or simply modified to *met* — "corpse"), the golem sinks into a deathlike slumber.

While active, the golem is the perfect servant. Tireless and steadfast, it follows any and all commands to the letter. Many golems are created to guard Jewish ghettos, to patrol the perimeters of the areas from sundown to sunrise in an effort to keep out malefactors. Others serve as bodyguards, or as unsleeping guardians of specific sites.

Golems supposedly echo the hearts of those who create them, so if the man who breathes life into a golem is pure of heart, the golem remains pure throughout its existence. Should, however, there be the faintest hint of hatred, greed or any other negative emotion embedded within the breast of the creator,

Sample Golem Statistics

Physical: Strength 10, Dexterity 2, Stamina 9

Social: Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4

Skills: Melee 3, Stealth 1

Knowledges: None

Disciplines: Golems are considered to have the equivalent of two dots each of Fortitude and Potence.

Willpower: 10 (0 to resist the commands of the golem's creator)

Health: Golems have 10 Health Levels, rather than the normal seven. A golem takes no dice pool penalties for being injured, unless a portion of its unnatural anatomy has been physically removed. Aggravated damage does not apply to a golem; fire, fang and other normal sources simply don't do much to a golem's clay form (although the golem still suffers nonaggravated wounds). In addition, a golem automatically regenerates a Health Level every turn.

Note: Overanxious players may simply charge in against a golem and make a beeline for the creation's forehead, thus rendering an impressive and dangerous foe inert. Should a character attempt this maneuver, the Storyteller should immediately request justification for the character's knowledge of golems — the intricacies of Jewish mysticism are not exactly common currency.



that flaw manifests and breeds within the clay. Sooner or later, the golem rebels or goes insane, and must be destroyed.

A golem also grows a tiny bit each day, making it increasingly difficult for the creature's creator to eradicate the word on its brow. According to some legends, the day a golem grows so tall that its creator cannot reach the inscribed *emet* to remove it is the day the golem goes berserk.

The methods of golem creation are closely guarded. Golems require a tremendous amount of work, dedication and prayer to create, so are extraordinarily rare. A rabbi must hew a life-sized statue of a man from clay, a *minyan* must pray before the ark of the covenant in the local synagogue for a fortnight, requesting that YHVH breathe life into the creation, and the word *emet* must be carved into the golem's forehead.

The finished product has clearly defined capabilities. Golems are incredibly resistant to damage, and are inhumanly strong. One was reputed to have held up the collapsing roof of a palace; others have subdued human wrongdoers easily. While golems are never crafted with weapons, a single blow from the fist of one of these automatons will shatter a wooden door or fell a warhorse.

Striking the word *emet* from the brow of a golem is never an easy task. While the clay of the creation's forehead is soft and smooth to its creator, a golem's flesh is rock-hard to all others. It goes without saying that a golem will resist this sort of assault with all the resources at its disposal.

Faeries

There was a time when meadow, grove and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Appareled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

— William Wordsworth, "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early childhood"

Enchanted forests, mushroom rings, magical pools, green barrows and stone forts — throughout the Dark Medieval world, these are known border markers between the human realms and the lands of the fae. Here, magical energy abounds, Glamour rules over reality, and the good folk preside over their eternal courts. From these magical dwelling places, faerie kings and queens lead their courtiers on nightly hunts. They sweep across the land in search of mortals — or Cainites — to taunt. If their quarry gives merry chase and evades them until dawn, the capricious fae may reward her with a faerie treasure or curse her for robbing them of the anticipated finalè of their sport.

The fickle fae are enigmatic and dangerous when crossed. Their passions run wild and hot. What the fae feel, they experience with bone-jarring intensity that can consume a mortal or Cainite courageous enough to interact with them.

Because faeries are immortal and live in the dreams of Arcadia as well as in the physical world, the years can pall if they have nothing with which to entertain themselves. This is one reason they delight in tormenting, tricking or rewarding others. They long to play a part that allows them vast scope to experience strong emotions. Some, like the boggarts and brownies, achieve this vicariously, watching their chosen mortals during the day and churning butter for them (or turning it sour) as payment for the show at night. For their own amusement, some fae prefer to cause emotional reactions in humans. They appear in various guises and provoke mortals to greed, anger, fear, love or laughter. A few fae experience mortal life directly, undergoing a change that replaces mortals with themselves, weaving Glamour about themselves so the change will go unnoticed.

Many set up elaborate dramas. In the dramas, each fae plays a role mimicking that of nearby humans. They create a town made of moonbeams and illusion where they enact complex scenes with great solemnity — made all the more enjoyable by kidnapping unsuspecting mortals (or Cainites, though this is less common) and setting them down in the middle of their play with no explanations. The fae consider the resulting madness evinced by many mortals as the epitome of humor. Malkavians who have fallen prey to such tricks invariably emerge energized and pleased with their new insights.

Unlike the Church's depiction of them, most fae are not deliberately cruel, evil or treacherous. The majority of the good folk are merely curious and careless. Some, especially those of the Unseelie Court, can be extremely dangerous and callous. Their tricks are designed to hurt rather than embarrass; their illusions meant to lead a mortal into deadly danger.

The Division

If mortals fear the fae, however, they have only themselves to blame. Once, the good folk gave freely of their gifts to humanity, but mortals began demanding what had once been offered. The fae felt justifiably angry and began to cut their ties to the mortal world, spending more time within the borders of fabled Arcadia. As faeries grew more distant, many people forgot their kind deeds and remembered only their pranks. With the rise of the Church, the faeries found themselves cast in a new role altogether — minor demons sent to torment and seduce the faithful. Their changeable natures and penchant for illusion made it all the easier for the Church to blacken their names.

Unfortunately, the fae contribute to their image in other ways as well. A wrathful sidhe knight, for example, might be mistaken for a fallen angel, while redcaps are close enough to most people's conceptions of flesh-eating demons. As children of the Dreaming, faeries also take on characteristics assigned to them by popular belief. Finally, many faeries have grown angry at mortals influenced by the Church, who no longer correctly propitiate them. These fae may deliberately assume apparent demonic qualities when interacting with such humans.



Medieval Practices and Beliefs

Most peasants (and more than a few nobles) step carefully where the fae are concerned. It is well-known that the good folk will savagely avenge any slight or wrong done to them, no matter how small. Mortals can offend faeries without meaning to or even knowing they have done so, and that only increases the tension. Because it is so easy to unintentionally cause offense, mortals have compiled lore and developed certain practices to minimize the possibility of doing so. The following represents knowledge that mortals (and most Cainites) *believe* they know about the fae.

It is known to most peasant women that faeries go about their business invisibly, and that one might be passing by at any time. Throwing out the wash water or the slops without calling out to the good folk beforehand could well result in an innocent faerie being splashed — a deadly insult. Likewise, as faeries, and cows, pigs, sheep, chickens, geese and other domestic animals often share names, it is common practice to point at any animal being called so that a faerie of the same name is not compelled to answer the summons instead. Faeries angered by such impertinence can sour milk for a month or break down perfectly strong fences.

Whether a house is blessed with an obvious helper such as a boggan or not, it is probably kept from harm by at least one faerie acting as a guardian. If good things happen, it is due to the faerie's favor; if something bad occurs, the faerie keep it from getting worse. It is only fair, then, to leave a dish of milk and a little bread and honey outside the door at night so the faerie knows the household appreciates its efforts.

Those fae who are not placated can dry up the milk in a cow's udder, make chickens stop laying eggs, rot the grain in the fields, break weapons and equipment, foul well water, bring bad smells into the house, cause accidents, start fires, cripple children, steal the crops, lame horses, make women barren and lay curses on generations of family members. Some folk are even lured to their deaths through clever illusions. These are the dire fates that mortals seek to avert when making offerings to faeries.

Remedies

Sometimes, despite their best efforts, mortals (and Cainites) incur the wrath of the fae. If rich gifts or heartfelt apologies fail to move faeries to forgiveness, the only choice left is to ward oneself and one's home from the good folks' vengeance. The sovereign remedies outlined may or may not prove effective. The

effectiveness usually depends on whether the fae is amused or offended when she encounters these practices. Nonetheless, the common folk truly believe in their efficacy. They believe that:

• Salt sprinkled across the door and window sills will prevent faeries from entering the household, as will ashes strewn across the hearth in a circular pattern.

• Cold iron will wound faeries terribly, and an iron weapon or tool left lying across the doorway will discourage their entry.

• Carrying a small piece of iron when going out repels faeries, as does humming a holy melody.

• Crosses, ringing churchbells and the host are all sovereign remedies against faeries, because, being minions of Hell (or so it is believed), they cannot abide holy power. Nor can faeries tread on holy ground. One is therefore safe in a church or Christian graveyard.

• Calling out Christ's name robs faeries of any ability to trick a person with illusions, and holy water causes such illusions to disappear in a puff of smoke. The former places one dangerously close to using the Lord's name in vain if done frivolously, however.

Though some faeries have become Christian knights and joined holy orders, mortals still believe that Christian symbols and beliefs can scare and defeat any fae. Most fae are no more afraid of, or repulsed by, the cross than are many Cainites.

Faerie Practices

While mortals may be confused about certain faerie practices, they are actually correct concerning a few of them — though the fae usually have far different reasons for what they do than humans or Cainites can fathom. Some of the most common knowledge is detailed below.

Faerie Raths

• **The Belief:** Everyone knows that faeries live in pagan burial mounds, where they speak with the dead and sometimes bring forth plagues upon the land.

• **The Truth:** This is both true and false. Many faerie raths (great earthen mounds, often covering ancient stoneworks), are indeed tombs, though that was not their original purpose. Many were intended to catch and direct sun- or moonlight down a passageway to illuminate the dark interior on certain special days of the year. Great chieftains were often entombed within such works as acknowledgments of their heroic deeds. The fae may have wondrous castles or whole lands within such structures, but these are like small pockets of the Dreaming that touch upon the physical world, and are not an actual part of it. The fae do not actually reside inside the mounds, but alongside them in another realm. This is definitely not something the Dark Medieval mind grasps.

Stealing Children

• **The Belief:** It is common knowledge that babies or children who show exceptional beauty or talent, or those left unattended by their mothers, or unbaptized are stolen away by the faeries, who leave foul-tempered, sickly changelings in their place. The poor babes are used to pay the faeries' tithes to Hell. The only way to recover a child is to have prayers recited over the changeling, touch it with holy objects, or, as a last resort, whip it soundly with a rowan branch, threaten it with cold iron or burn it in the fire. The faerie cannot stand such torments and deserts the household. The faerie's pact with the Devil thus broken, the child instantaneously returns to its home.

• **The Truth:** Faeries do steal children — and adults when the mood takes them. Births among the fae are infrequent, and babies provide years of joy to a faerie mother in Arcadia. Further, the absence of a child provides a fae with a perfect opportunity to slip in and become a baby, experiencing all the joys and sorrows of growing up. The immortal fae have plenty of time, after all. Many babies are indeed chosen because they seem pretty, merry, smart or sweet. Only the best will do for the fae. Mothers who ignore or harm their children may also lose them to the fae, who have special feelings for children. Baptized or not, any child who is mistreated has a chance of being taken.

Threatening or harming a faerie changeling, though it may be the only way to retrieve a captive child, is a very dangerous affair. If the taking of the child is truly unwarranted and the changeling is too horrid to tolerate, other fae may forgive distraught parents for trying to recover their child. In any other circumstance, any harm done to the changeling will be visited tenfold upon the household that condoned it. Further, the fair folk will assume the people to be unworthy of having children. Not only will the captive be kept, their other children may be taken as well, or the woman cursed with barrenness.

It is not unknown for adults to be kidnapped by the fae. They may be taken for a night or an eternity, but there is usually something about the mortal that leads the fair folk to notice her. She may sing or play an instrument so beautifully that the fae feel they cannot continue their existence without hearing her again and again — for centuries. He may be so handsome that the faerie maiden takes him away and becomes his bride. Or the one taken may simply lack a sense of humor and becomes the sport of a gang of pooka determined to make him laugh — or make him die trying.

Darker motives are also at work. Redcaps sometimes take travelers along the road, forcing them to attend grisly feasts, often as the main course. Some malicious faeries steal children and assume their places to torment parents with endless crying, screaming and breaking things. The Unseelie have been known to engage in human sacrifice from time to time, and those of the Seelie Court whisper that perhaps their darker brethren do pay a tithe to Hell in return for some unknown gift.

Acknowledging Faerie Help

• **The Belief:** Thanking a faerie for his help is both expected and necessary if he is not to be offended.

• **The Truth:** Acknowledging debt to a faerie is a tricky affair. Most fae dislike effusive thanks, preferring symbolic appreciation such as libations of wine or butter, or milk and

honey left out for them. Some faeries become irate when humans offer them more permanent gifts such as jewelry, believing it shows the mortal's own vanity in thinking he has anything of worth to offer to one of the magical fae. Others understand that the mortal is simply trying to thank them and accept it as graciously as possible. It all depends on the fae involved — and their current mood.

Curses

• **The Belief:** Faeries are fickle folk and quick to lay a curse — even upon those who are blameless.

• **The Truth:** The fae may be fickle, touchy, difficult to please and easily bored, but they are rarely unjust within their own codes of behavior. Minor annoyances and small inconveniences may be laid upon humans or Cainites at a faerie's whim. There is usually some reason behind doing so, but it may be no more than the faerie's boredom and desire to watch her victim deal with the situation. While Seelie pranks range from tying someone's hair in knots or causing someone to step in a milkpail and get his foot stuck, Unseelie curses tend to be more malicious, like causing rashes in embarrassing and painful places or making everything the person tries to eat taste like goat vomit. While uncomfortable, such curses rarely last long and aren't really dangerous.

Curses that last or result in noticeable, possibly dangerous effects are only spoken against those who deserve them. Such curses may cause all animals to instinctively shy away from the path of a hunter, or make the lord's household guards unable to recognize their liege.

Those great curses that affect entire family lines, last for centuries, cause direct harm, or kill may only be invoked against those who have caused grievous harm to the fae. Backed by the full force of the Dreaming, these terrible maledictions can destroy a mortal or Cainite, make him and his heirs laughingstocks, undermine him politically or socially, or simply ruin him financially.

Fair Folk Types

Gone away, peerie faeries,
Doon come the bonnie angels,
Sleep safe, my baby.
Away be to Bugaboos,
Smoke shrouds the inner room,
Sleep safe, my baby.
Gone away, peerie faeries,
Gone away, night stealers,
Sleep safe, my baby.

— "Baloo Baleerie" (Hebrides cradle song)

It is not always easy to tell one fae from another. For one thing, not many Cainites or mortals know much about the fae. While certain rough groupings of the fair folk are known, it is also a documented fact among mortals that the fae change shape to appear however they wish. Wildly chaotic, they assume new personality traits to match their outward appearances. Still,



mortals have identified several types of faeries, among them a number of elemental fae of the waters, mountains, fields and forests too numerous to detail. Though in many cases, these mortal labels are inaccurate (or at least incomplete), they form the basis for what most Cainites know about the fae as well.

There are eight types of faeries that are best known to the Dark Medieval world.

• Boggans

These feisty fae are known as hard workers. They can perform miraculous deeds in a single night. Boggans were originally found among the settled Germanic people, and they reflect the pride such people take in having well-ordered homes. Boggans often help with the housework and chores. Homes that boast a boggan in residence are unusually well-kept and prosperous.

• Nockers

Nockers are noted for having both bad tempers and foul mouths. Found wherever the Earth yields up gems and coal, nockers are superb miners. If mortal miners show respect for nockers and leave out bread and honey for them, these quarrelsome fae will sometimes "adopt" the mortals and assist them in finding rich veins or by digging through particularly difficult stone while the miners are not there to witness the feat. Unhappy nockers can break tools, cause cave-ins or foul the air in their caves, poisoning miners and driving them away.

• Pooka

Pooka are known for their ability to change shape. Most mortals lump pooka in with shifter faeries (see below), and consequently fear them unreasonably. Nor do mortals usually realize that pooka have an affinity to one particular type of animal and that this is the only shape they can assume. Pooka *do* love to play pranks on mortals and supernaturals alike, though unless a pooka is virulently Unseelie, such jokes are rarely dangerous. More often they are merely embarrassing. Pooka are incapable of telling the truth, a factor that also leads others to distrust them.

• Redcaps

Ever hungry and foul tempered, redcaps hate mortals (and most Cainites). Probably the single most feared race of faeries, redcaps are noted for grouping together to attack unwary travelers. Their name comes from their practice of dipping their caps in the blood of their victims as they consume the unfortunates' flesh. Some Malkavians claim that redcaps are related to Cainites.

• Satyrs

Little is known concerning satyrs, except in Greece. Those who have any knowledge concerning these goat-legged fae know them as mythological beings of ancient Greece whose lusty passions lead them to seduce young virgins. Most would be very surprised to meet an actual satyr.

• Sidhe

These tall and beautiful fae are best known in Ireland. They rule all the other faeries and the kingdom of Arcadia. Divided into Seelie (good) and Unseelie (bad) courts, all sidhe are powerful magicians and fearsome warriors. Their flaming swords can easily sever a Cainite's head from her shoulders; when in the throes of their wrath, they have been known to do so.

• Sluagh

These elusive fae shun the light and live in deep caves. They have been seen in such far reaches as Scotland and Russia. Secretive in the extreme, not much is known about sluagh. They, on the other hand, seem to know everything about everyone else. Many Cainites believe sluagh are related to Nosferatu.

• Trolls

Huge and muscular, these gigantic fae are found most often in Scandinavia, Germany and the British Isles. Fierce warriors, trolls serve as guardians for the other fae, particularly the sidhe, and are rumored to be the guardians of faerie treasures. A swing from one of their mighty war axes can cleave a Cainite in two. Many mortals believe that trolls will turn to stone if they are abroad when daylight comes.

More information on these faerie kith may be found in Chapter Nine of **Vampire: The Dark Ages**.

Other Fae

Though I am old with wandering
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,
I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among long dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done,
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun.

— W. B. Yeats, "The Song of Wandering Aengus"

Some faeries are indigenous to specific locales of the Dark Medieval world. Many are thought to be singular beings, while others band together and are known as "trooping faeries." Generally, singular fae tend to be more powerful than individuals within groups. Both are becoming increasingly rare as their groves and secret glens are invaded and the Church makes inroads into the hearts and minds of the people. Many withdraw further from the world, leaving for Arcadia.

Alfar

Also called elves, these Norse fae are often mistaken for a version of the sidhe. Alfar are the fae least likely to be encountered on Earth as they usually dwell entirely within their own realms of the otherworld. Whenever someone meets an Alfar, he can be certain that the elf is on a significant quest or mission. Such fae usually have powerful faerie treasures and potent Glamour (faerie magic) with which to protect themselves. Alfar are most often found in the lands that will become Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Russia, Germany and Austria. There are two distinct types of Alfar, each of which resides in its own realm.

The light elves (or lios alfar) live in the kingdom of Alfheim, a sunny, fair land of fertility and bounty. They love the sunshine and are tall, with fair hair and light eyes. The lios alfar adore bright colors, love animals, and excel in helpful magic, agriculture and husbandry. Some alfar women are noted spinners and weavers whose tapestries are treasured as artworks beyond compare. The light elves are noted musicians, poets and dancers, and sometimes may be induced through gifts or flattery to offer a mortal a drink of Poet's Mead, a potent brew that bestows the gift of lyrical genius.

Their clothing is usually elaborately embroidered and they wear their hair in neat braids. Warriors among the lios alfar prefer chain mail and long spears, axes and swords. Some use elf-shot, which is an arrow wound about with spells and tipped with a substance that causes those hit by it to fall into a deep, enchanted sleep.

Those who fall prey to elf-shot cannot be awakened except through the efforts of others. The quest that must be fulfilled to awaken a victim of elf-shot is determined at the time the arrow is made. Such quests usually involve long journeys in search of strange or difficult-to-find ingredients (such as traveling to the easternmost lands of the world to find the jeweled serpent who guards the well of life, and begging for a drop of the well's water). Whatever the journey and its dangers, it must be possible for heroes to fulfill the terms within a reasonable period of time (a year and a day is popular).

The dark elves dwell in Svartalfheim, a dusky land found in the caverns under the earth. Twisting tunnels give way to open lands under a darkened, starry sky, where the elves reside in crystal palaces. Because they are puissant miners, smiths and sorcerers, the dark alfar prefer darkness to sunlight, which hurts their eyes. The svartalfar prefer deep, jewel-toned colors set off by perfectly cut and polished gems set into gold or silver. Dark, drab mining and smithing gear is preferred as work clothes. Most have black hair and black eyes and many among them have some deformity (a hunchback, clubfoot or twisted hand). Those who do not appear to be physically deformed often suffer from occasional bouts of madness or possess extremely dark hearts or cruel natures.

Svartalfar also prefer chain mail, swords and spears. The elf-shot they use is not tipped with a substance that causes sleep, but with one that causes sickness (and sometimes death). Furthermore, it is rumored that the dark elves may breathe deadly poison upon mortals who offend them. No one knows what the dark elves require in exchange for the antidote to this poison.

The svartalfar take great pride in their smithcraft, fashioning amazing and beautiful items. Whether jewelry, armor, weapons, or useful household items, many are infused with faerie Glamour, giving them potent magical dweomers. One of their greatest delights is fashioning magical rings that bring trouble or disaster to the wearers (mortal or Cainite). A ring either casts some Glamour over a mortal, causing her to act in a way contrary to her nature, or it bestows power upon her. Some rings that give power may wrest themselves from a person once she is dependent on their power, and disappear (only to reappear elsewhere and tempt someone else). Others levy a cost whenever they are used, such as making the owner's heart grow colder, changing her gradually into an ugly hag or destroying something else the person values (money, other jewelry, peace of mind or even the love of her betrothed).

According to some tales, the svartalfar created the fetter that chains Fenrir, the dire wolf, who is now tethered until the end of the world. Light as a ribbon, the leash is made of six impossible things, among them the sound of a cat's foot fall and the breath of a fish.

It is difficult to say whether the alfar are good or bad, for they can be both. Generally, the light elves are seen as more helpful and tolerant of mortals (and presumably, Cainites). The dark ones are seen as evil, twisted and less willing to aid mortals. It is believed they would have more in common with Cainites. Notwithstanding these reputations, it is possible to encounter an angry alfar of the light whose wrath makes many vampires tremble, or a svartalfar who is kind and generous — especially to anyone he has taken under his protection.

Cottage Faeries

Many names are given to cottage faeries, depending on the local language. Called *buebachs*, *booakers* or *cottagers* throughout much of Europe, they are known as *domoviyr* in Russia and *duendes* in Spain. Cousin to the brownie or boggan, they perform many duties around their chosen households. Most cottage faeries remain invisible when anyone is present. Those who have been seen are said to be very different from boggans. Rather than appearing as short and somewhat stout, cottage faeries tend to be slightly smaller than humans, with thin bodies and long fingers and toes. Hair and eye color varies. They all have a preference for sober, practical clothing.

Some perform various household chores — from milking cows to bringing in fresh rushes for a floor. So long as no one catches sight of them as they work and as long as some small token of appreciation (a dish of milk, a bit of honey) is left out for them, cottage faeries make life much easier for those whose homes they occupy.

Some cottage faeries disdain household duties, but guard their chosen homes from outsiders — be they friends or foes of the family. They can become difficult when their jealousy keeps friends of a family from entering a house. Those who try to enter are assaulted by flying cauldrons, utensils, tools and anything else that the faeries can throw until the offender retreats outside. Unless the visitor means harm to the inhabitants, however, cottage faeries rarely cause actual damage to those they see as trespassers.

A few cottage faeries, especially *domoviyr*, help their chosen households by stealing what they need from neighbors and travelers. Thus the family may awaken to newly gathered eggs taken from the farm next door, a pie stolen from another

neighbor's windowsill, or a riding horse (with tack) taken from a sleeping traveler staying at an inn. Cottage fae do not take kindly to suggestions that such items be returned.

A few cottage faeries are jealous, hateful beings who move into houses and try to destroy everyone in them. Their usual protective and helpful natures somehow become twisted into madness. They are noted for throwing furniture around. These fae are highly dangerous — even to Cainites — and have been known to seriously injure (some say, kill) vampires who have taken shelter for the day in seemingly abandoned dwellings.

Cainites will most often meet cottage faeries in their roles as guardians. While not usually considered the most powerful of fae, cottage faeries have a number of tricks (invisibility among them) that allows them to match wits with vampires and win. Cainite lore tells of an unfortunate vampire who tried to feed from a person living in a house claimed by a cottager. The faerie's potent illusions tricked the Cainite into the fire, where it is said his ashes remain to this day.

The Erlkonig

This singular faerie, sometimes called the *ly erg*, is found wherever alfar are known. The Erlkonig (which means "elf king") is a tall, regal elf who wears a golden crown. He usually dresses in clothing to match the season — pale green in spring, dark green in summer, orange or gold in autumn and white in winter. Some say that the Erlkonig is the master of the wild hunt. As such, he rides a faerie steed through the air, with faerie hounds belling, horns sounding and courtiers shrieking as they track an unfortunate victim through the night. If someone pursued by the wild hunt escapes it until dawn, she is free to go.

Usually, the Erlkonig works alone as a portent of death. When he appears to one who is about to die, his visage depicts the type of death the person faces; if the Erlkonig grimaces, the death will be painful, while a peaceful look portends an easy death. While many claim that once someone sees the Erlkonig, her death is inescapable, others say the elf king always offers the person a reasonable chance to escape. Sometimes, the condemned must answer a riddle or solve a puzzle. Other times, she must defeat the Erlkonig in some sort of challenge (combat, storytelling, extemporaneous poetry) in order to survive the experience. To some, this sad-faced fae appears as a soldier. As he approaches, he holds up a bloody red hand and indicates that he wishes to fight a duel. If the person accepts the challenge, he inevitably loses, and is doomed to die within a fortnight.

Many say that the Erlkonig is the king of the lios alfar, a good-hearted being whose job it is to collect the souls of the dying. Others claim that he is one of the svartalfar, who steals the souls of those he condemns, using them to increase his own power. It is unknown whether any Cainite facing Final Death has ever seen the Erlkonig.

Gianes

The name gianes is Italian, but these wise and dangerous fae are known as *skogrsa*, spinners and weaver faeries in places throughout Europe, Russia and Scandinavia. They usually appear as unattainable young and beautiful women, older grandmotherly women, or owls. Rarely, gianes assume human male form. Those who do prefer to dress in long concealing garments with hoods.

Gifted with powerful prophetic and time magic, weaver faeries are able to provide potent divinations. By staring into their spinning wheels as they turn, they are able to foresee the future for whomever provided the materials for spinning. Some gianes use other divinatory methods, such as interpreting the waves created by dropping stones in a pool, or watching leaves blown by the wind. Whatever method they employ, however, it always involves motion of some sort.

The gianes' predictions are always accurate, though some aspects of them may change due to actions taken to prevent them. The gianes never sweeten their prophesies; only those who want the unvarnished truth should ask them about the future. Furthermore, their oracular gifts come with a high price. In return for their knowledge, they always ask for something strange that seems easy enough to get, but which places the one sent to fetch it in mortal danger. The gianes see this as a game; they don't intend for anyone to get hurt.

Gianes have been known to make predictions for Cainites who ask nicely enough or who can be required to gift the faeries with something mortals have no chance of obtaining. Conversely, at least one Cainite has found herself the target of a persistent hunter who was required by the gianes to fetch a vampire's blood in return for a prophecy.

The Hag

Known to some as the Blue Hag, to others as Black Annis or the Lady of Death, the hag is most often described as a single individual. The name hag derives from the words *hekau* (the Hebrew word for "wisdom") or *hagi* (a Norse word meaning "sacred grove"). In either case, the term denotes a holy or wise woman or priestess who knows words of power and who can predict the future. Often depicted as being from Scotland, the hag can be found as far away as Egypt and the Holy Land.

An old woman in tattered black or blue garments, the hag walks at night and carries a staff carved from holly. A carrion crow rides on her shoulder. Reputed to know the fate of anyone she meets, she is often depicted as wearing a veil, implying that no man is permitted to know the manner of his death. In Brittany and France, the hag is known as the Korrigan, who appears as a lovely, desirable woman by night and as a hideous crone by day. Some say if a suitor truly cares for her and does not repudiate her by day, she becomes beautiful all the time. Many believe that the hag is not a faerie at all, but an avatar of the three-fold goddess in her crone aspect.

Legend depicts her as bad tempered and easily angered; if she touches anyone with her staff, they will die. Cainites may simply enter torpor (though the sun will then kill them if they aren't under cover by daybreak). Those who treat her with respect may escape this fate and may even find fortune. To those who please her, she has been known to give cryptic clues that lead to buried or lost treasure, or advice that saves them much grief. Her knowledge and wisdom are legendary, and those who seek her to learn that knowledge are rarely turned away. She does require a price, however. Depending on her mood, the gifts offered her, the respect shown her and the reason someone wants her knowledge, she may ask for something as easy to find as a wooden comb, or as difficult to obtain as a small pink flower that grows only on the highest peaks of the Carpathians.

The hag is most powerful during the winter months, following Samhain, and she buries her staff during the summer months, reacquiring it each year on Samhain Eve. If one can find her staff, he is believed to gain power over all humans. Though she herself knows many healing herbs and tinctures that may even be effective on vampires, her blood is said to be deadly poison to Cainites.

Shepherding Faeries

Shepherding faeries are known in every culture that keeps herd animals. Though most are concerned with sheep or goats, some specialize in other domesticated animals such as cows, horses or pigs. Known as the *gruagach* in the British Isles, *vasily* in Russia, *Yann-An-Od* in Brittany and by other names throughout Europe, shepherding faeries usually test mortals to see if they are worthy of having animals under their care.

Rumored to be shapeshifters not unlike pooka, shepherding faeries in actuality, rarely (if ever), assume animal form. Some take the shape of grotesque-looking old men or women, but most often they appear as normal shepherds, goatherds, pig herders, goose girls or grooms. Whenever they do take on animal form, it is usually to test herd owners or caretakers whom they suspect might be mistreating their creatures.

These fae can be beneficial or harmful depending on the behavior of mortals with whom they interact. Some appear at a stranger's door and beg admittance to the house. If allowed inside and made welcome, they reward the kind host by protecting that person's herds or flocks. If refused admittance, they have been known to set fires or steal animals in retaliation.

When a shepherding faerie assumes responsibility for a herd or flock, the fae protects the animals from predators — including Cainites in search of a quick meal. They search out lost herd members and bring them safely home, heal sick or injured animals and assist in birthings. Shepherding faeries have even been known to seek out new pastures (so animals under their care remain well-fed and healthy) or increase the





available food in older pastures if new ones aren't available. Furthermore, they make certain that water sources used by their flocks are clean and free of obstructions (like hidden, broken branches under the water) that might cause injury to animals drinking from them.

While they understand that people keep herd beasts for their usefulness (be it wool, milk or meat), shepherding faeries punish those who mistreat animals. They would not harm someone who slaughtered a pig for its meat — that is, after all, the beast's purpose — but should that person starve or beat the animal, he would incur the fae's wrath. The faerie is usually content merely to steal the entire herd and add it to his ever-growing flock, but occasionally, an enraged fae may curse or even attack the careless or cruel master.

Though their main concern is with the animals, some shepherding faeries take it quite badly when good masters are harmed. They go beyond protecting or avenging animals to performing the same services for the humans who own the beasts. Should such people fall prey to vampires, for example, an angry fae who watches over a flock might go to battle on a victim's behalf.

Shifters

While all fae are dangerous when crossed, certain faeries don't seem to have a good side to their personalities. Most of these extremely dangerous fae hate all other creatures and seek to harm them at every opportunity. Though most of their victims are humans, some have been known to tangle with Cainites who get in their way or annoy them. Most such fae are known as shifters because of their ability to assume other shapes, and because of their alien natures.

Once such fae were mere tricksters, but, angered by mortals' treatment of their faerie kin, many have become killers. Known as *ieles* in Romania and eastern Europe, *lutin* in France, and *painajainen* in Italy, Germany and Austria, and sometimes linked to kelpies in Scandinavia and the British Isles, shifters take on various forms to lure the unwary.

Some may look like normal humans and sing or dance to entice victims to them. These forms are always flawed in some way. The faerie may look like a beautiful young girl, but she may be covering a long cat's tail under voluminous skirts, or bat wings under a cloak. Some may also take on forms that seem better than possible, becoming (for example) a handsome young man who is a perfect physical specimen. In both cases, the fae use their Glamour to blind mortals to their real shapes, which are often hunched and ugly. The shifters who take on these forms seduce their chosen victims, visiting them night after night once they have initially met. They feed upon both the creative energies and the blood of their paramours, weakening them daily until the people die. Rumor tells of a Cainite who fell prey to a shifter and was reduced to a husk by this pseudo vampire, just as if he had been diablerized. It is also said that the faerie acquired his victim's Cainite powers.

Other shifters prefer more outrageous forms, appearing in such guises as large, upright cats, sea horses, mountain ponies, and surprisingly large hounds. Many of them, such as the cats and hounds, speak to their victims, persuading the hapless dupes to follow them. The evil faeries promise to show where treasure is buried or swear that the king of the faeries will owe the person a favor in return for assisting them in some labor. Once in private and away from any witnesses, shifters attack and devour a gullible fool.

Those who become sea horses and ponies do not speak, but appear as enticing as possible, trying to lure someone into mounting them for a ride. The journey they then take the rider on is a hellish nightmare. Sea horses grab hold of an adventurous rider and drag him to the bottom of the sea, drown him, then feast on his flesh.

Pony shifters might also be called nightmares, for they run away with a rider, magically holding her so she cannot fall off, then race over the roughest and most frightening terrain they can find (such as along slender and treacherous mountain trails high in the Alps). Pony shifters delight in and feed from the terror of those who ride them. At the end of a journey, they throw their victims off, laugh and run away. They mark the riders, however, learning their particular "feel." That night and every night thereafter, they send virulent nightmares to a person, drinking in the resulting terror. If the dreams are not stopped, the person eventually dies of exhaustion and fright.

The final type of shifter assumes the form of an inanimate object and causes trouble. Such shifters have been known to take the shapes of farming tools, wagons, barrels, and even clothing. Tools then move themselves, sometimes appearing among a neighbor's possessions and causing arguments about ownership, or charges of theft. Wagons roll away unexpectedly or break down when loads are placed inside them. Barrels spring leaks, and clothing twists around the person who dons it, tripping her, wrapping her tightly or even binding her to a tree.

A favorite ploy among these types of shifters is to assume the shape of gold nuggets or other valuables. They incite greed among potential owners, then slip away and into someone else's purse or disappear just as the person prepares to pay for something with his newfound wealth. These shifters seem to gain whatever sustenance they need from the irritation and anger they engender. While not as dangerous as shifters who devour their victims, they can still cause considerable trouble.

When Fair Meets Foul (Faeries and Cainites)

For the most part, faeries and Cainites tend to travel in different circles. If vampires don't go looking for the fae, they probably won't be bothered by them. Still, there are certain vampires who acquire a taste for exotic blood or who believe the sluagh may know some vital information. These Cainites may seek out the fae for good or ill. Their reception depends on what type of faerie they seek, what kind they find, what they want and how they approach the fae in question.

A more disastrous situation for a Cainite might occur if she unwittingly drinks from a mortal whom a fae considers to be under his protection. The fae make jealous guardians and would consider such an action a blatant attempt to steal the mortal in question. Such affronts do not go unpunished, and the Cainite might never know what hit her or why.

Some fae are more tolerant of Cainites than others, believing vampires to be distant kin. According to faerie lore, vampires were once fae, but their bloodlust consumed them and made them into what they are. Many pity their fallen kin and, if flattered or cajoled, might aid them.

Other faeries find the presence of vampires extremely distasteful, seeing them as terrible reminders of what might befall them if they ever give in to their baser instincts. These fae shun vampires whenever possible and seek to force them away from their territories if they stray too close.

The most sensitive faeries feel pain when in the presence of vampires. These immortals feel the icy hand of mortality stretching out toward them, freezing the laughter in their hearts whenever they encounter vampires. They flee Cainites and seek to kill them if the vampires follow.

One exception to all these is the Malkavian clan. Many fae consider the Malkavians the only acceptable Cainites, recognizing their madness as the vampires' attempts to embrace their fae heritage again and emerge once more into the Dreaming that lays on the other side of madness.

The fae have many Arts that they use to annoy, embarrass or even kill Cainites who displease them. The profusion of Glamour and strength of their magic during this time makes them more than a match for any single vampire, and possibly for a whole group. Smart Cainites walk softly around the fae and speak respectfully.





Chapter Seven: Infernalism

Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea: for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

– Revelations 12:12

Beyond the sanctuary of the Church lies a world of total darkness. To the Dark Medieval mind, the forces of Satan are a real and potent threat, and these fears are made manifest through the schemes of infernalists, who seek to bring their dark masters into the world.



The Roads to Hell

There are many roads to Hell and many who walk into the darkness. Some are tricked by demons or bought by false promises; others willingly choose the shadow over the light. It is said that the road to Hell is paved with good intentions, but in the Dark Medieval world this is not true. The road to Hell is paved with mistakes, dark longings and unsatisfied lusts. The following sections examine how demons tempt characters, and how a character's personality is the Devil's best friend.

Pride

Pride was the sin which led to Lucifer's fall — he who was brightest and greatest among the Host of Heaven is now Lord of the Endless Dark because of this single flaw in character. Sinful pride always involves the lesser sins of jealousy and envy; at its simplest level, pride manifests as the desire for someone else's property or position.

A demon who seeks a character's soul may first let the character experience a little humility by destroying and frustrating her schemes, then offer a way for the character to regain what she has lost. Or, a demon may appear before the character in some beguiling shape, offering her some way of furthering her plans. Should agreement be reached, the character has taken her first step on the road to Hell.

Despair

The greatest problem facing the medieval mentality was despair. Living conditions were sufficiently harsh that many people deemed suicide a better option than living. Christian proscription against suicide originates in this period because it was so prevalent — the souls of those who commit suicide are resigned to an eternity in Hell. Demons grow fat on human misery and promote despair in the interests of reaping new souls for Hell's fires.

When someone has lost everything or can see no way out of the monotony of life (endless monotony in the case of a vampire), that person is vulnerable to demons. Doubts and regrets leave them open to the whispers of demons suggesting an alternative to suicide: infernal power.

Perversity

Some few infernalists have walked the tainted path out of sheer perversity. Their inner demons offer greater torments than the forces of Hell, and they face damnation with some pleasure and few regrets. A few souls actively seek out the darkness. To satisfy their lust for evil, they commit blasphemies and call on the Devil to take notice of their actions. Most of these fools are left to their own damnation, but, should their chosen evil be particularly inventive or simply impressive, demons occasionally answer their call.

Ignorance

It is possible for a character to be so thoroughly tricked that he never knows he is dealing with a demon until the very end of the association, if ever. Demons take on many forms,

pretending to be ordinary mortals or even vampires. In this manner they become trusted companions who disguise damnation with friendly words.

Lust for Power

Demons offer wealth equal to that of kings, satisfy any lust, answer any question (though their answers will almost always be misleading) and satiate the grossest appetite. Infernal power provides a quick and easy path to whatever the heart desires. The price, though, is always higher than one expects.

Trickery

If a demon cannot win a soul by fair means, it will try deception and trickery. Games of chance with unusual wagers, strangers who propose odd challenges, and the like should all be avoided if one wishes to keep one's soul.

Supplicii

As a character becomes entangled in infernal intrigues, her soul becomes tainted and weighed down with sin. This is indicated within the chronicle by the character's growing reliance on demonic aid for even simple tasks. Contact with the infernal, whether directly or through the learning of corrupt powers, gradually wears away a character's personality until there is very little of the original person left when the demons finally claim her. Indeed, an infernalist may welcome Final Death, as it at least promises an end to life's constant struggle and pain.

The idea behind a Supplicium (which means both "entreaty" and "sacrifice") is that contact with infernal forces gradually turns a character from her chosen Road toward the Via Diabolis. The character's soul becomes a battleground between her old Road and her growing infernal taint. Eventually, even the most hardened and stoic individual succumbs to the temptations offered by Hell and becomes irrevocably damned. At this time it is best to consider the grand finale of the character's story, and how he should take his leave of the mortal coil.

A Supplicium is a journey within the character's soul, directed by his infernal tempter. Supplicii may be run one-on-one, with the Storyteller playing the role of the demon and describing all the action, though they are often more rewarding if you use troupe-style play (wherein the other players help to torment their comrade).

The following section presents a system by which one can measure a character's fall into damnation. It is hoped that the process is roleplayed — the only good thing that can came out of dealing with the infernal powers is the drama of a character's destruction — but this system allows the descent to be quantified.

The Downward Spiral

A character falls into a Supplicium whenever he makes a pact with a demon, increases his power in Dark Thaumaturgy, gains an infernal investment or otherwise opens himself to the influence of Hell and its minions.

The Storyteller, as the tormenting demon, runs a personal passion play for the victim of the Supplicium. This play confronts the victim with his sins and forces him into further damnation. This passion play should involve a direct attack on the character's weaknesses. (**Note:** We said the *character's* weaknesses. This should never be an attack on a player's personality. Supplicii are always roleplaying experiences, never excuses for psychological bullying.)

The Storyteller should consult the other players concerning the course of the Supplicium and possible escapes for the character in question. This consultation is very important — not only can the other players provide insights into their companion's character, but prior consultation also enables the players to ready themselves for their part in the Supplicium.

When a character is forced into a Supplicium, she becomes the center of a perverse drama acted out by demons intent on breaking her personality. Within the Supplicium, nightmare logic rules. The character is confronted with past mistakes, previous victims and personal failings. The character's reality becomes warped by the demons: Objects appear and disappear, people turn into nightmarish versions of themselves, escape is held up before the character and then snatched away. Often the Supplicium revolves around a single event, probably one that caused a degeneration check. For example, if the character frenzied and killed an innocent in a previous game session, the demon might appear as that innocent and demand restitution for his death.

Whatever form the Supplicium takes, it should urge the character toward a previous poor or immoral decision. This choice should revolve around a roleplaying event in which the tormented character gets a chance to atone (the character in the previous example could swear to find the bystander's family and help them in some way). If the character fails to accept this penance, the demon has won, and the character must accept the Supplicium's consequences.

Consequences

If the demon successfully enacts the Supplicium, the character automatically loses a Via point. (There is no remorse roll for this degeneration.) Should the character's Via rating drop to zero, he automatically switches to the Via Diabolis (rating of 1) rather than be overcome by his Beast (see **Vampire: The Dark Ages** page 132 for the consequences of switching Roads). Once on the Via Diabolis, the infernalist is unable to change his destiny unless he decides to break entirely with the forces of Hell.

The consequences are slightly different if the character is already on the Via Diabolis. The aim of the Supplicium in this case is to reduce the infernalist's control of himself by such a degree that the demon can take possession of his body. An infernalist who fails a Supplicium still loses a Via point, but if his Road rating reaches zero, he is plunged into one final Supplicium for his very existence. If he fails this last test, his soul is plunged into the Pit and the demon takes up residence

in the empty shell of his body. Should the infernalist succeed, he regains one point in the Via Diabolis, leaving him shaken and barely in control of himself.

Infernalists

There are no great Satanic conspiracies across Europe in this period — the idea that Satanism could be organized, or that infernalists would band together, is alien to the medieval period. Infernalists are those rare people who possess a dedicated mind and a propensity for evil great enough to seek power and companionship from inhuman forces. Each is jealous of his status with the forces of Hell and scornful of other practitioners of the black arts. Damnation is an individual journey that brooks no fellow travelers.

An infernalist typically surrounds herself with a cult of followers (servants and sacrifices) but keeps the greater part of her knowledge secret. She corrupts others as offerings to her demonic master, not to spread the secrets for which she has bartered her soul. In very rare cases a Luciferian might take on an apprentice, but the relationship will be antagonistic — each fearing that her companion will, in time, attempt to betray the other.

The Black Pilgrimage and the Devil's Mark

Many infernalists take the Black Pilgrimage, a deliberate inversion of the act of pious Christians, and set out for Chorazin, the ancient center of Baali power. Few outside infernal circles understand what this act entails, but the following was found in the writings of one who had taken the dark path: "If any man desires to obtain a long life, if he would obtain a faithful messenger and see the blood of his enemies, it is necessary that he should first go into the city of Chorazin, and there salute the Princeps Aëris." Chorazin is rumored to lie somewhere near the ruins on the north shore of the sea of Galilee.

The dedicated infernalist sets out across Europe into whatever wasteland holds the ruins of this dark city, committing acts of evil along the way so as to be able to present a catalogue of sins to his masters. If the infernalist succeeds in this task, his infernal masters grant him great power and rewards and affirm his pact with Satan. The infernalist receives the Devil's Mark, a sign upon his body indicating that he is in the service of Hell. The Inquisition zealously seeks such marks, using them to prove the guilt of their prisoners.

Unholy Places

There are places in the world where the laws of nature, humanity and God are overthrown and the infernal holds sway. Such places are shunned by all good folk, and on certain nights (when fires are lit on mountainsides and the air seems full of noise) people lock their doors, shutter their windows and pray that the Devil merely passes by.

In such places, infernalists work their rituals with greater ease, and the infernal powers can enter the world with less struggle. Unholy places are scattered across Europe, from the Pictish ruins of Hibernia to the crossroads of Roman roads in Italy and Spain. Some infernal regions even broadcast their evil within great cities, as stones that once marked the meeting places of infernalists are torn down and worked into new buildings.

The most vile of all these damned places is Chorazin, but there are many others: the ruins of Babylon, which are haunted by bloodthirsty demons; Mons Veneris in the Italian Alps, where there is a gateway to a realm of pleasure lorded over by the Queen of Succubi; and St. Patrick's Purgatory in Ireland, where a dark cave is rumored to lead into Hell itself.

At such places the Storyteller should feel free to increase the Dice Pool of any infernal action and restrict the power of the Faith-related activities by any amount she sees fit. A faintly infernal site, like the birthplace of a Luciferian or a forgotten site of sacrifice calls for a one-die modifier, while a hideous altar used to call upon infernal lords every midnight suggests a five-die adjustment.

Unholy Relics and Infernal Faith

The bleakness of damnation does not inspire hope — and so there is no "anti-Faith." Infernalists fill this gap in their lives with the magic demons teach them and with a Faith in their unholy host.

Certain relics of infernal power have been created by dedicated Luciferians working with demonic artisans. The products of this unholy alchemy are varied and are guarded jealously by their owners. Some infernal objects are sentient — and it is not always clear who is master and who is servant.

The most potent unholy relics are the Talons of Satan, supposedly the claws that were torn from the Dark One's fingers as he grabbed the Earth on his plunge into Hell. Infernalists say that there are five of these relics, one hidden on each of the known continents, and more in lands yet to be discovered. The Talons, if they could be found, would be relics of near-limitless power, allowing the wielder to reshape Europe and beyond. Luckily, they are all lost.

Many lesser relics exist, as do the charms and amulets of individual infernalists; these mystical talismans gift their users with powers equivalent to the lower levels of certain Disciplines, but often have corruptive side effects, sometimes inducing Supplicii in their owners.

Clan Infernalists

Even the proudest Cainite may be humbled by the forces of the Devil. The following section looks at individual clans' views on infernalism among their own, and suggests what path such a damned vampire might follow.

Assamite

Rare is the Assamite who falls prey to demons — the tenets of the Via Sanguinius hold that dealing with demons is a trap for the weak, and Clan Assamite is never weak. Infernalists of this clan are viciously hunted down by their brethren, and great honor accrues to the vampire who performs the purifying killing. So hated are the infernal powers that Assamites will not even drink the vitae of an infernalist, preferring to let the blood be wasted rather than contaminate their numbers.



An Assamite infernalist is secretive and deadly, trading with demons for the powers that he cannot learn on his own. Such an infernalist pursues a twisted version of the Road of Blood, dedicating the souls he destroys to his dark masters.

Brujah

Brujah's weakness when dealing with the Devil is the desire they hold for knowledge; beneath their warriors' hearts lie scholars' minds. Many Brujah have been seduced by Hell through promises of ancient knowledge and dark secrets; others have believed that the powers granted by demons can be turned to good use. All have fallen in the end. The clan's tradition of fellowship hinders the purging of infernalists, as most Brujah feel that a fallen comrade is redeemable. Such idealistic folly has allowed demons to reap entire coteries at once.

A Brujah infernalist finds his rage channeled into Hell's work. Scholarly pursuits are neglected and forgotten as the slow spiral into darkness begins, stripping away all human pretensions until only the inner Beast remains.

Cappadocian

Given their familiarity with the Reaper and the afterlife, the Clan of Death seldom falls prey to infernal trickery. Cappadocians' heightened senses and extensive lore allow them to spot and protect themselves from most minor demons. However, like the Brujah, they can be tempted by promised revelations of the world of spirits. The relationship between and demon and a Graverobber is like an intricate dance in which a misstep for either party is fatal. At the clan center at the mountain Erciyes lie many bottled demons who failed in their tasked of corruption — but rumors aver the existence of many failed Cappadocian infernalists, who have been bound in torpor by the clan.

A Cappadocian who turns fully to the infernal powers is certain to barter for Necromancy as well as darker powers. Once she has accepted her infernal servitude, she turns to her new work with a surprising will, building fortresses of corruption and raising evil spirits tirelessly. After all, her eventual fate will be but one revelation among the many secrets of death.

Followers of Set

Set is a jealous god, and he does not allow his childer to follow another. There are few sights more terrifying in the Dark Medieval world than a Setite hunt for a fallen Serpent. The torments inflicted on such a renegade are said to rival the fires of Hell themselves — and to last almost as long.

However, the promise of even darker power tempts a few of the Followers, and small dens of infernal Setites lie scattered across the fringes of Europe.

Gangrel

Although Gangrel's typical rejection of Christianity should make them easy prey for Satan, this is not the case. Their physical and mental isolation from the works of humankind has thus far protected them from the Devil's minions. Fallen Gangrel who rampage against the Church are often supported by their com-

rules, who remember the destruction of paganism at the hands of Rome and bear a grudge — but woe betide the Animal who seeks power over his own kind through infernal means.

A Gangrel infernalist cheaply barters his soul, often caring more for the pagan traditions of a brave and honorable death than for the consequences in the hereafter. The agony of such an infernalist eventually discovering how tightly she has been bound in chains, how domesticated she has become in the service of Hell, is sweet to demons.

Lasombra

The Lasombra have long-established rules for dealing with demons. They refuse to deal with lesser demons at all, seeing such as beneath their dignity, and attempt to manipulate any demon they encounter just as they manipulate everyone else. The clan believes that its powers of darkness are at least equal to Hell's, and its members are willing to test this assumption should they feel slighted by any infernal power. Because the Magisters hate weakness, any clan member who is exposed as a demonic vassal is destroyed because it sullies the clan's honor.

A Lasombra infernalist accepts petitions from demons who come politely before him. They ask the demon to sign pacts of agreement —rules for their relationship — before committing themselves to any further dealings. These masters of the legal loophole and the subtlety of power can sometimes — but not often — come out ahead in a deal.

Malkavian

Each Malkavian holds her own view of the infernal powers — the only truth that applies to all dealings between Madmen and demons is that the demons do not always know what they are getting themselves into when they seek the soul of a Malkavian. According to legend, one demon who sought such a prize found himself confronted by all the Malkavians of the region, who suddenly gathered together. Driven mad by the experience, the demon was bound into human form and to this day wanders the world, living on charity and gibbering insanely.

A Malkavian who does wholeheartedly turn to the infernal proves a fiendish foe indeed.

Nosferatu

This clan puts no faith in appearance and scant trust in words, so demons have a hard time seducing a Nosferatu. Because many Nosferatu have turned to Christian salvation as an escape from their condition, few are willing to deal with demons. Most Nosferatu seek out renegade clan members and sorrowfully destroy them.

A Nosferatu who turns to darkness becomes a bitter monster. The compassion inculcated in the clan by its curse festers into rage against those more fortunate than he. With care and great cunning, he weaves plots to destroy beauty, tarnish hope and drag everything down to the same sorry state.



Certain rumors state that many of Nosferatu's first childer — and perhaps the clan founder himself — turned to infernal powers following the great war in the First City. Clan Nosferatu says little of this legend, but those who count the Lepers among their friends occasionally hear whispers of a hidden war fought by the clan against these dark monsters.

Ravnos

Ravnos do not deal with demons — it is nigh impossible to force one of the Charlatans to sign a binding contract or make a long-term agreement. Demons have been frustrated in their dealings with this clan many times, and weave traps to destroy them whenever possible.

The rare Ravnos infernalist will be a mercurial foe, delighting in cruelty and deadly tricks where once a sense of fun prevailed.

Toreador

Though the Clan of the Rose has turned to the sanctuary of the Church, many among its number remember the Dionysian heyday of the Toreador. With the fall of the pagan powers, some Toreador have turned to darker magics to satisfy their appetites; sometimes it seems as if Hell needs no incubi or succubi while the Toreador exist in the world.

An infernalist of this clan often devotes herself to sensual pleasure, but also seeks a release for her appetites through bloodletting and artistically inspired cruelties. Such a twisted being rivals even the Tzimisce in ingenuity when her inspiration is applied to pain. The art such infernalist Toreador create is said to impart seeds of corruption in whoever views it.

Tremere

This newborn clan's need for strength and the taint of its previous Hermetic intrigues have woven a strand of damnation into the pyramid of power. Because of the clan's strict hierarchy, a single Tremere infernalist can reach out to corrupt many underlings and win higher position in the clan. The clan's stress on the need for power has led many Tremere toward a dangerous deténte with the infernal host, as Usurpers attempt to barter for knowledge and magic without losing their souls. Such ploys generally fail, as the clan's desperate need gives the demons great bargaining advantage. It is said that one of the Seven Elders, who with Tremere founded the clan, is an infernalist. If this is true, then much of the clan is corrupt.

A Tremere infernalist is invariably a master of magic, greedily learning all the paths of Dark Thaumaturgy and seeking out places and artifacts of potency.

Tzimisce

Despite the allegations of this clan's foes, the Tzimisce have scant regard for the infernal powers. These monsters feel that they have little need for otherworldly Hells when they have the ability to create their own on Earth. A dedicated Fiend would torture angels and demons alike, fearing little in her blasphemy. Some Tzimisce have even learned spirit magics enabling them to pursue a disrespectful demon beyond the world's boundaries. The clan boasts that it has overcome demons and even gods in its nights, though no one knows of any who have returned from such vendettas. Perhaps, the Fiends smile, their compatriots are establishing new domains in Hell.

A Tzimisce who decides to deal with demons is among the most dangerous foes in the Dark Medieval world. Combining Hell-spawned sorcery with her natural predilections, she become; the penultimate master of darkness.

Ventrue

Of all Cainites, Clan Ventrue suffers from the greatest measure of pride, and it is this that leads its members into demonic clutches. Ventrue often refuse to bend with the wind and so are broken by the storm — infernal powers play on this inflexibility when they seek the souls of these undead lords. Coming as they do from noble backgrounds, most Ventrue are trained to seize power with both hands and so are incautious with regard to what power they take. Demons often come to them in the guises of sycophantic servants, offering advice that sounds good while leading their dupe into infernal clutches. They encourage the vampire to make war on the Church, to neglect her responsibilities — and then laugh as the Ventrue's carefully constructed world falls apart. Only then does a demonic advisor reveal its true form and offer a deal to give the Ventrue back all she has lost. The clan as a whole sometimes makes the mistake of supporting an infernally inspired comrade, in hopes that the clan can keep the gains its erstwhile member made while under infernal tutelage. Little do the Ventrue realize that corruption has a way of spreading.

A Ventrue infernalist is the cruelest feudal lord imaginable, draining his lands to supply a stream of decadent luxuries and fuel endless conflicts with neighboring fiefs. The Ventrue's lands become a Hell indeed for all who live there, and will be reduced to a barren wasteland before his reign is done.

Via Diabolis

The Devil's Road is a strange contradiction: On the one hand it commands its followers to wallow in sin and depravity; on the other it functions as do other Roads in maintaining the character's personality against the Beast. Following the Devil's Road does not necessarily place a character within Hell's power; there are many independent vampires who follow it but would scorn the company of demons.

The key to understanding this contradiction is that the principles of the Via Diabolis were established in the nights before Christianity. It represents a willingness to cast off the limits of society and act purely in one's own interests. Those on the Devil's Road can be portrayed as antiheroes — champions of dark passions — rather than as simple monsters.

Baali

One clan of vampires has given itself wholly to the infernal. It is known as the Baali, and its story begins millennia ago in the legendary nights of the First City.

Shaitan

The oldest Baali is reputedly called Shaitan (though he once had a different name) and he was the first childe of the mythical Antediluvian Ashur. According to legend, he was the most beautiful of the Fourth Generation; such pride was his that he became jealous of Arikel, the Toreador founder, and even of Zillah the Beautiful, wife of Caine. In life he had been a slave who sang hymns in the temple to all the gods of the cosmos, and his beauty and his honeyed voice were retained after his Embrace. Bitterness festered in Shaitan's heart, however, for he knew he would always be a lesser power compared to his sire and grandsires. He lamented that he would always be a reflection of greater light, never the source of illumination himself — and so he fell. Many stories are told of his fall, but it is from fragments of the *Book of Nod*, the oldest record of the children of Caine, that the following tale comes.

The First War

In the great war that shattered the First City and cast down the Second Generation, Shaitan was one of the most wrathful of his generation. He gathered the dissatisfied of the other clans to his banner and laid siege to the Temple of Caine itself at the heart of Enoch. Cursing all the gods he once worshipped, he called on the powers of darkness to give him strength; then Shaitan hurled himself and his followers against Caine himself. The battle shattered the temple, bringing down its ancient stones and searing the ground about the ruins with hellfires. Shaitan could not win, however, for such was Caine's might that even Hell could not stand against him.

Shaitan's power was broken, but Caine could not bring himself to kill this wayward childe. Instead Caine gazed on the beauty of his great-grandchilde and spoke, "You seem beautiful, like the golden bands I wear, like the grove of sweet-scented trees in my garden, like the flesh of my beloved wife. Yet you are evil within, like the blood poisoned by sickness, like the wine turned sour in the gourd, like a broken sword lying on the battlefield. I cannot kill you, for it is my tainted blood, my anger, that has brought you to taste this bitter cup; yet I cannot let you walk the Earth in beauty, with your long lashes, your golden hair and pale eyes. Therefore I grant you unlife but take your beauty from you."

Caine raised his hand and struck Shaitan, and his hair fell from his head, his eyes burned in his sockets and his skin itched with sores. Caine raised his hand and struck Shaitan a second time, and his bones twisted and broke and he could no longer stand. Caine raised his hand and struck Shaitan one final time, and all his power left him. Then Caine walked away, never to be seen again by his childer until the night of Gehenna, when all secrets will be revealed.

Shaitan's war party — one from each of the great clans — gathered around him, lifted him and mournfully carried him from that place, knowing their dreams of rebellion were over and they were all outcast. They took him into the wilderness and there prepared to die, for their spirits were broken.

The Fall

But great Caine had made one mistake, for he had left Shaitan his beautiful voice. In the wilderness Shaitan cried out, first to his fellows and then to the darkness which had aided him. The darkness answered, and in a rush like a whirlwind, Shaitan and his followers were swept up and changed forever. The dark ones saw their broken child and wept bitter tears, and where these tears touched flesh it was altered. They gave to Shaitan and his followers poison like the asp, claws like the mountain lion, fangs and horns like the rocky lizards, a casement like the scorpion, and raised them high above the earth.

"We have raised you who were fallen," they whispered, their voices like ice on rock. "We have mended your shattered bones, smoothed your broken skin, and opened your eyes to darkness, for we love you better than any others could. Worship us, love us in return, and we will give you dominion over all this." And the kingdoms of the world were spread before Shaitan and his followers like a tapestry. And Shaitan looked upon the earth with new eyes and coveted its beauty and so, like a falling star, he entered the abyss.

Shaitan and his followers left the wilderness and saw the work of their cousins, the vampires of other clans. They saw new civilizations emerging from the ruins of the First City and realized they had been forgotten, made outcast. As each of his followers came from a different clan, Shaitan ordered them to create broods of their own and infiltrate their old clans, concealing their new nature. Shaitan himself built a fortress in the desert, at a place called Chorazin, and dedicated it to his infernal masters. This place (now lost beneath the sands) became the center of an infernal cult that worshipped Shaitan. His name entered human legends as the Adversary, the leader of the forces of darkness. His followers, hidden among the other clans, led vampires to him to be converted or destroyed.

Centuries passed and the Jyhad raged across the ancient world. Shaitan plotted against his parent's generation and spread his power. He was worshipped by many names and in many places: In Greece he was husband to Hecate and lapped spilled blood from the ground; in Ur, children were thrown into the fire in his name; in Babylon, astrologers sacrificed to him at the dark of the moon; as far away as Hibernia, he was known and blood was shed in his name. Shaitan's cult summoned demons and dedicated places to the infernal powers, and his power waxed until he was ready to open the gates to Hell and give the world to his masters.

The Great War

Only the oldest vampires in Europe remember the time of the Baali's first rise to power, and they are loath to recall these dark times. As the Baali grow in power once again, some of the elders have taken to warning their childer against the Devil's children and retelling tales of the great war fought against them.

Shaitan moved his center of power to Crete, the trading and cultural center of the Mediterranean, and called his original followers to him. Casting out the previous masters of

the island, he commissioned an intricate labyrinth to be built, a dark mandala that would focus his power and allow the Lords of Hell to walk the earth once more. The Minoans turned to war and demanded tribute from other civilizations; slaves and the children of kings alike were sent to feed the blood rituals of the Baali. Inhuman things walked the labyrinth and the palace of Knossos was like a charnel house in those days. Infernal power grew so strong that vampires could walk abroad in daylight, and Shaitan planned an empire of blood that would plunge the entire world into darkness.

But Shaitan's actions had angered his rivals in the Jyhad: his demands for tribute from Egypt had roused Set himself; the Brujah warmaster Menele came from Athens with mortal heroes to destroy the slavemaster of the Mediterranean; and the Ventrue Balthazar returned from his travels in India, where augurs had seen the sky turn dark. Other pawns of the Jyhad moved into place: Gangrel from the steppes, the Malkavian Dionysian and the bacchante, Toreador and Lasombra from Africa. They waged war on Shaitan until the sea around Crete was stained red with blood — mortal and immortal alike.

The war raged for nine days and nine nights as Shaitan remained at the center of his labyrinth, working rituals to open a gate to Hell. Although Shaitan's forces were scattered no one could penetrate the maze to reach him. Mortal heroes thought they had slain the monster of Crete when they confronted ghouls of Shaitan, as twisted in body as their master was in heart.

The exhausted warriors met and said, "We cannot reach Shaitan himself and we are weary — what shall we do?" Set's childer, wise in the magic of Egypt, spoke. "If we cannot break him, we must break his labyrinth. Let us call on the storm, let us call on the fire, let us call on the Earthshaker. Let us split this island like a ripe fig." The vampires agreed on this course of action and called on their powers, and the nearby island of Santorini answered, exploding in a cataclysmic eruption. The shock bought down the palace of Knossos, the fire burned Shaitan and his followers, and the sea rose up to wash away the taint. Set's childer smiled, for they knew the kingdom of Egypt could only rise in power now that Crete was no more. Shaitan howled in rage and anguish as he was once more cast down.

Since that time none have met Shaitan in person. His disciples say that he talks to them in dreams — that he was carried on the wings of the storm to a distant land where he could rest and heal his wounds, and that he will come again in power to reclaim what is rightfully his. His followers were scattered but not destroyed, and returned to their secret places, hiding within the clans or in the wilderness. The Baali watched empires rise and fall from the fringes, biding their time and waiting until the Jyhad had forgotten them.

The Baali Today

In the Dark Ages the Baali are on the rise once more. They have returned to their places of power — long ruined — and once again stand ready to begin the great work of raising themselves



and their dark masters to dominion over the world. Though their great labyrinth of power was shattered in Crete, many of their infernally tainted sites remained intact: with power drawn from the bloodshed of the Crusades they have raised Chorazin from the desert sands, and a steady flow of supplicants has begun to follow the Black Pilgrimage once more

Even now, Shaitan's 12 original followers awaken from their long slumber to begin the corruption of the clans anew.

Saulot

This enigmatic figure has become perhaps the closest thing to a saint Cainites have. Little is known about him beyond the writings in the *Book of Nod*, which are considered apocryphal at best. Those Salubri old enough to recall him personally are almost extinct: They were some of the very first to be hunted and slaughtered. Most Salubri of this day only know him through stories of their sires. Certain elements come up frequently enough to make for a hazy sort of history.

Saulot was described frequently as being a kind man with "eyes like forever", his Beast already well controlled before he attained Golconda. He was respected as a voice of reason, and is often named as Caine's favorite childe. Some have noted the interesting correlation in the descriptors of Abel and Saulot, both spoken of as gentle men with strong interests in healing and the natural order. In light of Caine's deep affection for this childe, and the need to keep him close during the latter part of the Second City's years, it has led a number to wonder if Saulot was perhaps a surrogate Abel for the guilt-racked Caine.

Saulot's achievement of Golconda marked a turning-point for how vampires would view their world. Suddenly, there existed hope; they need not be sole prey for the Beast and count their years based on when they would make that fatal descent. Caine in particular seemed interested in this, and from then on, kept Saulot very close to him. If there was ever jealousy among the other vampires, it has never been mentioned in any story. Saulot also shared an unusual relationship with his brother Malkav; the two apparently enjoyed each other's company, and Saulot's gifts were said to relieve Malkav when his madness threatened to overwhelm him.

Saulot had the well-known but disturbing habit of going into meditative trances. During these states, he would speak in riddles and strange phrases that were occasionally taken to be prophecy. A few fragments of the *Book of Nod* are said to be transcriptions of these mutterings. Perhaps it was why Malkav was so fond of him. His words to his childer hinted strongly at his own death.

Through the stories of other vampires, whose ancestors had seen the Second City, was the tale of Saulot told. Other accounts — those of Malkav, Nosferatu, Ravnos — told how Baali wars brought out a side rarely seen in Saulot. He was driven, angry, obsessed. When he made war against the Gnostics, none would gainsay him, and rumor claimed that even Malkav could not soothe his fires. On the other hand, some whispered that Saulot feared losing his childer to Gnosticism (several had already left to practice mortal religions), and had concocted rumors of a Baali presence among them to have an excuse to destroy them. As suddenly as his rages began, they ended, and the stories speak no more of it.

As he slipped into his last years, the tales became less certain. The disappearance of Caine led to his near-complete withdrawal from the world, and he spent hours engaged in mysterious business away from all eyes. After years of this strange errand, he too vanished from the world. To where he retreated, no one knew, save one or two childer he trusted completely. Still, he had kept contact with his brood through the powers of his mind, watching them and advising occasionally. It was initially through this connection that news of his death came to light.

Today, Saulot is granted the sort of reverence offered to martyrs. Most of the other clans shelter his descendants for his sake, and the legends of his kindness have stirred others to good deeds. If there were ever any doubts or uncertainties about him, they have since vanished or have been conveniently lost to history.

Baali Connections

The history of the Salubri is often intertwined with that of the Baali, and one cannot be discussed with the other. The connections that are discussed would rather be forgotten by the Baali, and the ones whispered about rarely reach the ears of most Salubri.

The Baali's beginnings as a sect of human diabolists is believed to have been during the misty times of the Second City. As they grew bolder and more powerful, they sought to grasp at the gift of immortality. Saulot, at this time an advisor to Caine, suggested that these diabolists bore close watching, and that the vampires needed more information on them, particularly if war became an issue. Caine agreed, and bid Saulot find those best suited to the task.

The Salubri of this time were not strictly healers and ritemasters; a select few were warriors with impressive command of their Disciplines and the martial arts. Of these few, Saulot chose four (two of them were his own childer) for this mission and brought them to Caine for his approval. He approved and told them that they walked a path of great danger and secrecy. They were to infiltrate the stronghold of the diabolists, learn how close they were to gaining immortality, and return to the City with word. They agreed and left that very night, with only their leaders aware of their passing.

Little is known of what happened in the interim. Nearly four months passed without a word, and Saulot feared the group had met Final Death. Then, one starless night, one of them dragged himself to the gates and begged for entrance and blood. He was half-crazed with hunger, weak and badly frightened. After being tended to, he told his sire and king what had happened.

The four found the camp with little difficulty. The farmers in the river valleys spoke in hushed, dread-filled whispers of a dark mountain where the earth cracked open and belched forth demons and other foul spirits. After several days journey, the four

reached the mountain and managed to convince the gate-keeper that they were there to join the diabolists, or at least learn from them. The diabolists made them welcome with feasting and terrible rites that the survivor refused to speak of, even at the command of his great-grandsire, save that a dark shape with glowing eyes had appeared at the feast to bestow its blessing upon them. The group called itself the Baali, and they were worshippers of the Infernal powers, things that appeared from the bowels of the earth and from beyond the stars. The Baali already possessed a number of gifts that had been bestowed by their dark masters, which they called Investments. Some were powerful enough to rival vampiric Disciplines, summoning flames and searching out the corruption in each person's soul.

The longer the four stayed among the Baali, the more dangerous it became. Because of their strong grasp on their Via and their humanity, they began to arouse suspicions. Worse, one of them, a childe of Saulot, had become enamored of the Baali and their ways. The life of a warrior and ascetic had never truly pleased him, and the Baali had fed upon his unhappiness, replacing it with their honeyed words and promises of power. In that moment, their companion fell to darkness, betraying the infiltrators as he did so. The rest were captured and imprisoned in pits deep below the earth.

When the Baali learned of the great prize in their midst, their sorcerers spoke of using the vampiric blood to give themselves immortality. First, the Baali forced the imprisoned vampires to Embrace their leaders, as instructed by their erstwhile companion. Then he called on the new vampires to diablerize the other childe of Saulot. One leader was chosen to perform this, and he did so with frightening skill. The remaining Salubri were nearly slaughtered as well, but the new leader, bloated with power and blood, commanded that they should be left alive as fonts of knowledge.

The first died the Final Death, screaming as his captors attempted to rip the information from him with tortures as to make Tzimisce himself wince. The second, the survivor, said that he was tempted many times by his former companion, but refused to share in such tainted power. Finally, he was able to escape, and he had made his way back to the City. The former Salubri had been left behind, and no doubt even now he poured new wisdom into the ears of the Baali. Not long after telling his tale, the survivor committed suicide, staying up to greet the morning after one nightmare too many.

The Baali did not take long to make themselves known as a threat. For once, it was gentle Saulot who counseled war and asked — nay, demanded — that his forces lead the attack. Of those who questioned this action, only Malkav understood with the wisdom of the mad that his brother's heart was gnawed and worried with guilt, and that he wished to wipe out the traitor himself.

Most accounts of the war have been lost with the Second City, and those that remain are consigned to allusions in memoirs and the ramblings of scholars and elders. All agree that it was



a bloodbath, led by Saulot's chosen warriors. Of those, none survived, but the traitor's fate was less certain. When it was finished, most of the Salubri had been decimated, and the losses from all allies had been costly. But Saulot was not finished.

The years that followed were an eerie premonition of the Salubri's fate. Saulot turned his attention to hunting the Baali out, driven to see the traitor to their clan destroyed. When rumors began attributing Baali presence among the Gnostic sects, Saulot went after them with flame and sword. This would never have gone on for so long, but for the burning hatred shared by the other clans. Brujah in particular stood with Saulot in this, and arranged for his allies to see about "investigating" the Gnostics. The bloody purge was mysteriously ended by Saulot's command, and none to this night understand how or why it began or ended.

Now, with the death of Saulot, some vampiric scholars among the Brujah and Cappadocians are beginning to question how a group of mortals could have reached such heights of power in so short a time. In dating the appearance of the Tremere as a clan and such things as razor bats and Gargoyles, some notice that the Tremere adjusted to their new state and the loss of the mortal powers with remarkable speed. Even more remarkable is their new Discipline of Thaumaturgy and new creatures at their disposal: a good 50 years work. Too good, declare these scholars, who are now proposing various theories as to how the Tremere developed so quickly. The one gaining some credence among scholars has put the Tremere in an even more tenuous position.

The theory states that the Tremere had help in their dirty deeds, perhaps even acting as someone else's hatchetmen in exchange for power. A number of powerful Cainites and not a few mortal wizards have been pointed out in this, but a Cappadocian has proposed the simplest and most sensible theory: the Baali, for revenge. The Baali took terrible losses in the Salubri-led campaign against them, so much so that they were reduced to their present, mostly powerless state. It would be the classic "deal with the Devil" of the Tremere leaders being offered great power in exchange for getting rid of someone that they could not. Likewise, it would account for how Tremere and his followers gained access to the sleeping Saulot. The Baali (through their ill-gotten knowledge) might be well acquainted with how Saulot protected himself, but unable to approach him or broach his powers.

The theory has gained little credence among the remaining Salubri, strangely. Few are willing to agree with the idea that their closest cousins might be the things they despise so wholeheartedly.

Via Dolorosa

It is said that the lost Salubri dealt with demons and had their own path to follow. Clan Tremere has tried to argue that it has done the world a great service by ridding it of a clan of infernalists; the truth, as it often is, is stranger.

The Salubri Warriors

Samiel, childe of Saulot, was called the first and greatest of Salubri warriors. Apocryphal stories describe how the young man, called by another name now forgotten, was headstrong and uneasy in the role of a quiet healer. Caine finally commanded that the childe learn the arts of war to keep him occupied, giving him to Brujah and Gangrel as a pupil. After many trials of body and spirit, the result was a young warrior, blooded and wise, anxious to defend the weak and innocent, and all too ready to stand against evil. He took the name, "Samiel," to reflect his changes, and Samiel he has been ever since.

Samiel's writings on his experiences became the basis for the training of other Salubri warriors. This "code" gave the warriors ideals to strive for, but each had to find his own inner light by which he was guided. Each was expected to be skilled in combat, proficient in Disciplines, pure in intent and heart, and strong in spirit. When the training was complete and the would-be warrior was deemed ready, he was given a certain portion of Samiel's writings to read. Whispered stories claimed that something about the text was said to spiritually "blood" the new one (none of the tales agree on the exact occurrence), and he would thereafter take his place among the ranks. Upon his entrance, he was expected to change his name to one containing the syllable "-el" ("of the Lord") to show he had given himself up to the Great Father. The names of Samiel, Ariel, Jael and Aredhel ring through history in response.

The ongoing Crusades have fostered a few new Salubri who wish to continue as paladins. While they are encouraged to do so, they are not considered to be "blooded" by Samiel, and thus not true warriors of his code. The last copies of the code itself are believed lost, and some claim that it signals the end of the Salubri's warrior caste.

The Salubri did indeed deal with demons, making pacts and accepting infernal power. This led to their bad reputation, which the Tremere are eager to exploit to justify their founder's crime. Those who knew the Salubri, however, realized their dealing had a purpose: The Salubri sought to chain demons to them by their pacts; they would then destroy themselves, binding the demons into the destruction with secret magics. These rituals for destroying demons have been lost with the fall of the clan, but they may still be discovered among the remnants of the clan and in ancient manuscripts.

The path that the clan followed was called the Via Dolorosa — the Road of Tears. Its tenets included offering aid to the injured and protection to the abused. The path challenged its followers to combat the evil in the world in an attempt to remove the corruption other Cainites had bought

into it. The final duty of a Salubri who reached the pinnacle of this path was to create a childe, who would be brought up to diablerize his sire. The Salubri realized that an escape from the vampiric condition through Golconda was too hard a task for many of them, and instead sacrificed themselves through the Amaranth, thus removing what evil they could from the world.

Demonic Pacts

A character may make a traditional pact with a demon in order to gain more power. The abilities that demons grant are called infernal investments. They are a double-edged sword; for all the power they grant, they exact a harsh price.

Most demonic pacts involve barter, whereby the demon offers power in exchange for some service. Often this service coincides with the character's own goals: For example, the character has been having trouble with the local bishop, so the demon offers the character a chance to kill him and gain an infernal investment. Such bargains are in the demon's interests — each time a character gains an infernal investment, she must undergo a Supplicium, bringing the character's soul closer to Hell's power.

Pacts

Demonic pacts are rated on a scale of 1 to 10, representing the degree of service the character must perform for the demon. A pact of 1 is easily accomplished, and most infernalists perform many such services in their career, allowing them access to a wide range of investments. The higher-rated pacts are far more difficult to perform, but their rewards are significantly greater. Once a character has completed a pact, she may spend the points gained on infernal investments in any way she chooses.

For example, Johann Binsfeld, a Ventrue infernalist, has just corrupted the local monastery and turned the good monks into subservient ghouls. The demon he is dealing with awards him five points for the pact. Johann could spend these points increasing one Attribute from 3 to 4; learn Rego Dolor at 1 (one point), gain a demonic man-at-arms (one point) and gain fiery breath (three points); or any other combination.

Pacts can also be made to gain a demon's immediate help; this option is generally used by an infernalist who is in great danger or severely threatened. Common pacts include such boons as transportation to a place of safety or use of demonic powers in the infernalist's defense. Such a pact should cost as much as the Storyteller thinks he can get out of the threatened character, given that refusal would probably mean destruction. Once such a pact is made, the infernalist must do all within his power to fulfill his end of the bargain or find himself forfeit.

Forfeiture

My time is come, my day is done, And I can no longer stay,
For I am seized to pay that debt, Which debt we all must pay.
— inscription on a gravestone, Yorkshire, England

Alternate Occupations

Not every Salubri currently walking the land is restricted to the professions of healing or teaching. Since the beginnings of Saulot's torpor, several sought out different paths of unlife. Needless to say, some of the choices have startled their more conservative brethren, not to mention a few fellow Cainites.

Some are caught up in the political intrigue of the day, working as advisors to princes and primogen. Others at princes' courts serve as seneschals, scribes or repositories of lore. A few work in the ministry, primarily serving the needs of the streetfolk and poor. In France, rumors persist of one who works as a sort of highwayman in reverse, stealing bandits' loot to return it to the owners or a more deserving soul.

The so-called "Angels of Death" are considered legend, except to those who know them. The rare Salubri seeking vengeance is retold like a hearth story, complete with the requisite shudders by amused non-Tremere vampires. The Cappadocians and Tzimisce could tell some very interesting stories of certain Salubri companions who show great promise and ability in different fields. In their quest to better understand the body, these Salubri have delved into vivisection and torture, to the shock of their more peaceful siblings.

Should a character attempt to evade his part in a pact, his soul is declared forfeit by Hell, and the demons involved begin their pursuit. Some mortals may be able to escape demonic persecution by fleeing to holy ground, but for a vampire such a route is practically impossible. The character may beg for his unlife and soul, making his final moments on Earth petty; alternatively, he may turn on his pursuers and fall in glorious battle. Certain legends say that a character who evades the forces of Hell three times becomes free from any pacts, loses all investments (including improvements bought with demonic aid) and may start his own Road.

A character who escapes Hell's clutches will be bitterly hated by all demons and resented by all infernalists — her life or unlife is likely to be very complicated from that point on.

Investments

Infernal investments are rated by their cost in demonic pacts, allowing a quick conversion between the service offered and the power gained. This is not an exhaustive list of available investments; Storytellers should have fun inventing their own powers. Many of these investments are possessed by demons as natural abilities and may be substituted for or added to their listed powers. (More supernatural powers can be found in the supplements **Freak Legion** and **Ascension's Right Hand**.)



Pact Ratings

The exact rating of pacts is up to individual Storytellers. The following list should give a broad idea of what services are appropriate for each level.

Level One — Malice

Small tasks, often designed merely to add to the character's burden of sin.

Level Two — Cruelty

Petty or personal actions, such as corrupting a single person, are at this level.

Level Three — Immorality

Any task which forces the character to make a degeneration check should be at least this level.

Level Four — Wrongdoing

Actively spreading evil or challenging the authority of the Church.

Level Five — Corruption

Leading others into evil or killing a major opponent of the infernal powers (for example, a knight with True Faith).

Level Six — Sin

Founding and leading a coven of other infernalists or dedicating a site to corruption.

Level Seven — Heresy

Reversing the actions of the Church, spreading riot and dissent across a wide area.

Level Eight — Supreme Task

Corrupting a whole city or dedicating a cathedral to evil. Creating a heresy that lasts more than 10 years.

Level Nine — Life Boon

Dedicating one's entire life to the service of the demon.

Level Ten — Soul Pact

This is the ultimate pact that can be made with a demon. A character undertaking such a pact swears fealty to the demon and promises it his soul upon death. Once a character has made such a pact, the demon refuses any further pacts, for it has all it ever wanted from the character. Many demons try to badger an infernalist to sign such a pact immediately, not revealing that lesser services can be performed. Most demons offer this pact when an infernalist is in mortal danger and willing to seize upon any chance to save his life.

Transformations

With these investments the demon grants a new ability to the infernalist. All of these abilities involve some physical transformation. For example, the power of flight means that the character grows twisted wings, further marking the character as one of the infernal host.

Armor: (1 pt Investment)

Scales, fur or chitinous armor plating grows over the character's body. Each time this investment is taken the

character adds one die to her soak pool against nonaggravated attacks. This investment may be taken many times, but every three times it is taken, the character loses a point of Appearance permanently.

Claws: (1 pt Investment)

The character grows claws like a beast. The claws are permanently in place, but they may be made retractable for an additional point. These claws inflict Strength +2 damage in combat.

Flame: (3 pt Investment)

The character becomes able to exhale gouts of flame (or a similar virulent substance such as acid). This flame inflicts three aggravated Health Levels on the target, who may dodge against the infernalist's Dexterity + Occult roll. The infernalist may increase the damage of his fiery breath by one Health Level for every two points spent.

Flight: (3 pt Investment)

The character grows leathery wings, enabling him to fly short distances. The character can remain in the air for a number of turns equal to his Strength Attribute. For an additional point, the wings may be barbed, inflicting damage like claws (Strength +2).

Limbs: (2 pt Investment)

The character grows an extra limb. This may be a normal limb, such as an arm sprouting from the chest, or something strange like a tentacle or tail. Each additional limb allows the character to make one extra attack each turn; these attacks do not split the Dice Pool, but each additional attack increases the difficulty to hit by one.

Poison: (1 pt Investment)

The character's blood becomes poisonous, inflicting five Health Levels of damage on anyone who ingests it. This damage is soakable. If the character has claws (or wants to bite), he can purchase poison sacs for an additional point, allowing him to inflict this damage in combat. Should someone ingest large amounts of poisonous blood, a soak roll against the poison should be made for each Blood Point imbibed.

Power

Demons are always willing to teach their dupes new powers. Almost all infernalists are taught Dark Thaumaturgy by demons, and many vampires seek out demons to learn Disciplines they cannot gain from their clan.

Dark Thaumaturgy (varies)

Characters can purchase Dark Thaumaturgy from their demonic mentors. Ratings in the paths of Dark Thaumaturgy can only increase one point at a time. For example, if a character has Video Nefas at Level Two, he can only increase it to Level Three with the next pact he makes. The character need only make a pact equal to the new level of Dark Thaumaturgy, but must immediately undergo a Supplicium upon learning the corrupt knowledge.

Disciplines (varies)

Demons can teach Disciplines to vampires. Each time a Discipline is increased through an infernal investment, it may be raised only one level. Raising Disciplines costs the character a pact equal to the new Discipline level +3.

A demon can also teach the character a single power from a Discipline (for example, just Dread Gaze, not the full Discipline of Presence). This costs the character a pact equal to the level of the specific power +1. In this way, mortals can receive these specific powers from demonic mentors.

The special infernal Disciplines of Maleficia and Striga (as well as any other infernal Disciplines the Storyteller creates) can only be learned by dealing with demons.

Attributes and Abilities (varies)

Demons aid their minions to become more powerful. Attributes and Abilities can be raised only one level for each pact. Attributes require a pact equal to their new level +2 and Abilities their new level +1 to raise through infernal means.

Life (one point per year of life)

Though inappropriate to vampires, demons offer mortals extended life in exchange for pacts. The mortal's life (in good health) will be extended for one year for each point of the pact. The demon can also reverse the aging process for the same cost. This is a very tempting offer in the medieval period, when most people had short lifespans. A demon will never grant unconditional immortality, nor will it guarantee anyone against harm. Similar pacts may also be made to cure diseases and heal wounds.

Servants (varies)

Minor demons may serve a character in exchange for pacts. Powerful infernalists may be attended by many followers. Most such servants are possessed mortals who are intensely loyal, and even willing to die for the infernalist. Such servants cost one point unless they are especially skilled or powerful. Bound demons may be granted to an infernalist for two points, and it is possible that a more powerful demon will consent to serve for a sufficiently large service.

We Are Called Legion...

Though the Church holds as plain truth the theory that just as there is one God there is one Devil, those who have sought the mysteries of the world have discovered there seem to be as many devils as there are people who believe in this force of evil — is the Devil such an artful deceiver that he can appear in many forms, or is the Church wrong? There is no simple answer to such a question, but it is possible to examine several of the options.

Caine and Satan

Caine's curse springs from the same dark pride that drove Lucifer. Some vampires have argued that the human images and stories of Satan are merely pale reflections of Caine's story. Cainite infernalists hope that Caine fights a war against the God who damned him and will praise them when he awakens from his sleep of ages.



Lilith and Satan

According to folklore, Lilith, the mother of vampires, was cast out of Eden before Eve was created and became the Devil's wife, giving birth to many monsters. Some ancient vampires say that they remember stories in which Lilith is portrayed as the mother of all supernaturals — that she was the first mage, taught werewolves how to change their skins and even dealt with the restless dead and the fae.

Lilith is revered as the mother of vampires, the entity who awakened Caine into his dark powers. Whether she is a representative of Satan is hotly debated among scholarly Cainites, who desperately seek out fragments of the *Book of Nod* and the legendary *Testament of Lilith*. Some ancients speak of a time when Lilith was equal to Jehovah and say that these legendary manuscripts contain ancient magics lost in time. A Cainite who finds these lost documents might gain access to the power of gods — or just be another fool in the games of the Jyhad.

Set and Satan

The Followers of Set know the tricks of demons very well; indeed, they use many of them for their own purposes. This is not to say that the Followers are servants of Hell. Setite legends say that Jehovah, Christ, Allah and all the other gods are but trinkets held up to pacify humanity, and that the various devils are merely terrors to frighten them. Their dedication is to their lord Set and they will not be swayed from his path.

The Wyrm

The pagans of Northern Europe (and, if travelers' tales out of Africa and Asia are to be believed, of more distant parts) worship a great dragon or serpent that they call Vermis Magnis. To the Christian, this is merely one of the aspects of Satan, as the serpent, but some disturbing rumors have arisen from vampires who hold their fiefs in the forsaken northlands.

The strange worshippers of Vermis Magnis descend into pits in the earth, there to commune with spirits and stranger beings. They are taught how to put on and take off the wolf skin and learn many secrets of Dark Thaumaturgy. Many elders scoff at these stories, but rumors circulate throughout the north of England that the barbarian Picts have crossed their ancient borders and are moving south. Those Cainites whose domains border the north have requested aid from their clan fellows, and it appears that something malevolent stirs there.

...For We Are Many

No human can enumerate all the forces of Hell. Though hedge magicians collect and hoard the names and ranks of demons as if they were treasure, it is a futile task. Those who

have explored the dark side of the world believe that there is not merely one Hell, as the Church claims, but innumerable levels of pain and damnation. To the medieval mind, Hell was not a structured place with separate realms of punishment, but a bleak emptiness in which the Fallen Angels and demons have built their habitations.

Lucifer

Lucifer is first among the Fallen Angels. He led the rebellion in Heaven and continues to work against all good in the world. In the Book of Job he was portrayed as a servant of God sent to test mankind. According to the Church he was Prince of the World until Christ made a new covenant with humankind. At this point, he became the Adversary, violently resisting the works of the Lord and fighting a battle that would only be resolved on judgment day. His name in Heaven was Samael, the angel of light; he became Lucifer when he fell, and has also been named Abaddon, the Destroyer, and Apollyon, the Angel of the Bottomless Pit.

In past ages he was given charge over the Earth and humankind, but with the coming of Christ and God's new covenant with humanity he was overthrown and condemned to Hell. By the 12th century, people have accepted that Lucifer is the enemy of God and man, dedicated to the overthrow of the Earth. Luckily he is bound in Hell until the world's end.

The idea of Lucifer as an antihero, a Promethean figure that could be pitied or even praised, will not arise until the 17th century. In the Dark Medieval world he is the ultimate foe, the pitiless fiend who seeks to trample all that is good beneath his cloven hooves. He is not free to enter the world and relies upon his servants, the princes of Hell, to do his work.

The Antichrist and the End of the World

There will come a time when Lucifer will be free to work his will upon the world. This will be the End of Days and will be heralded by the coming of the Antichrist. The Antichrist will be the antithesis of Christ, a man given wholly over to the power of evil, in whom Satan will place all his trust and power. He will be neither a demon nor the son of the Devil, but rather a normal man who will seek to give the world to Hell.

According to legend he will be (or perhaps already has been) born in the city of Chorazin and rise to greatness through his intelligence, regal bearing and common justice. He will unite the warring factions of Christianity and be proclaimed both Pope and Emperor, leading the forces of Christendom into a great Holy War that will destroy the Jews, Muslims and pagans. His empire will unite the entire world and he will be seen as the new Messiah.

All of this will be a lie. He will then plunge the world into an age of devastation that will last 1000 years, an age in which all hope is extinguished and people will count the dead as



lucky. Eventually, it is said, his reign will end as the tired world begs for an end to its pain. Christ will return in power, and history will come to a close as the day of judgment begins.

This day will be the last, and all souls will be bought before God's throne. Those whose names are found in the Book of Life will be given a new Heaven and Earth free of sin; others will be cast out forever.

Infernalists believe that the outcome of this final battle is in hazard, and that their masters may win and raise them to dominion over all the world. Cainites whisper of their own legends, recorded in the *Book of Nod* from the time of Enoch, that say the world will be given over to their elders on the Night of Gehenna: that the only dead who rise will be the Antediluvians, who will feed upon their childer and found an empire of blood that lasts a thousand years. After this millennium there will be no judgment, merely the ashes of the dying sun illuminating a broken and empty world where the citadels of the elders stand forever.

The Princes of Hell

Scholars and saints often try to enumerate the forces of Hell. Some claim there are as many as 133,306,668 devils in Hell; others, that 66 princes command 6,660,000 devils. The point of these figures is that the human mind cannot realize the scope of the infernal forces set against the world. Hell's hierarchy is seen as a dark reflection of Heaven's angelic host, with the following orders of Fallen Angels leading the unholy legions.

First Hierarchy

The most powerful of the fallen angels are the Seraphim. The Seraphim are ruled by Beelzebub, who tempts men with pride; Leviathan, who is the ringleader of the heretics and leads men into sins repugnant to faith; and Asmodeus, who is the prince of wantons and burns with the desire to tempt men into sins of luxury. Below the Seraphim are the Cherubim, lead by Balberith, who stirs the blood to murder and blasphemy. Lowest in the first hierarchy are the Thrones, lorded over by Astaroth, who promotes sloth and idleness; Verine, who causes impatience to lead to sin; Gressil, who wants mankind to wallow in filth; and Sonneillon, who tempts men into hatred against their enemies.

These Archdukes and Dukes of Hell bear scant resemblance to humanity, instead appearing as perverse mixtures of creatures — great beasts or dragons, or shadows of terrible import. It is virtually impossible for such beings to reach Earth; they influence humanity through visions and dreams. Infernalists contact them for their great knowledge and advice, but fear to look upon such potent devils, and so work in darkness.

Kaiser

Kaiser is the servant of Sonneillon. He appears as a walking corpse, clad in rags of finery, with his flesh burnt and scarred. His eyesockets are empty, and wisps of mist seem to drift behind them.



Kaiser has been given governance over last things. He is the census-taker of Hell; his job is to be present at the end of things, whether they are ideas, faiths or races. He is sometimes sent by his lord to find those who seek to escape the powers of Hell, for he is an excellent tracker and huntsman. He was allegedly seen by Cainites at the time of the diablerie of Saulot, and it is said that he appeared disturbed by the events he witnessed. He seldom communicates, preferring to follow his lonely task in silence, but will respond if addressed in High Latin.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 6, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0, Perception 8, Intelligence 7, Wits 6

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -3, -5, Dispelled

Attack: Burning Touch for five dice of aggravated damage

Abilities: Alertness 6, Empathy 4, Intimidation 5, Leadership 6, Etiquette 7, Stealth 5, Academics 3, Investigation 8, Politics 6

Disciplines: Auspex 6, Celerity 2, Dark Thaumaturgy 5, Dominate 5, Fortitude 3, Mortis 3, Obfuscate 4, Obtenebration 6, Presence 5

Dark Thaumaturgical Paths: Video Nefas 5

Blood Pool: 20, **Willpower:** 9

Second Hierarchy

These Lords of Hell are the Dominions, commanded by Oeillet, who tempts people to break their vows; and Rosier, Queen of Succubi, who opens the path of sinful pleasure and tainted love.

Their work is supported by Verrier, Prince of the Principalities, who whispers rebellion against authority and incites people to refuse their lords. The final level of this hierarchy is the Powers, headed by Carreau, who makes men harden their hearts against love and faith; and Carnivean, who makes people love obscenity.

The Second Hierarchy is very active on Earth. Its princes are sometimes able to break their chains and appear to their servants. They often take human forms of great beauty (especially Rosier, who appears as a beautiful woman or handsome man). These lords of Hell are too proud to engage in vulgar combat and other contests of power and will return to their domains if challenged, laying great curses on those who dared oppose them.



The Huntsman

The Huntsman appears as a finely dressed noble. He has many friends and knows all the latest fashions and scandals. An inveterate gossip, he seems to know more of a character's business than the character himself. He proposes games of chance in which the wager gradually rises, or dares victims to commit some indiscretion with him. (Perhaps it would be amusing to spy on the nuns bathing? Or to break into a church and drink communion wine? Would you like to visit the local brothels? He has many contacts there. Avenge yourself on a foe? He knows how to cheat in a duel.)

Only when his victim has no other friends and is exiled from society will he invite her to come to his house and see what else he has to offer....

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 6, Stamina 5, Charisma 5, Manipulation 6, Appearance 6, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -3, -3, -5, Dispelled

Attack: Weapon for eight dice + Potence

Abilities: Acting 4, Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Empathy 3, Intimidation 4, Larceny 6, Subterfuge 6, Archery 3, Etiquette 5, Melee 6, Music 3, Ride 3, Stealth 4, Law 2, Linguistics 3, Occult 6

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Daimoinon 4, Dark Thaumaturgy 4, Dementation 3, Fortitude 2, Potence 2, Presence 3

Dark Thaumaturgical Paths: Rego Venalis 4

Blood Pool: 15, **Willpower:** 7

Third Hierarchy

The least among the demon lords are the Virtues, governed by Belias, who leads humanity into arrogance and worldliness, distracts them from virtue with vulgar fashion and teaches children to be wanton and disregard the Gospels. Olivier, of the Archangels, is the lord of cruelty and delights in abusing the poor and weak. Finally the infernal Angels, led by Iuvart, are merely servants and vassals to the other lords of Hell.



Spite

Spite, a minion of Belias, appears as a normal cat. It insinuates itself into a household with children and becomes their trusted companion, whispering to them in their sleep. Its insidious machi-

nations begin with minor mischief (for which it uses its powers to place the blame on others), escalate through levels of cruelty, and finally dupe the child into murdering other children or tempting adults into sex. Unless its child has potential, Spite then abandons him to the law and damnation. If it thinks its child might prove useful, it leads him to other infernalists, who train the child in evil.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 6, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Health Levels: OK, OK, -1, -1, -3, -3, Dispelled

Attack: Claw and bite for 3 dice

Abilities: Alertness 4, Dodge 5, Subterfuge 5, Stealth 5

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Auspex 2, Celerity 2, Dominate 4, Maleficia 4, Obfuscate 5, Thaumaturgy 3

Thaumaturgical Paths: Rego Elementum 3, Rego Motus 2

Blood Pool: 10, **Willpower:** 6

The Demons

The true host of Hell is made up of countless demons. It is these beings who are bought into the world by infernalists and most readily take an interest in the affairs of mankind. Most of them are subservient to their masters in Hell, but there are some who seem worryingly independent. According to medieval scholars, six broad types of demons have access to the world.

Fiery Demons

To the medieval mind, the world was surrounded by an aura of fire through which the stars and planets moved. The demons who dwell in this vast darkness between the stars are a varied breed. Most have little interest in humanity, preferring to pursue their own strange intrigues — it is said that the pagan gods drift in the void remembering their days of power, that there are strange demons based upon ideas, constructions of mathematics, manifestations of human reason and emotions. They are called *daemons* to distinguish them from their more comprehensible kin.

Infernalists have little power over these beings; they may only be summoned using True Magick. Astrologers have said that a few of these star daemons have shown an interest in the growing study of mathematics and other natural sciences at the University of Paris.

Star Daemon

This being appears as a twisting ribbon of light and shadow. Shapes emerge from this formlessness, hinting at geometric patterns or even writing. Gazing at this being too long makes the viewer uncertain of her place in the universe, as she begins to sense the vast void that surrounds her. If the viewer makes a Willpower roll (difficulty 12 minus Intelligence, maximum 10), she gains supernatural insight (gain a bonus to Dice Pools involving an Ability chosen by the Storyteller; the bonus equals the successes on the Willpower roll and lasts for a number of days



equal to the character's Intelligence). This daemon is angered by any attempt to dispel it, using its Thaumaturgy and Obtenebration against such an attacker.

According to translations of Chaldean and Egyptian magic, there exists a breed of greater star daemons who, like the wandering stars, intersect with the world only at specific times. The Sphinx and some Babylonian carvings are said to depict these beings. The powers of such inhuman intellects can only be guessed at.

Attributes: Strength *, Dexterity *, Stamina *, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0, Perception 9, Intelligence 8, Wits 7

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, Dispelled

Attack: Thaumaturgy and Obtenebration only. No physical attack.

Abilities: Music 5, Academics (Mathematics) 7, Linguistics 7, Occult 5, Science 8

Disciplines: Auspex 6, Fortitude 4, Obfuscate 2, Obtenebration (appears as forms of light rather than shadow) 4, Thaumaturgy 6

Thaumaturgical Paths: Cre Ignem 6, Rego Elementum 4

Blood Pool: *, **Willpower:** 10

*This star daemon has no real physical presence. It can only be harmed by attacks involving natural forces such as fire or lightning, which it resists using Fortitude.

Aerial Demons

These demons swarm invisibly through the spirit world, seeking entrance to the material world in order to tempt or attack humans. They conspire with infernalists for the destruction of mankind.



Belteroth, the Storm-Chaser

Belteroth rides the winds of the world in the form of a dark shadow, ever seeking prey. It appears as a monstrous figure with ragged wings, claws and cold eyes. Its presence can be detected by the piercing shriek it makes as it swoops upon its prey. It can only consume damned souls, but revels in snatching up the innocent and lost, then dropping them from the heights.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 6, Stamina 5, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0, Perception 6, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -2 , -2, -2 , -3, -3, -3, Dispelled

Attack: Claw for 7 dice + Potence,

Abilities: Alertness 5, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 6

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Celerity 4, Fortitude 1, Potence 2, Thaumaturgy 5

Thaumaturgical Paths: Rego Motus 5, Rego Tempestas 4

Blood Pool: 15 , **Willpower:** 7

Terrestrial Demons

Terrestrial demons are the most dangerous sort, for they have been cast out of the spirit worlds and dwell on Earth among humanity. They are often confused with werewolves and fae, for they are adept at changing their forms and casting illusions. The weakest among them possess the bodies of animals, creating Hell-beasts (see **Vampire: the Dark Ages** pages 266-267), while the more powerful pose as human beings and work their corruption secretly. If a terrestrial demon is slain, it is truly dead rather than merely dispelled.

The Black Monk

Legends and sightings of the Black Monk are found across Europe. Some say he is from Germany, others from Scotland. He has been seen in Rome, in the company of cardinals; in the south of France, with heretics; and in the halls of Paris' University, debating philosophy with students.

Appearing as a normal monk of middle years, the Black Monk corrupts through the suggestion of heresies to vulnerable folk. It is said that he led a group of children away from their homes, promising them that they had been chosen to enter Paradise; the children disappeared and were never seen again.

He is often attended by swarms of rats, and plague follows in his footsteps.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 4, Manipulation 6, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4



Health Levels: OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -3, -5, Dead

Attack: Weapon for 6 dice

Abilities: Acting 4, Alertness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Larceny 3, Subterfuge 6, Etiquette 1, Academics 5, Linguistics 5, Occult 6

Disciplines: Animalism 5, Auspex 2, Dark Thaumaturgy 5, Dementation 4, Dominate 1, Fortitude 3, Maleficia 5, Obfuscate 3, Presence 3, Vicissitude 3

Dark Thaumaturgical Paths: Rego Venalis 5, Video Nefas 4

Blood Pool: 10, **Willpower:** 6

Aqueous Demons

These demons dwell in rivers, lakes and the ocean depths. They delight in drowning humans, especially children, and use both guile and outright force to claim their due. The aqueous demons of the ocean are colossal monsters capable of crushing ships in their coils or tentacles.

Jenny Green Teeth

Jenny appears as a bloated corpse with long nails and sharp teeth. She is seen only as she breaks from the surface of her river to seize a victim. It is said that she can take on more pleasant forms to lure the unwary into her grasp, including a fine horse and a beautiful woman.

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 3, Stamina 6, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3



Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -3, -3, -5, Dispelled

Attack: Claw for 10 dice + Potence, Bite for 12 dice + Potence

Abilities: Acting 5, Athletics 5, Brawl 5, Stealth 4

Disciplines: Fortitude 5, Obfuscate 4, Potence 7

Blood Pool: 20, **Willpower:** 5

Subterranean Demons

Subterranean demons dwell deep within the earth and in caves and caverns. They attack those who disturb their domains (miners and treasure hunters especially), but are otherwise encountered by humankind only when summoned to the surface. They are slow and malicious, appearing as hybrids of armor, flesh and stone.



Gergimoth, a Gnome

Gergimoth sleeps close by the mine workings in Cornwall, England. Miners know not to follow lights seen down closed passages or listen too closely to the sounds they sometimes hear in the darkness. Gergimoth is roused to wrath should anyone steal treasure from his hoard.

Attributes: Strength 10, Dexterity 2, Stamina 10, Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance -2, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 2

Health Levels: OK ,OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -3, -3, -5, -5, Dispelled

Attack: Crush for 15 dice + Potence

Abilities: Brawl 5, Discover Treasures 4

Disciplines: Fortitude 5, Potence 5,

Thaumaturgical Paths: Rego Terram 5 (this is a branch of Thaumaturgy governing the earth; it allows the wielder to shatter or repair weapons and armor, cause minor earthquakes, and even collapse buildings!) Though he has no knowledge of Thaumaturgy, Gergimoth is inherently skilled with the magics of Rego Terram.

Blood Pool: 15, **Willpower**: 8

Bound Demons

Least among infernal powers are bound demons. These demons are so pitiful that they can be summoned and commanded to work by mere human magicians. Bound demons are usually small and brutish, often appearing as overly large toads or other vermin, and serve either as familiars (for the length of the magician's life) or as guards set over places or treasures.



Familiars

Familiars are tiny demons that are bound to a specific master. They generally appear as small animals (toads, cats, weasels and ravens are common) and serve as spies and gossips. Known familiars have included (from Mathew Hopkins' *Discovery of Witches*) "Holt, who cam in the form of a black kitling; Jamara, who came in like a fat spaniel without any legs at all; Vinegar Tom, who was like a long-legged greyhound and could appear as a four-year-old child; Sacke and Sugar, a black rabbit; and, News, a polecat" as well as imps called Ilemauzar, Pyewackett, Pecke in the Crowne, and Griezzell Greedigutt.

Familiars need to be fed the blood of their master weekly or they will wither and die.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Health Levels: OK. OK, -1, -1, -1, Dispelled

Attack: Claw for 3 dice (possibly poison as well for 3-5 dice)

Abilities: Dodge 3, Larceny 4, Stealth 4, Occult 5 (familiars can teach their master this knowledge)

Disciplines: Animalism (same type as the familiar's form only) 3, Auspex 2, Celerity 3, Maleficia 2

Blood Pool: 5, **Willpower:** 5

Custodes

These minor beasts are bound to guard a place and its treasures. They recognize only the one who summoned them and attempt to eat all other trespassers. They are dull-witted and slow, but immensely strong and persistent. Most of them appear as large spiders or giant toads covered in caustic slime. A few may have poisonous bites or other abilities.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, OK, -1, -1,-1, -2, -2, -2, -3, -5, Dispelled

Attack: Claw, Bite and Grab for 7 dice + Potence

Abilities: Brawl 5, Stealth (wait patiently) 5

Disciplines: Fortitude 3, Potence 4

Blood Pool: 10, **Willpower:** 5

The Infernal in the Dark Medieval World

The infernal is presented here in a way consistent with medieval legends and folklore. It is presented merely as part of the roleplaying experience of the Dark Medieval world. White Wolf makes no suggestion that Satanism in any form is an acceptable practice, or that black magic is real.

Humanity inflicts enough horrors on itself on a daily basis to make the descriptions of imaginary monsters seem tame.

To show demonic entities is to show the depths of human evil in a dramatic manner, something we must all rise above.


AR



Appendix: Bestiary

As I was walking all alane
I met twa corbies making a main
And tane into the tither did say O
Whare sall we gang and dine the day O
Whare sall we gang and dine the day
– "Twa Corbies" (traditional Breton song of carrion crows)

Pets, familiars, beasts of burden, farm stock, prey and wild animals are far more common in the Dark Medieval world than they are in our own. Most people lived with animals close by, often under the same roofs as families themselves. Cainites, therefore, often interact with animals: as transportation, ghouls, hunting companions, guards and sustenance.

Most animals were regarded as symbols, portents of things to come, exemplars of vices or virtues, or even as people transformed by magical means. Lions were noble rage personified. Pigs were, of course, gluttonous slobs. Swans were fierce defenders of their young. Wolves were savage destroyers. And bulls were paragons of simple strength. Through clever use of animals, a Storyteller can foreshadow upcoming events, give hints about mysteries, or comment on characters' actions or personalities.

For the most part, normal animals are best described with only Physical Traits. Few have Intelligence scores higher than 2, or a Perception scores lower than 3. Social Traits, of course, are purely subjective. Any of the beasts below can be turned into ghoul retainers with occasional meals of vampire blood; such companions gain Willpower and some "trained" Abilities that wild animals lack. Assume that any Trait in parentheses is instilled through human contact and training; an animal in the wilderness does not have these Abilities unless there's something magical about it. Animals whose Health Levels include Incapacitated can survive longer than those without it — others die when they run out of Health Levels. The Blood Pool Trait reflects how many points that a feeding Cainite can drain from a beast. Note that animal blood is far less satisfying than human vitae; some animals that have more blood than a human actually have lower Blood Pool ratings.

Bat

Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Willpower: 2, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -3

Attack: Bite for one die

Abilities: Alertness 3, Dodge 3, Stealth 2

Blood Pool: 1

Notes: Regarded as messengers of darkness and as the familiars of witches, bats often carry diseases or plague-bearing fleas. Some Cainites claim that bat blood tastes of dust.

Bear

Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5

Willpower: 4, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -3, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Claw for seven dice; bite for five

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Intimidation 2, Stealth 1

Blood Pool: 8

Notes: Considered figures of foolishness or mindless rage, bears are domesticated by some Gypsy bands or traveling players. Norsemen and Celts, however, respect bears for their power and believe them to be totems of strength. Bears' blood and organs are considered delicacies by some coarse Gangrel, who hunt them as tests of bravery.

Cat

Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Claw or bite for one die

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Climbing 3, Intimidation 2, Stealth 4 (Empathy 2, Subterfuge 2)

Blood Pool: 3

Notes: The medieval cat does not have a good reputation; it is capricious, cruel, sexual, sneaky — in short, what men consider worst in women. Naturally, most good Christians fear this traditional witch's companion, despite its rat-catching talents.

Cow/Bull

Strength 3/5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3/5

Willpower: 2, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -1, -3, -3, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite for three dice/gore for six

Abilities: Alertness 2 (Brawl 3)

Blood Pool: 8

Notes: While cows are seen as symbols of domestic simplicity, bulls epitomize masculine aggression and potency.

Deer/Stag

Strength 1/3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2/3

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: None/gore for five dice

Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Stealth 2

Blood Pool: 5/7

Notes: Traditional prey of the hunt. Deer epitomize fleetness and natural beauty, while stags stand for pagan pride, with an ominous undercurrent. Both have rich (if salty) blood.

Hare

Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Willpower: 1, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -2, -3

Attack: Bite for two dice; rear claw kick for one (desperation)

Abilities: Alertness 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Stealth 4

Blood Pool: 3

Notes: These stats represent European hares, not small "bunnies." Hares are traditionally regarded as symbols of fertility and feminine cunning.

Hawk/Crow/Raven/Owl

Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -2, -5

Attack: Claw for two dice; bite for one (desperation)

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2 (Brawl 3, Empathy 4, Intimidation 4)

Blood Pool: 2

Notes: The hawk, a traditional hunting animal, is ascribed with the virtues of keen sight and pride. The crow, an unusually intelligent bird, is thought to read minds, speak and foretell the future — its appearance is considered a death omen. The raven is a traditional sorcerer's companion, and is said to speak in riddles and foretell ill events. The owl, long associated with scholars and sages, represents both pride and terror. While the owl is seen as a wise bird, its screech and staring eyes symbolize impending disaster.

Horse/Warhorse

Strength 4/6, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3/5

Willpower: 2/4, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Trample or kick for six/seven dice; bite for three

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 1 (Brawl 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2)

Blood Pool: 6/8

Notes: Symbols of simple-minded virtue, horses aren't clever but are steadfast, tireless and loyal. Horses have fierce tempers when roused, and wild spirits that only the most dedicated riders can tame. The unicorn, the horse's cousin, exemplifies everything that is best about the horse, and also has insight and is pure.

Hound

Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Willpower: 5, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5

Attack: Bite for five dice; claw for four

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3 (Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 3, Stealth 2)

Blood Pool: 4

Notes: Loyal, brave and ferocious, the hound is considered an ideal hunter and guardian: it knows its duty and performs it without fault. Though the hound is considered dirty and stupid by some, no one doubts its skill — or temper.

These Traits reflect large hounds like mastiffs and hunting dogs. Smaller, domestic canines will not be as formidable.

Lion (European)

Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Willpower: 5, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Claw for four dice; bite for five

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Intimidation 4 (Dodge 3, Stealth 3)

Blood Pool: 9

Notes: Although tales hold that the Romans exterminated these regal monsters, lions are occasionally found in desolate regions throughout western and southern Europe. Courageous, proud, terrifying when enraged, and loyal, the lion embodies the qualities that noblemen aspire to.

Mule

Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Willpower: 6, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -2, -4, Incapacitated

Attack: Kick for five dice; bite for four

Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2

Blood Pool: 4

Notes: The mule is the quintessential fool; too stubborn to know what's good for it. Although sturdy, reliable beasts, mules are often more obnoxious than useful. Despite their thickheadedness, mules are considered humble and hard-working once roused into action.

Pig/Boar

Strength 2/4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4/5

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -4, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite for two/four dice; boars gore for five

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2 (Intimidation 2)

Blood Pool: 4/6

Notes: These traditional gluttons are far stronger and tougher than many farm beasts, and are easily underestimated. The wild boar, a traditional game animal, is said to have a passionate heart. Those who eat the heart are granted ferocity and tirelessness in battle.

Rat

Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Willpower: 4, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -5

Attack: Bite for one die (swarm attacks do three dice per turn and are assumed to always have three successes on their initiative roll)

Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 3, Stealth 3 (Larceny 2)

Blood Pool: 2

Notes: Deceit and disease are the hallmarks of the rat. Plague-fleas hide in rat fur as the vermin steal through houses, gnaw at food, foul goods and attack children. Rats are everywhere. Their blood is as filthy as their behavior. They travel in numbers; a rat swarm is as dangerous as a predatory animal, and is pestilent.

Sheep

Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Willpower: 2, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -3, Incapacitated

Attack: None, though rams can gore for three dice

Abilities: Alertness 2, Empathy 2

Blood Pool: 3

Notes: Meek and gentle, the lamb epitomizes the Christian ideal: innocent and shepherded by the wise. Yet the connotation of victim applies as well. The sheep symbolizes everything that a lord hopes for in his vassals. Cainites who drink from lambs claim the blood is smooth but weak.

Swan

Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -2, -3, -5

Attack: Wings for two dice; bite for two

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Empathy 2

Blood Pool: 3

Notes: The symbol of purity and strength, the swan protects its family with surprising ferocity. Often associated with treasure and transformations from base to beautiful, the swan is considered a bird of good, if temperamental, fortune.

Wolf

Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite and claw for four dice

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Dodge 1, Stealth 2

Blood Pool: 4

Notes: Ravager. Seducer. Destroyer. Wolves combine cunning and social behavior with savagery. Tales portray the wolf as a liar in a comely guise, and as a monster that kills for the thrill of it. Some pagans still revere this hunter for his skill and wisdom, but most of Europe regards the wolf as the epitome of evil. The Gangrel, of course, consider themselves kin to wolves, despite the Garou who haunt the forests. To Gangrel, the wolf is a totem, a symbol of their primal pride.

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