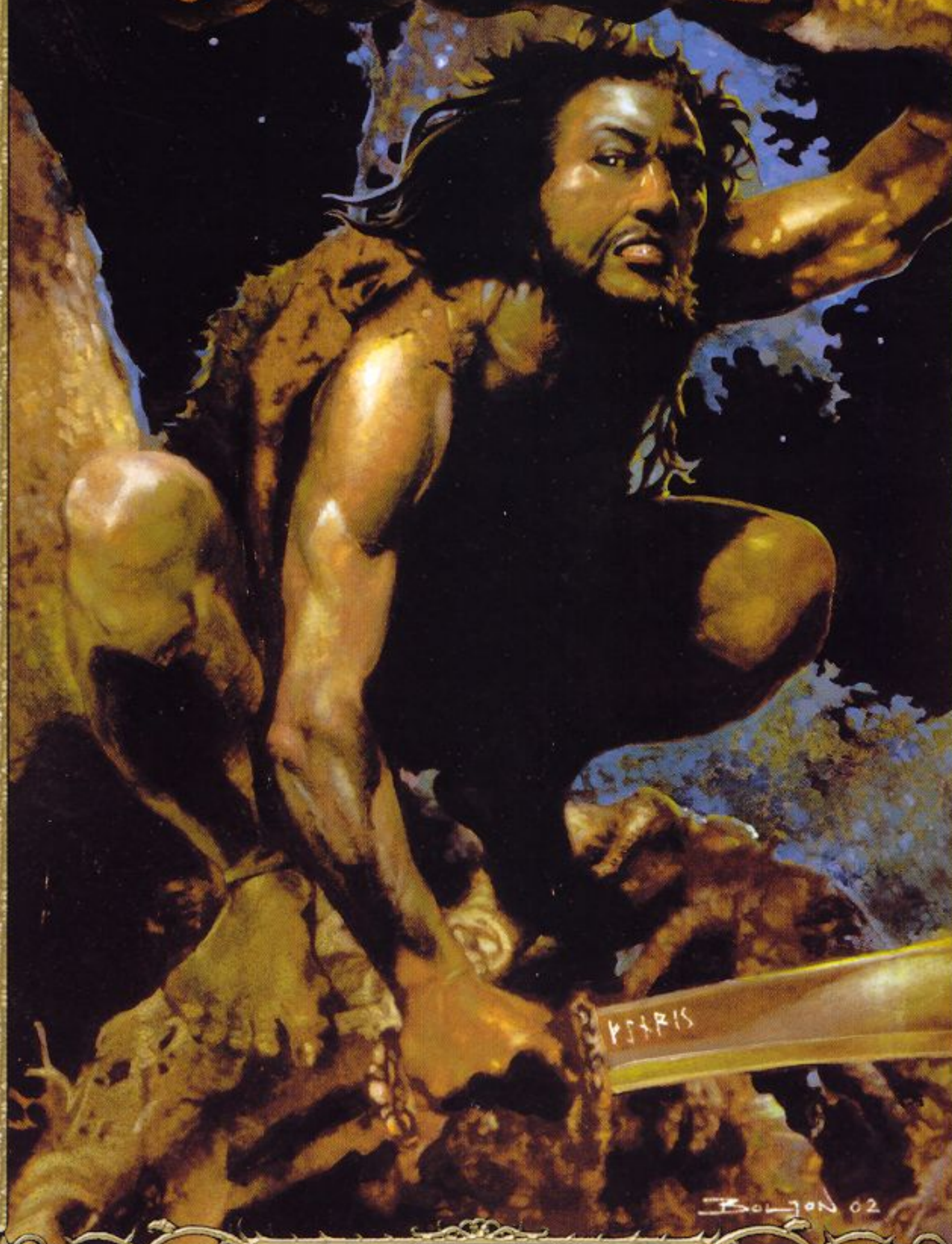
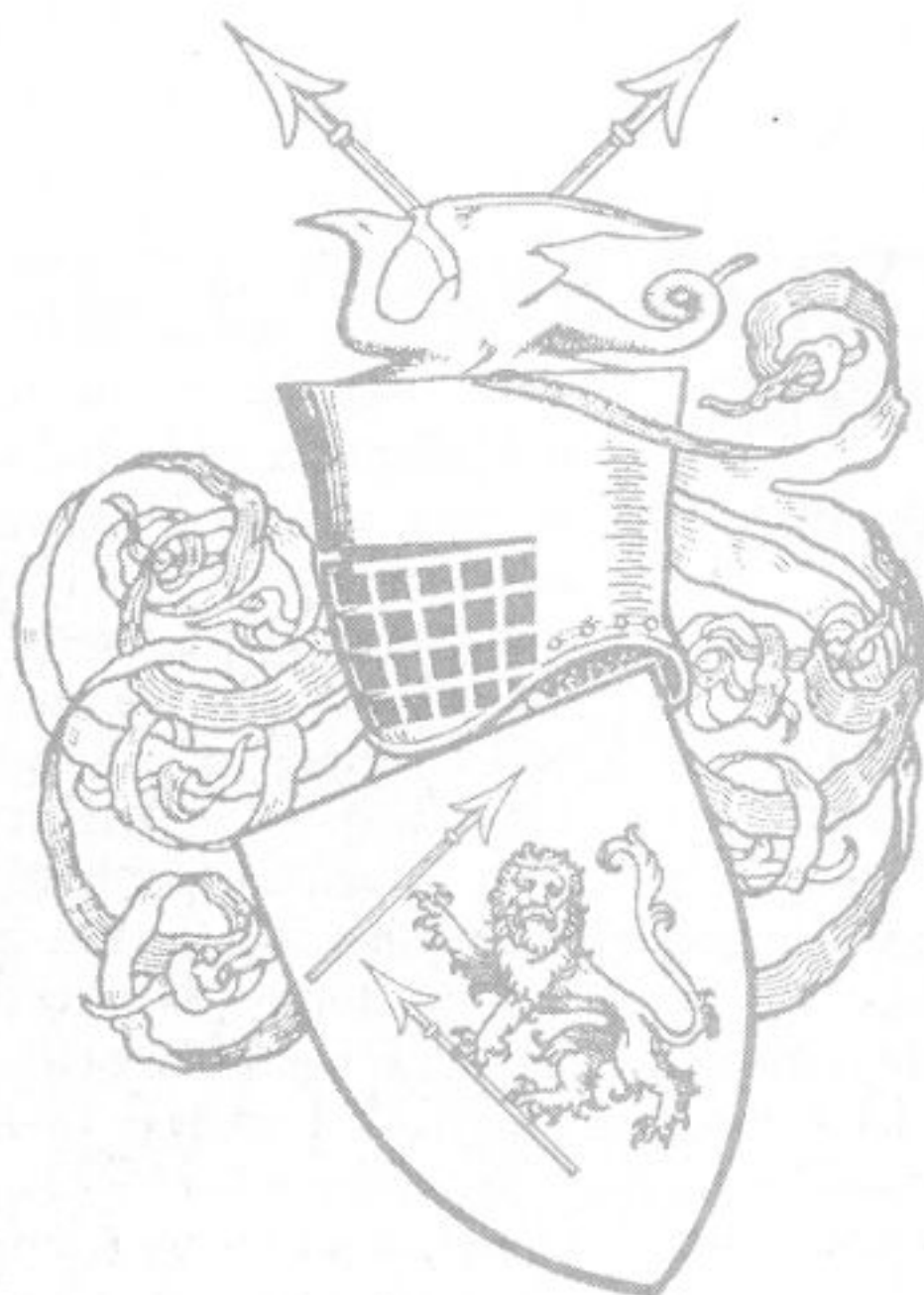


ROAD OF THE BEAST™



A SOURCEBOOK FOR DARK AGES: VAMPIRE™

ROAD OF THE BEAST™



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in 300 dpi



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ROAD OF THE BEAST™

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PRELUDE: A GATHER OF BEASTS

Rodrigo was moments from tearing the neonate's head off. The Beast threw the image of doing so into his mind's eye, and the Brujah scholar had to admit that it was not unpleasant.

"Where are they, thrice-damned fool?" he roared. "What have you done with them!" Antoine sputtered incoherently, which only infuriated Rodrigo further. With an inarticulate cry of rage, he grabbed Antoine and threw him across the room. Rodrigo relished the audible crack as the young Cainite's neck snapped.

"Do you realize what would happen if they fell into the wrong hands? The damage that would be done?"

"You mean the damage that would be done to *you*," Antoine croaked. "You shouldn't have written the damned things in the first place. My neck—"

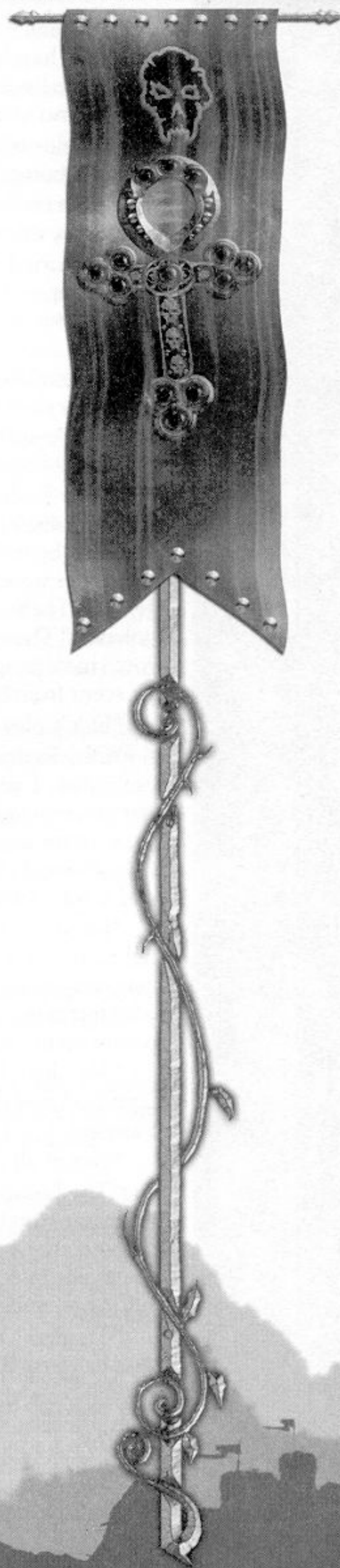
"Is broken, yes. If you were mortal, you'd be dead." Rodrigo began to pace, noting that Antoine was edging toward the door. "You say your wagons were raided. You say the manuscripts went missing. Who was behind the attack? Have you managed to trace the bandits? Have you done anything?"

"I... I—"

"Stop stuttering!" Rodrigo roared again. He was rapidly losing control of himself. He could feel the Beast stirring, urging him forward.

Blood. Bite. Revenge. Now.

Rodrigo paused. Were he mortal, he would have taken a deep breath. Instead, he drummed his fingers against his sides and considered.



"Antoine, I apologize for my outburst. I apologize for laying hands on you. I understand that your resources are limited and that you have done your best. I can ask no more of you."

He held out his hand. A little uncertainly, Antoine took it. Rodrigo hauled him abruptly to his feet.

"But it is clear you can do no more for me, and your failure may endanger me yet. Farewell."

He buried his fangs in Antoine's neck and drank deep.

Better.

† † †

"Now. Cornelia. I believe you have some information for me." The room was dark, as always. Rodrigo could have seen into the darkness easily, but that would be a breach of etiquette.

"Why Rodrigo, you flatter me. After I heard of poor Antoine's fate, I realized that something important must be troubling you, so I made some inquiries. His estates were raided, as you know, and his wagons attacked. I believe I know who was behind this terrible violence." The voice was lilting and pleasant. Rodrigo would have imagined that Cornelia was beautiful, but the scent from her clothes said otherwise.

"Don't play games. Name your price."

"Oh, Rodrigo, you are such a disappointment sometimes. I wish nothing from you. Save perhaps that you remember who your friends are, and that, if you are ever in a position to return a favor owed, you will do so with all the generosity of spirit your homeland is renowned for."

"I know many who have not found the Iberian nights to their liking, dear lady, but you are certainly courteous enough to grace any of our fine courts. And as for recompense, I repay my debts as surely as I repay incompetence and betrayal."

"My dear Rodrigo, are you threatening me?" Cornelia knew the answer very well, but Rodrigo gave it anyway.

"Not at all. The information?"

"The Usurpers were behind the raid. They have begun to extend their reach beyond their homelands. I suggest that you aim your search in that direction. You might look for a Tremere warrior who has been sniffing around your Feral brethren in Lithuania."

"Tremere? Hmm. Never met one. I'm sure they can't be worse than the rabble who surround us now."

"I'm sure they're not. But do be careful. Those lands are dreadfully uncivilized. But I'm sure a big strong Zealot like yourself has nothing to worry about, does he?"

Rodrigo smirked but had nothing else to say.

† † †

Rodrigo shoved the man-at-arms aside then dropped his shoulder and charged the Lasombra. He easily knocked her down, but as he reached for the dagger he kept in his boot, he spotted tendrils of shadow already reaching for him.

He rolled away to his left, toward the fire. Cursing, he reached in and grabbed the unburned end of a faggot and flung it toward the shadow. The Lasombra flinched. The moment's distraction was all Rodrigo needed. He launched himself at the Magister, grabbing his sword from the belly of the man he had pinned to the wall. Swinging wildly, the blade bit deep into the other Cainite. Obviously unused to true combat, the Lasombra shrieked in pain and rage.

"Yes, feel it! Let it out! The Beast may save you yet!" Rodrigo yelled. The Lasombra screamed again and lunged forward, a mad light in her eyes.

One pass from Rodrigo's sword brought the Lasombra to her knees. Another removed her head.

"Or perhaps you kept it caged too long," he mused, almost regretfully.

Rodrigo surveyed the carnage. One of the men-at-arms was still kicking feebly, trying to crawl to the door. Rodrigo grabbed him by the belt and lifted him easily, his powerful frame barely registering the weight. He sunk his teeth into the man's neck and drank deep. Then he threw him to the ground.

"Damn this temper of mine," he muttered. "I really must learn to control myself."

"Did you really need to kill them all?" came a voice.

"Liolya. Good to see you. This young Magister demanded to know my business in her domain. Then she took offense when I told her my business was my own." He looked about the rectory and gestured, as if hoping one of the deceased would speak up to support him. "I had no wish for this. You know why I'm here?"

Liolya stepped into the room. She was stocky and muscular, naked and covered in dirt.

"I do. The one you seek has been traveling with me for some time. His name is Gerard. I am teaching him our road; I believe he will come to it. But he does not have your letters and does not even know of them. Why don't you join us? We're heading for a gathering. North of Riga. You know it."

"Hmm. I haven't been to a gathering in this part of the world. And I would be curious indeed to meet a Tremere interested in our road. Perhaps I will come."

"What about all this?" Liolya waved her arm, indicating the carnage Rodrigo's fight had caused.

Rodrigo did not answer, but merely threw a lantern against one of the bodies. By the time the building was burning, he and Liolya were already on the road.

† † †

"I am Qarakh."

"And I am Rodrigo."

"Why should I not kill you?"

Rodrigo looked the Mongol up and down. He was swarthy, just as the stories said. His build was compact and muscular, certainly shorter and lighter than his own. But there was a quality to him that even Rodrigo found alien. Perhaps, he thought, it was the Mongol's eyes. Flat and expressionless, they betrayed no emotion, no desire.

"Because I am looking for something, and I think you may be able to help me. I met many Ferals at the gathering, yet one caught my attention: a Tremere named Gerard. He knew nothing of my quest, but now I am wondering if we cannot help each other."

Having been seated beside Rodrigo until now, Liolya stood.

"I have been watching the Tremere. Here in Lithuania, they do not conform to the ways of Ceoris. Their pagan practices have raised the interest of sponsors far away. The Usurpers have sent spies to observe their Lithuanian cousins."

Rodrigo scowled. "A war among the Usurpers would not displease me, but the locals—"

"Telyavs," said Qarakh.

"The Telyavs are friendly to our cause and to our ways. I would spare them. They are good allies, though they may not think of themselves as such."

"What do you want of me?" Qarakh asked.

"For now, little," said Liolya. "We will investigate further, but if the time comes to strike, we would have you with us."

Qarakh regarded the pair for a moment. They met his gaze squarely.

"I make my home here. It is secret from most. I would not have it known to all. You will have my help."

† † †

The chantry was well hidden. Nestled in a deep valley, it was shielded by thick forests. A small carriage lurched toward the inner gate. The night was cold and windy, whipping a light drizzle into a sideways slurry that seeped under doors and around window-frames.

The carriage stopped at the gate. The Gargoyle perched atop the wall craned its neck slowly, sniffing the air. It looked at the wagon then stretched its wings.

The men on the gate hurried out of the guard-house to let the carriage out, splashing through the thick mud, smelling of damp earth and horse shit. The gates creaked outward on their hinges.

Suddenly, the Gargoyle stiffened. It let out a piercing shriek and leapt down at the carriage.

Two figures burst out, a man and a woman. They sprinted for the now rapidly closing gate. The Gargoyle bounded off the roof of the carriage and leapt for the man.

The woman, meanwhile, charged the guards. She killed one with a single swipe of her taloned hand. He gurgled and wheezed as bright blood shot from his neck, spraying the wall behind him for an instant before the rain washed it away.

To his credit, the second guard fought well and did not panic. He swung his axe and followed through with a swipe from his dagger. The woman, however, did not even wince from the wound. She grabbed his wrist and squeezed, shattering bones in her grip. His dagger found its mark again, but the woman only grinned. She slammed him back against the wall then tore his throat out with her teeth.

She looked up. Through the rainy haze, she could see figures hastening from the chantry.

"Rodrigo! Come on!" she yelled.

"Just a moment," he grunted. The Gargoyle smashed into him and he felt his ribs crack. It wrapped its arms around him and began to squeeze, then snapped at him with its fangs.

Rodrigo scrambled backward, carrying the monster with him. He freed his arms and began to force its maw away.

With a wild shriek, the woman swung the guardsman's axe. It nearly severed the monster's head. Ichor seeped from the wound, pooling in the mud.

"Many thanks," Rodrigo growled as he pulled himself away from the corpse's grasp. "Now let's go, Liolya. Liolya! I said let's go."

Liolya stood with her back to him, panting. He could see her hands clenching and unclenching.

"We have to go now!"

Liolya looked back at him. Her face was contorted into a snarl. Something passed behind her eyes, and she shook her head. Then she turned and ran.

† † †

"Tell me again why I thought this was a good idea."

Liolya looked back over her shoulder at Rodrigo as he pulled his boots out of a puddle of sucking mud. The drizzle had not let up all night, nor had the pursuit. For the moment, they seemed to have evaded the Tremere.

"Because it was the only way to find out."

"That damn Tremere is going to cause us a lot of trouble."

"He'll cause us a lot more if we don't go back and get him out. Damn them!" She glared back in the direction of the valley.

"So why did you teach him?"

"Because we need allies. Otherwise our nights are numbered. The cities grow, the princes extend their grasp.... If we could gain the Tremere's understanding, we could destroy them all."

"Well, my dear, I don't think there's much chance of that now." Rodrigo shook his head in disgust — he hadn't expected such a reception from the Tremere. "Are you serious? You think we need to get him out?"

"You might not have found whatever it was that you were looking for, but I found Gerard. He was my pupil, and they were torturing him to extract a confession."

Unsure of how to react to this news — concern? anger? — Rodrigo merely nodded. "You sound very fond of him."

"He knows too much. You met him at the gathering. You mocked him for being a soldier, remember?"

"Hmm. I suppose you're right. We'll need to act quickly. If these Tremere run true to form, they'll hoard all their information until they're ready to use it to discomfit a rival chantry." Rodrigo angrily knocked a branch out of his way. "Will these woods never end?"

"It's not much further. Wait... did you hear that?" Liolya stiffened and leaned into the wind.

"Hear what?"

Without answering, Liolya leapt away. A crossbow bolt thudded into a sodden tree behind where she had just stood.

Rodrigo whirled and drew his blade. It was Damascene steel — deadly sharp and in need of no enchantment.

"To hell with this running," he muttered. Then he grinned. His Beast howled in delight as he let it out, taking over all but the barest essentials of his mind. Lightning struck as Rodrigo bellowed his challenge to three Cainites who stood silhouetted in the sudden light. Rodrigo smiled at them. He saw Liolya dropping silently out of a tree behind the closest.

Food. Sport. Blood.

Rodrigo's grin widened, and he charged as the lightning flashed again.

"You must help us," Liolya said. "The chantry is well guarded but not impregnable. And they have Gerard. He is one of us. He was at the gathering."

"What do I care of his fate?" Qarakh asked.

"You were at the gathering, too. He might not know who you are. He might not have seen you. But he might have. And you are being sought. Can you afford the risk?"

Qarakh settled back. He closed his eyes. Liolya glanced nervously at Rodrigo and Grandfather. It was Grandfather who broke the silence. His voice came like wind through the trees, soft and yet impossible to ignore.

"The times are moving against us. Your brothers ride forth from the east. The princes press on our lands from the west. Your allies, these Telyavelic Tremere, may well fall if news of Gerard's confession travels beyond the walls of his chantry. Where then will your protection be?"

"Yes, listen to Grandfather," Liolya added. A touch too eagerly, Rodrigo thought. He decided to add his thoughts to the conversation.

"Qarakh, you are known to only a very few of us. We need your right arm in this struggle. This chantry... they are collecting information. Prisoners. Documents. About us. How to defeat us. Your fate is at stake too. Will you not help? Together, we three can break in, destroy their records, free Gerard and escape."

Qarakh kept his eyes closed. Then he spoke.

"This I will not do. We will hunt. We will gather again, and make war on the sorcerers' home. We will destroy it and all within it. We will be feared. None will dare stand against us, and the Usurpers will leave our lands."

† † †

"How do we get in?" whispered Liolya.

"Well, I know you scoff at us Grey Hunters, but knowing how to move and hunt in polite society has its advantages. There is an ambassador from the Baronies of Avalon in the chantry. Henry. Been there for months. He's also a Feral. I left him a message on our last visit. He's going to arrange a distraction for the Gargoyles. Damn things." Rodrigo rubbed his shoulder, which still bore a long scar from the Gargoyle's bite.

Liolya flinched and dropped low to the ground as a resounding boom echoed from the chantry. "There it is... impressive," murmured Rodrigo. Squatting under a tree, Qarakh laughed.

"Time to kill," he said. He then stood and broke into a loping run toward the building.

The night was clear and the moon full. A fire had broken out in a far corner of the chantry, but it was clearly no natural fire. The flames had a greenish tinge, and explosions and tortured screams punctuated the cries of panic. Then the first wave of Ferals, nearly a dozen in all, began scaling the walls and entering the buildings.

Qarakh, Rodrigo, Liolya and Grandfather all waited by the gate. A massive Feral, nearly eight feet tall and built like a colossus, smashed his mailed fists against the gates. Splinters flew in all directions; soon he had punched a hole and was reaching for the crossbar when blue sparks flew from the door. The door itself was untouched, but the Feral flew back, his arm disintegrating. Howling in pain, he leapt to his feet and ran off into the woods.

Grandfather chuckled, then whistled. Momentarily, a Feral appeared on the other side and lifted the bar. Casually, they strode in.

"Good work, Lukas," Grandfather nodded approvingly as he stepped through the maze of severed body parts.

Qarakh turned to the trio. "Now I hunt." He ran off.

"I'm going to find Gerard, if he isn't ash by now," said Liolya.

"Time enough, I think, for me to destroy their records," replied Rodrigo. He drew his sword, then they both ran to the main chantry house.

"Time enough for me to feed," Grandfather chuckled. He slipped off his robe and ran with surprising speed toward the barracks.

† † †

Liolya burst into a small, stone room somewhere beneath the chantry. Gerard was strapped to a rack. The body of the guard left with him hung from the wall, the long cloak peg protruding from his throat. Still alive, he twitched and kicked. Occasionally, gurgling noises escaped his throat.

She reached down and undid the straps. Her pupil was wasted; the Tremere knew how to torture a victim.

"Here, drink some of this before we go," she said as she led Gerard to the guard, "but don't take too long. We must hurry."

† † †

Rodrigo strode through the ruins of the chantry. He found the library and the scribes' rooms, but they were empty of Cainites. He was hunting for the Cainite who had expressed a keen interest in matters of philosophy and the spiritual side of Cainite existence. At last, he had found his prey.

"Xavier. So nice to meet you again." Normally, Xavier might have given Rodrigo a witty retort, but at the moment, he was too terrified and pained to do so. Rodrigo didn't continue with niceties. "Where are the books?" Xavier spat blood at him. It didn't show on Rodrigo's already gore-soaked garb. "Hmm. I'd think

you'd wish to help me reclaim what's mine, my friend. Does it hurt when I do this?" He leaned on the beam that had fallen from the dining hall's roof and impaled the Cainite as he fled.

"Curse you. Animal! Beast! I have read your words. You have betrayed your kind by writing them. Wait until they find out what you have done!"

"You do not understand. I want my manuscripts back. Who do you think brought this about? Who tipped your captain off about Gerard? Who urged the Ferals to make this attack? Who has destroyed your chantry? I am hunting for something that is mine, and I will not be denied. Now speak. Where are they? Hmm. This beam is coming loose."

He twisted the beam again. Xavier squeezed his eyes shut as a bloody tear ran down his cheek. As calm as Rodrigo's face appeared, his Beast was howling for Xavier's blood. He almost didn't notice when the warlock began whispering something, in a language Rodrigo had never heard before.

"Damn you!" he shouted. His sword flashed and Xavier's head rolled free. Rodrigo's shoulders slumped.

"I must learn to control that temper of mine." He kicked absently at Xavier's rapidly decaying body and stalked back to the library.

† † †

The Ferals stood at the gate of the chantry. It was a smoking ruin. The attack had been a success. Taken off guard, the Tremere had fought back, but the Ferals had been too fast, too savage.

Liolya stood. Gerard squatted beside her. Rodrigo trudged toward them.

"I see you found what you sought," he said sourly. "Congratulations."

"I take it that you did not."

"No. But I will keep searching."

A movement made them both turn. It was Qarakh. He looked pleased, content, like a cat licking blood from its paws.

"A good night. Good hunting." He sniffed the air. "But there is more to come."





CHAPTER ONE: THROUGH THE EYES OF THE BEAST

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.

—Genesis 4:11

Etrius, Lord of Ceoris,

This resolves the matter of Gerard and those troublesome inquisitor-monks. I have included the correspondence of the inquisitor Nikola and the confession of Gerard.

With the destruction of the inquisitor at the hands of the Ferals and the capture of Gerard and his journal, I believe that we have done more than gather much useful information and capture a traitor. We have also learned that none survive who might know of our activities or trace the various deaths and disappearances back to us. If only all our Cainite foes were as easy to deal with, the Pyramid would already have triumphed.

But we must guard against becoming overconfident. Indeed, it is well that we were successful. The monks learned much about our nature from their captive, and if they had survived, or if the inquisitor had not foolishly returned to

the monastery, then a considerable amount of potentially damaging information would have made its way into the hands of the Church. We must not discount the influence of the Lasombra in that matter, either. In any case, we must be on our guard and make certain that we have agents placed in the Church. As for Gerard, we must be careful to watch our soldiers and captains more closely. I suggest that we prohibit expeditions of fewer than three soldiers and that our couriers and outriders be regularly examined for treasonous thoughts.

Imre

Believe in Strength

Most Holy Archbishop,

As you have commanded, I have set my agents to investigating the degenerate cult that calls itself the "Via Bestiae."

The demons who swear fealty to this cult are not entirely the disorganized mob we initially suspected. The truth, I fear, is far worse. In their arrogance, they have not only rejected the mercy of our Savior and Lord. They are, in fact, practitioners of foul rituals and holders of pagan beliefs and heretical notions that make them a threat to Christendom.

We captured one such degenerate sniffing around our cathedral. By the power of my Faith I was able to drive him away from me. The monks showed surprising courage in overpowering the creature, although I fear Brother Remus will not walk again. We imprisoned it below the cathedral, allowing it to feed on rats and other vermin, as befits such a foul creature.

I purified myself and readied the rites of exorcism and interrogated the monster. It was once a man perhaps, but when stripped of its putrid garments, its true nature was revealed. Its feet were clawed, like those of a bear, and its legs and back were covered in coarse, matted fur. Its ears were tufted like those of a wolf, and its teeth were likewise sharp.

Nevertheless, after a long night of work, I was able to drive the demon back so that the man within could speak. I could scarce believe the blasphemies it told me, but I gathered my courage and now I commit them to paper. I trust you will know what to do with them. I have included my record of the interrogation, along with some observations of my own. I am certain that you will find them to be of some use.

I began by asking the creature what it was. It told me it was a child of the Beast, a messenger of Caine, an avatar of the hunt. It claimed that it had once been a man but that it had been killed and risen from the dead when it drank the blood of its murderer, a being who claimed descent from the first murderer, Caine.

Steeling myself against more such blasphemous words, I asked it what it meant. It told me that the blood of Caine now ran in his veins. It told me that when he killed Abel, Caine had seized part of God's sacred power over life and death. This, he explained, was why God had not killed Caine, but only cursed him instead. Caine now held part of God's power and God would not destroy him, as that would be tantamount to destroying a part of Himself.

Caine then wandered the Earth, propagating his foul race by murdering and feeding his victims a draught of his blood, which brought the victims back from the dead. Cut off from our Lord's grace and mercy, only the stolen power of Caine allows them to live. But theirs is a cursed existence. They cannot face the light of the sun, and they greatly fear flame. All creatures of good sense fear flames, but the next morning I put its fear of sunlight to the test, exposing its left arm to the light. It began burning and withering immediately.

The monster claimed that it carried within itself a Beast — surely a confession that he was possessed by a demon. I was suddenly overcome by compassion for this poor, unfortunate wretch and had him put on the rack immediately. Filled with hope, I wanted to drive the demon from him forthwith.

The demon continued to speak. I had two of the monks working together to take down its words, so I could concentrate on my interrogation. A third monk — Brother Vargo — assisted by keeping the irons hot and the blades sharp. The demon claimed to have terrible powers and threatened that the Beast that lay within would loose itself upon us. Protected by Christ's mercy, and the stout chains that held the poor soul fast, we commenced the exorcism.

I told him that he had become a servant of Satan, that he was a tool of the devil, but that it was not too late to repent. God's mercy is infinite, but so are His punishments for those who displease Him.

He told me once again that he did not serve Satan but simply followed the dictates and commands of the Beast that lay within. He said it was the Beast that gave him life and that he trusted his instincts to guide him in all situations, even giving the Beast the release it so often craved. I record his words below, although they are a blight upon the teachings of Christ:

"You wish to understand us? You think we are a cult?"

"We know what we are. We have seen what lies on the other side of the grave. Nothing. Oblivion awaits us, nothing more. Mortals are but the playthings of blind fate, fireflies that flicker and dim under the uncaring sun. But we understand what we truly are. The blood of our kind awakens the Beast. The Beast is life. It is what drives us. It is what makes us strong.

"To awaken your Beast, you must put all else to death. Reason and learning have their uses, but as the

last breath escapes your body, so knowledge fades and reason dies, and the Beast is at last able to slip its bonds. Unfettered by the petty restraints of 'civilization' and learning, it rages freely, and it rages against its death.

"The blood of another Child of Caine is enough to show it the way. It needs some draught, some elixir with which to stir its dead flesh. The blood of the Beast is sufficient. It gives the Beast power enough to continue. But the Beast is hungry, so we must keep drinking blood. It is only blood that has saved us.

"Each kill we make is an offering to the Beast. That is why we do not content ourselves with a mere sip when we hunt. We are hunters, so we kill our prey in homage to the Beast. If we have a God, it is the Beast. It is instinct, passion, the urge to exist."

I would hear no more. It was clear that this demon would not repent. We built a fire and burned it.

Now I must relate another strange event. I left the monastery to meditate and draw up these notes, but when I returned, I found all the brothers dead. The buildings have been ransacked and the chapel defiled. Is Satan's power so great? If he wishes revenge for the destruction of his servant, he will find that I have a greater power as my ally. Still, I will leave these lands forthwith. When I return to Riga, I will entrust these documents to a courier so that they may make their way to you with all due speed.

Yours in God,
Nikola

My Lord,

The inquisitor's account ends at this point. Gerard had it among his possessions. As to the churchman's fate, I will let Gerard tell it in his own time.

Imre

From the final confession of Gerard, soldier of House Tremere:

Most Exalted Tremere, my Lord and Master,

I am Gerard, and it is my privilege to be one of your humble servants. This is my final testament and confession.

I have abandoned my duties. I have been found consorting with the enemies of our house and clan. I have been accused of harboring ideas and beliefs contrary to the interests of the Pyramid, and for that, I will shortly face the sun.

Know that I have served you loyally for over three-score years, as mortal, ghoul and childe of my elders. Know that betrayal was never my intent. My weakness led me into error. It was always my intention to return to the clan with new knowledge, new ways of controlling the Beast, new ways to advance our plans and new allies. I still believe that an alliance between the Ferals and the Tremere is possible. I believe that such an alliance would tip the balance of the war we fight against the Fiends decisively in our favor.

My captors have ordered me to write an account of my betrayal in the hope that, by revealing what I have learned, the clan may somehow benefit and my reputation be redeemed. I hold out no such grand hopes. Nevertheless, as knowledge is power, I hope to contribute to the power of the Pyramid even after my final damnation by leaving behind this knowledge. My journal tells most of my story. My confession documents tell the rest.

Gerard

Brutes and Vagabonds

From the journal of Gerard:

I must begin my diary with an account of my current mind. I am Gerard of Clan Tremere, a Childe of Caine five times removed from Tremere. My sire is Lucinda.

I am not a sorcerer, I am a soldier. A second son, not favored by my family, not interested in the Church or in fighting the enemies of the Cross, I joined the Company of the White Stag and became its leader in time.

We accepted a contract to guard a house of scholars in the western foothills of the Carpathians. Our employers were strange, but the pay was good. I excelled in my duties and in time was introduced to the clan, first by the blood oath and then, once I had proven my worth, as a member of Lucinda's brood.

I have undertaken the writing of this journal to sharpen my mind and clarify my thoughts. I am not a stupid man, but it is plain that advancement up the Pyramid is a matter of cunning and influence. It is my hope that this journal will help me develop my mind and order my thoughts. I have learned that it can be advantageous to cloak one's ambition so as not to alert potential enemies to one's intentions. So for now, I will write and study what texts I can. Perhaps I will ask one of our magi to take me on as an apprentice. Until then, I will perform my duties, guarding our chantry and capturing other Cainites for interrogation and the Gargoyle pens of Ceoris.

Discovery

It is now seven nights since I last wrote. Tonight, I believe I have learned much that is of interest to our masters. I have taken to making solitary expeditions to patrol the wilds around the chantry. There, I can test my prowess as a hunter, and I need not guard my every word and deed. I chanced upon a Cainite of greatly disheveled appearance. She was reciting a long poem. I could not understand her words at first, but after positioning myself carefully downwind and concealing myself, I realized that she was chanting in Latin. I could not fathom at first, how so coarse a being, and a woman, too, learned the language of scholars. Her appearance led me to believe that she was one of the Animals. I decided to listen a while, to evaluate her usefulness to Virstania's Gargoyle pens.

Her chant was, I realized, a history of the *Via Bestiae* — the Road of the Beast! I cannot remember all her words, but I will try to commit as much of what I can remember to parchment.

The Curse of Caine

We Tremere have a great advantage over most other Cainites. We are not weighed down with centuries of tradition and superstition about our condition. We are free to experiment with new techniques, new skills, new ways to structure our existence. We know what we are, and we seek to make the best of it. But there is much lore we do not know that other clans and Cainites understand as part of their heritage. We need to discover more of the legends of our kind, for there is often truth in them. We do not, however, know many of the legends about Caine and how he came to be, and sometimes this is a disadvantage.

We all know the story of Caine and Abel. Caine was a farmer, Abel a herdsman. Both made a sacrifice to God, who preferred Abel's offering. Caine was enraged and killed his brother. For that, he was cursed. "A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be," God told him.

The Cainites who follow the Road of the Beast believe that Caine's rage and jealousy at Abel was the first manifestation of the Beast. Overcome by its power, Caine used the jawbone of an ass — one of Abel's own flock — to kill him.

The mark that God put on Caine was the mark of the Beast. The thirst for blood is only its most obvious manifestation. That is why, whenever our passions are aroused, the Beast comes to the surface. That is why we must keep control of our urges and desires.

Caine wandered the land of Nod for many years. The Gangrel's song told of how he struggled with his Beast and would not allow himself the company of others until he had mastered it. Once he had done this, he met Lilith, who took him in and gave him shelter.

Lilith taught Caine much, including the powers of the blood and how to control them. Three angels visited Caine, each offering God's forgiveness. Each time he stood before them, Caine's Beast rose up in anger. It did not want to be caged again. Neither did Caine want it caged, for he had learned to master it as well. With the strength of the Beast at his command, Caine told the angels to return to Heaven. He wanted naught from God.

Then Caine resumed his wanderings, which ended only when he found the First City. The history of these times is well-known. The flood destroyed the First City, and the grandchilder of Caine slew their sires. The Gangrel's verse told a story I have never heard before. In it a wise woman named Ennoia became a lover of Caine, and from their "union" was born Clan Gangrel.

Ennoia

Caine was saddened by the fate of the First City. Still, he decided that all was perhaps not lost. Ennoia joined him in the Second City, but she soon left. Caine recognized that civilization was a great boon to his childer, as it simplified the hunt and kept the human herd together. It also made it possible for a Cainite civilization, of sorts, to flourish.

But Ennoia realized that civilization could also be a trap. She looked about and saw her siblings sinking into decadence. They did not always hunt for themselves. Indeed, some took pride in having power enough over others that they did not need to hunt at all. The luxuries of civilization caused them to forget about the Beast and the power it granted. They sought other ways to contain it, to distract themselves from its desires.

These distractions did not work. The Beast can be ignored or caged for a time, but never contained. Ennoia watched as her family began plotting and scheming over trifles instead of mastering themselves and harnessing the Beast to their will. Eventually their schemes came undone as the Beast clawed its way free. In disgust, she turned her back on civilization and set out for the wilderness.

Like Caine before her, she set out to master her Beast. She grappled with it for 40 years, living like a wild animal. When she emerged, she gathered as many of her clan as she could find and told them of her odyssey and shared her wisdom. To her delight, she found that many of her get shared her thoughts and hungered for her lessons.

She taught them that to survive was their greatest challenge. She taught them that the key to survival was to master the Beast. She taught them that the only way to achieve this mastery was to spend time in the wilderness, seeing the hunt through the Beast's eyes without distraction.

The Road Leads Far

I was fascinated, both by the woman and by her story. Carefully, I watched her and resolved to return the next night. She had given me much to think on. A way to understand the Beast? To make it a servant, not a howling monster to be struggled against? This was surely knowledge worth pursuing. I was eager to learn more, both for myself and for the benefit of my clan.

The next night, she had moved on. It took me several hours to find her, and I missed my hounds. She seemed to be suspicious. I wondered if she had heard me or somehow knew if she was being watched. Nonetheless, she sat and continued her tale.

After Ennoia spread the word of her way to her childer, they spread out across the world and taught it to those they thought worthy. Most of her clan, and some members of other clans (chiefly Nosferatu, Malkavian and Brujah), adopted the road. The rise of cities has

always caused debate among the road's elders and philosophers. It was not until Augustus, a Roman nobleman given Caine's kiss just before the fall of his beloved empire, that any followers of this savage religion would approach civilization after the fall of the First City.

Augustus reminded his fellows that if one wished to control the Beast, one must first master it alone, and then test one's control in the company of others. Many Ferals disdained cities after the calamities that had befallen our race therein, but Augustus showed that they could be fit habitations for our kind. Where better, after all, to hunt than where prey gathers?

Augustus taught that the perils and distractions of unlife in the city (politics, decadence and reliance on servants) need not be impediments to following the road, as long as one could rise above them. He did not claim it was an easy task, however, and he still advocated spending time alone in the wilderness as a way of cleansing the soul, removing any taint or softness that may have crept in. The hunt, he claimed, was the greatest sacrament and should always be sought.

The Road Spreads

It seems that the Road of the Beast has had little influence from scholars and philosophers. This is due in part to the preponderance of warriors and wanderers who uphold it, and in part to the emphasis of the road itself. It seems likely that instinct and controlling the Beast are more important guides to behavior than reason or deep reflections on the nature of our condition.

Rather, the *Via Bestiae* has been influenced by the more prominent practitioners. Augustus is one, and the Gangrel woman (I must learn her name!) mentioned another in her verse: Rashid.

Rashid is an Infidel, a follower of the *Tariq el-Bedouin* or Road of the Nomad. This is the Saracen's equivalent of the *Via Bestiae*, and it seems Rashid was a member of the army of Arabs and Berbers who invaded Iberia some 500 years ago.

Rashid traveled widely throughout Iberia, meeting with many of the Visigoth Gangrel who inhabited the peninsula. As well as bringing much knowledge of philosophy and sorcery, the Arabs brought their own understanding of our condition. Rashid brought the Path of the Nomad.

The Path of the Nomad places less emphasis on mastering the Beast and more emphasis on rejecting the decadence of civilization. A number of Northmen raiding into the peninsula took Rashid's ideas home with them, and it is believed that these ideas were fundamental in forming an offshoot of the *Via Bestiae* called the Path of the Barbarian. This path claims that civilization is a danger to all Children of Caine and a dangerous trap for the Beast. Destruction of such trappings is therefore

their goal. The Northmen do not remember Rashid, but the Beasts of Iberia remember him fondly. It is said that he still exists in the deserts beyond Damascus.

Facing the Savage Truth

From the final confession of Gerard:

My excitement grew. Perhaps I could now learn to control the Beast, to harness its power for the glory of our clan.

I returned to the Gangrel's lair, but she was there no longer. I hunted for her frantically. I sent riders to our nearest chantries to discover if she had been captured. I told my own chantry I was tracking a potentially valuable Cainite. It was autumn and no raids were expected on our holdings, so my absences were allowed.

I tracked the Gangrel for two weeks before finally catching up with her far to the west. I approached her one night, masquerading as a fellow outcast from "civilized" Cainite society.

She regarded me warily at first, but as our conversation progressed, she seemed to be willing to trust me. We arranged to meet again the following night.

That next night, we hunted together. I could barely keep up with her as she ran. I marveled at her control, her skill, her focused savagery. In truth, I am a warrior of considerable prowess, but in the wilds, the Gangrel could not be matched.

Once we had stalked and killed a shepherd on his way to market, we spoke again. I complemented her on her control and hinted that I envied her mastery of the Beast. Bluntly, she asked me which road I followed. I feigned (with little difficulty) ignorance and told her that I simply existed as best I could. She told me that she followed the *Via Bestiae* and that all other roads were foolish lies to distract the weak from facing the truth about their nature.

She told me that the Road of the Beast was trying but that she would be willing to guide me along its first steps if I desired. The road would be hard and long, she warned, and the perils would be many. I did not hesitate to accept her offer. I believe she saw in me the strength and potential to make a fine Feral indeed. I flatter myself that she was correct.

And at last, I learned her name. It is Liolya.

From the journal of Gerard:

Liolya has taught me much about the Beast. She claims that, unlike the followers of other roads, the Ferals (for that is what they call themselves) are the only Cainites bold enough to face what they truly are.

Most of the members of Clan Tremere, for example, regard the Beast as a curse, an unruly element of the soul that must be carefully kept in its place and never unleashed deliberately. The loss of control could destroy years, decades, even centuries of careful research, conspiracy or persuasion.



Others fear the Beast. They try to hide from it, proclaiming themselves to be either blessed or cursed by God. (In the end, it matters little.) They then act according to a set of rules they have created, perhaps based on religion or some other obsession.

Yet others proclaim themselves to be still human, despite the obvious evidence to the contrary. Liolya reserved her deepest contempt for these deluded souls. They cling desperately to the weakest part of their nature, denying themselves the strength and certainty of the strongest.

As Liolya says, our existences have been reduced to the barest essentials. Caine awakened the Beast; God's curse ensured that it could never be caged. These are the simple facts of our existence. Facing them is neither an act of courage nor an act of surrender. It is simply an acknowledgement of the truth, simple and unadorned.

The first step on the Road of the Beast is to acknowledge this. The Beast is our soul, our heart — our *essentia*, as the philosophers might say. It is the prime mover, the first principle, the uncaused cause. It cannot be questioned or ignored or pushed aside. It can only be faced, understood, accepted and mastered.

Frenzy

Liolya had much to tell me about controlling the Beast. It loves to run free, but this frenzied state need not be feared if one has mastered the Beast. It can be ridden, guided if not controlled. It can be called forth when needed and its strength added to one's own.

The careless pay little attention to the lessons needed to contain the Beast. The wise learn carefully. When ridden with skill and care, the Beast can be a powerful mount. Just as the knight is made more formidable when mounted on his destrier and clad in his armor, so are the Children of Caine made nigh invincible when riding the Beast and clad in the armor of certainty and control over our rage.

As the rage descends, Liolya told me, it is best not to fight it. But neither should one surrender completely. Rather, one should allow it to wash over oneself like the tides of the sea. This is difficult, she said, because one's first reaction is either to surrender completely or to set one's will against it. It is sometimes necessary to defeat the Beast directly, so that it will know you are its master, but once this has been done, it need only be done occasionally to reinforce your control.

But the Beast can be directed. It is a simple creature, easily satisfied. It instinctively strikes out at all that is dear to us, so that our will might be weakened, our resolve shattered, our sanity broken. This way, it will find it easier to seize control the next time. And so the downward spiral begins.

If the Beast knows you are its master, she said, and that you will let it rage freely, it will feel no need to

destroy what you love. It will become your tool — more than that, it will become your accomplice or familiar. If it is fed and satisfied, it will be loyal.

But, Liolya reminded me, like any beast, it tests one's vigilance. When least expected, it presses against the bars of its cage, rattles its chains, screams for release. Strength and vigilance are needed, for it will deceive and destroy if allowed free reign. Yet this task is not so odious as it sounds. It is unceasing and often draining, but ultimately, it is the source of much power.

Liolya told me I would discover great joy in my Beast. She said that when I had ridden frenzy, I would understand. When I lived, I was a warrior, and I took pleasure in victory — in killing. But those pleasures pale into insignificance beside the thrill of hunting with the Beast as your ally. To drain the lifeblood of another, to feel their heartbeat fade as their vitae flows in your veins... the rewards of the Beast are many.

These theories bear further investigation. Xavier knows much about the various philosophies espoused by the other Cainites. If these Ferals have truly developed a way to control these urges, then we must know what it is! The advantage it would give us in our dealings with other Cainites would be worth a very high price indeed.

Imre

Other Pleasures

Liolya tells me that the Beast is also capable of more refined pleasures. Other Cainites go through the motions of their devotion to gods who no longer hear their prayers, if indeed they ever did. Or they play their foolish and pointless games of politics and intrigue. They study death in an effort to understand it, even as the answer lies in their own cold breasts.

But unless they listen to the Beast, unless they warm their cold, dead souls by its blazing fire, they are doomed to the same endless cycle of plans, friends and hopes being destroyed by the Beast. By denying the hot spark of desire within, they deny themselves the pleasures of existence and consign themselves to a gray, pointless procession of years.

Liolya is well attuned to her urges. The Beast demands pleasure and satisfaction. The deeps of the forest, the still of the lake, the bite of the mountain air — all these things she savors because she has not forgotten the joys of life. The Beast reminds her, every night, of what she has gained as well as what she has lost. She delights in the simple fact of her continued existence and feels no shame or guilt for the lives she has taken. We cannot live as mortals, but the grave has not claimed us yet.

We do not scheme to fill the unending hours. The Beast is too impatient for that. It craves action, the hot taste of fresh blood, the strain of combat and the smell of

fear. You will hear the whimpering of the trapped and restrained Beasts of others. Vengeance not taken, ambitions thwarted, desires unfulfilled. The Beast is not stupid. It does not attack when there is no chance of victory. The Beast has made us hunters. Is not a true hunter cunning and careful? The snare can be as effective as the tooth and claw. The Beast laughs long and loud when its cunning trap overcomes the strength of a powerful foe.

So I will not be afraid of my Beast. I will embrace it. Master it. Give vent to its desires and be strong and glorious.

Does the Wolf Pray for the Sheep?

From the final confession of Gerard:

I say with pride that I yet kept my mind focused on my duty. I was determined to discover what I could about these Ferals and report back. But I must confess that a desire to join Liolya's road was growing within. The more time I spent with her, the more constrained I felt. I felt my own Beast straining at the edges of my mind, aching for release. I yearned for the freedom she reveled in. A seed of rebellion against the Pyramid was planted in me, but at the time, I resisted.

Liolya could see that the freedom she offered me was tempting. We spoke again, and again I refused. She laid out the tenets of the road in an ordered form, to make it easier, she said, for my ordered mind to understand. I do not recall her exact words, but I do recall her lessons.

The Commands of the Beast

All Cainite roads have their commandments, their rules and principles. The Road of the Beast is little different. Liolya told me it was simple enough to enumerate the most important precepts of the road. This was often done for the benefit of neonates and newcomers (like myself, she hinted) to help them understand what they must do — and what they must not do. Like the commandments of the Bible, Ferals observe 10 such commandments.

The rules are simple enough.

Feed When You Hunger

This is the Road's basic command, its most sacred and pure sacrament. The Beast is a great gift, the hunger for existence, even in the face of death itself. It must be fed, else our very existence will end.

The Ferals believe that the Beast marks all Cainites as the greatest, swiftest and most terrible hunters who have ever lived. We are no longer mortal, so we have left behind mortal concerns of right and wrong, good and evil. We simply do what we must in order to survive. Does the wolf feel remorse for killing the deer? The hawk for the hare? The snake for the rat?

Neither, say the Ferals, should one feel remorse for one's prey. But when one strikes, it should be swift and strong. The hunt should not be prolonged, and prey should be consumed utterly when brought to ground. The Beast will not be satisfied with half a kill, nor with a few mouthfuls of precious vitae taken with the permission of a willing thrall. It demands the very life-blood of its prey, killed swiftly and cleanly in the hunt. The Ferals do not shy away from the kill. They believe that to do so is to fear one's true nature. We are hunters and killers; to act otherwise is nothing more than self-deception.

Show Your Enemies No Mercy

The quality of mercy is a sign of weakness. The Ferals aim to destroy their enemies with neither hesitation nor remorse. This means that no attack will go un-avenged, no enemy will go unmolested. They reason that allowing an enemy to survive not only gives a foe another opportunity to strike back, it all but guarantees further attacks. To show weakness in this is both foolish and dangerous.

The strong should not hide their strength. The weak must be shown that any threat or challenge will be met with ruthless and decisive retaliation. Prey may survive by moving in herds for safety, but a true hunter can defend itself. The strong must be shown that you too are strong, so that their attention will be directed elsewhere (to the weak, in fact).

Defend Your Territory

Defend what is yours or have it taken from you. The lesson is simple. All Caine's children need territory. Herds to feed from. Safe places to shelter in.

All Cainites must eke out and defend their territory. As our own clan's experience has shown, claims must be made boldly and defended strongly. All Tremere, I'm sure, would agree with this "commandment." Like the Ferals, we have used our strength to take territory from the weak and we defend it with the greatest vigor.

For the Ferals, however, holding territory is not just a matter of practicality, of access to herds and resources. The hunt is important to them for other reasons, and not to have land on which to hunt is an impediment to their progress along their road. As a result, they are ever vigilant and demand that all intruders on their domain pay homage. Those who do not are considered to be invaders and are dealt with as such.

Kill When Necessary

Enemies should be destroyed. Ferals show no remorse for their actions, no sympathy for the suffering they cause. And they will brook no interference. If a Feral has marked someone for death, he will be pursued — hunted — relentlessly.

When they hunt, Ferals kill their prey. This is central to their road. They do not allow anything to

stand between them and their needs. In their view, the simplest way to deal with a troublesome individual is to kill him. This extends to Cainites as well as mortals, although I believe they are more circumspect when it comes to their fellow undead.

Make No Unbidden Sacrifice

The Ferals do not recognize the feudal system. They feel they owe others nothing. To sacrifice oneself for another is a great folly in their eyes. The Beast has brought us back from death itself; it would be poor repayment indeed to sacrifice it to the interest of another.

Liolya explained that this does not mean Ferals are unwilling to aid each other. Indeed, no pack could function if self-interest were all. This principle refers to self-sacrifice for others, for "innocents," for matters of principle or for "greater causes." Let others become martyrs and die for their causes. The only cause a Feral will defend with his unlife is his own unlife, or *perhaps* that of a boon companion. The Beast offers the chance to hunt forever; who is great enough to be worthy of a sacrifice of that magnitude?

Do Not Torment Others Needlessly

Hunters do not toy with their prey. They stalk, then they strike. Ferals do the same. The Beast revels in the pursuit, the chase. It matches strength and cunning with its prey and rejoices when it triumphs. That is all the satisfaction it craves, all the reward it needs.

To torture or torment another needlessly is seen as a sign of weakness. Ferals are cruel, but not without reason. If torment is the only way to achieve an end, they will not hesitate to do whatever they feel is needed to achieve the result they need. But they do not engage in such activities simply for sport or pleasure. Indeed, they abhor those who do.

Remember the Wilds

By and large, Ferals abhor civilization. They may grudgingly enter a city or town, they may even participate in the theatrics of a Cainite court, but they are always aware that such things are artificial, constructions of man. Empires rise and fall, but the Beast remains, constant and unwavering in its needs.

The wilderness embodies this in a way that the cities do not. The forests and wilds hold all we need. Game, shelter, peace. Even the Ferals who dwell in the cities feel the need, from time to time, to return to the wilds and purge themselves of the influences and habits of civilization. In this way, they maintain contact with the Beast's most primal urges. Feeding, of course, also requires some proximity to mortals, but does not necessitate hiding among them, or so the Ferals assert.

Do Not Kill Without Need

The Beast is not greedy. Neither are the Ferals. When they are hungry, they hunt. When a foe must be

destroyed, they act. They may well enjoy killing, but they do not kill for pleasure.

I believe that there is a kind of asceticism attached to some Ferals. They pride themselves on their simplicity. Indeed, they do as little as possible to rise above mere existence, hunting wild and unconcerned with the actions of the world around them. For such Cainites, to kill only when necessary (to feed or to destroy an enemy) is a matter of pride, a symbol of their self-mastery. By discarding the need for gratification that needless killing can represent, they keep their Beasts from running amok.

Challenge the Weak

Only the strong deserve to survive. The weak are prey. The primary reason why Ferals despise civilization is their belief that it is a shield for the weak. Weak leaders, marginally stronger than those they rule, lord over weak subjects. Ferals believe that the truly strong need no retinues of servants and soldiers to secure their survival.

They also believe that weak leaders and their followers should be attacked and destroyed. I think that this principle stems in part from their fear that eventually, they may be overcome by the hordes of mortals and the Cainites who hide behind them. So they strike viciously at any leader or other individual they see as unworthy. Only by maintaining the dominance of the strong are they able to secure their own survival.

Avoid Foolhardy Risks

Survival is a serious matter. The Beast does not trifle with trivial matters, and neither do the Ferals. They do not risk their continued survival for petty rewards or simply to relieve the ennui that can affect the Children of Caine. They understand that the Beast brought them back from death. To repay this salvation with needless risk would be to deny the power and gravity of their condition.

This is not to say that they are cowards or that the Ferals avoid risk altogether. They well understand that existence is a struggle and that they must contend with others at all times. But they know the value of their existence, and they refuse to endanger it without pressing need.

Perfect Clarity

From the diary of Gerard:

We still travel north. Liolya seems disappointed that I have so far resisted her blandishments to abandon my loyalty, but she seems content for us to keep company. Today, I discovered why.

She brought me to an ancient Gangrel whom she called "Grandfather." This "Grandfather" is a venerable Lorekeeper, a bard and a priest all at once. A wizened figure, he looked like an old man as he sat covered in an old blanket. But when he finally moved, he sprang like a hunting cat. His eyes were slitted, and his arms and hands

were not merely hairy — they were covered in fur. Yet his mind was sharp and his wisdom considerable. We spoke for three full nights. The questions he asked and the answers I gave have led me to an inescapable conclusion: I must break with my current path and embrace the Road of the Beast.

I write as if I have reasoned my way to this conclusion, but there is far more to it than that. Ever since my Embrace, I have struggled to control my urges. In the course of carrying out my duties to the Pyramid, I have traveled far and wide. I have fought for my unlife against wild animals and against bandits and armies. Always, I have heard the Beast whispering in my ear. It tells me that the code of behavior I have been trying to follow is wrong. Why try to live like a mortal, by mortal rules, when I am no longer mortal? This makes sense, but so might all the roads when examined logically.

More important is the example I see before me. Liolya may be a savage, but she is at peace with herself. She simply acts according to her needs. When hungry, she hunts and kills, and she shows no remorse for the lives she takes. I long to experience that peace, to silence the voice of the Beast that torments me so. Every time I feed, carefully concealing my hunt and only draining a little from each victim so that no trail of deaths would allow my movements to be followed, I feel the Beast straining at its leash.

In truth, it has become unbearable. I will tell Liolya I am ready to turn my back on my humanity once and for all, ready to embrace my Beast and become one with it. I am ready to become a Beast in name as well as in nature.

Embracing the Beast

From the final confession of Gerard:

Grandfather told me I would be tested. He told me I needed to be put to the test so that I might face the truth of what I had decided to become. I needed first to become attuned to my Beast and then to master it. The Beast is a hard master, and I needed to be certain of my strength, so that I would know that I would not stray from its path.

He told me I would face moments of decision, when I would face myself and my actions and question whether what I did was right. My savagery, he warned, would sometimes delight me and sometimes terrify me. But we are Ferals, not devils, and we do not give the Beast free rein to ravage and destroy as it will. We hunt when it is time to hunt, rest when it is time to rest. We do not simply kill when the whim takes us.

I tried to prepare myself, to keep my resolve strong for the moments when I would be tested. I did not fear the tests that I knew would come. I did not even fear failing them, although I knew it was inevitable that I would not always prevail. I was determined to master my Beast, no matter how long it took, no matter how cunning it proved.



Liolya told me I should trust in my own strength and in my own instincts. She told me it would be a grave mistake to fight the Beast too hard, to be too afraid of losing control of it, to grip the reins too tightly. Rather, I should guide and steer the Beast so that its fury and rage were directed to purposes of my choosing.

I did not have to wait long for my first test. Leaving my weapons and armor behind, I roamed ahead of Liolya and Grandfather. I needed blood, and I spied a camp in a thicket of trees. Creeping closer, I saw that it was a small party of men-at-arms, some dozen or so. Two men were on guard. Steeling myself, I prepared to strike.

My plan was to quickly kill the first, then feed on the second watchman. I climbed one of the trees and dropped onto the ground behind the watcher. I snapped his neck, but as I lunged for his companion I stumbled and the alarm was raised. I fell on the watchman and drank deep. My Beast was agitated, excited. It had tasted blood and a fight was in the offing.

Normally, I would be ruled by prudence and seek to flee. But as I watched the mortals scramble for their weapons, I felt a rising wave of euphoria. Realizing that now was the time to unleash the Beast, I cried out in joy and fell upon the hapless mortals.

I cannot say that I took no wounds in the fight, nor that I was not afraid for my very existence. Were I only mortal, I would have died quickly. Even a Cainite would have been hard-pressed. But the Beast was not afraid. It

lent me strength and courage. It was confident that it could master these foes, and when it finally subsided, well satisfied with its work, I stood in the thicket covered in blood and surrounded by the corpses of my prey. I felt no fatigue, only elation. Proudly, I made my way back to Liolya and Grandfather.

As soon as they saw me, they guessed what had happened. They congratulated me and welcomed me to their road.

"You have taken but the first step, but your appearance betokens a confident stride, not a timid shuffle," Grandfather said.

As the moon sank and I lay down that morning, I felt a peace and completeness that was new to me. Instead of grumbling and nagging, the Beast was content. I was content.

Grandfather Speaks

From the journal of Gerard:

Grandfather has given me much to think about. Tonight we walked together as Liolya roamed ahead. Last night I loosed the Beast upon a small troupe of men-at-arms. I triumphed, and I feel at peace. The Beast is like an ember, burning slow now after raging last night. I feel it deep inside, and I felt it last night, as I slaughtered my foes.

Grandfather told me I must rid myself completely of mortal thoughts. He said I would feel elation every time I loosed the Beast, but that I should beware of pride and overconfidence. The hunter takes satisfaction from his

kills, not foolish mortal emotions. My instincts, not my thoughts, should be my guide. My victories should grant me confidence and strength, he warned. If instead I allow arrogance and conceit to grow, then the Beast would take me completely and I would soon be no more. The surest hunters of those who have succumbed to the Beast are Ferals, many of whom delight in such a challenging hunt.

It is difficult to sort out the feelings and thoughts I am experiencing. Even writing this journal is more difficult than it has been. It seems foolish to be searching for the words to describe the things I am feeling, but I am determined to continue in my undertaking.

Grandfather spoke much tonight about the progress I might expect to make. One thing he was clear about: I must not become too enamored of the Beast. I must not become so confident of my control of it that I give it its freedom too often, that I might rely on it too much. His lesson was that the Beast is a servant; I am its master. I must let it free when that is what my instincts tell me to do, but I must not free it every time a threat or fight is in the offing. That is the path to degeneration, to becoming nothing more than a raving monster.

He told me that I could expect to face many situations where my judgment would be called into question, especially as I am so new to the road. This is a dangerous time and losing control of the Beast is a great risk for me. He believes it is like tumbling down a hill. Once you slip, he says, it is difficult to regain your balance. And once a slip becomes a fall, it is nigh impossible to stop the descent.

Failure

From the journal of Gerard:

We have traveled further, and I have been making progress, I think, along my new road. Every night my confidence grows. I have hunted, naked and wild and alone, and the Beast has howled in satisfaction. Grandfather and Liolya continue to instruct me, and I have learned.

But last night, I shame to say I failed a test that Grandfather set for me. Tonight, I am feeling foolish, but yet determined to continue on this road. I will learn from this failure and never repeat it. I am writing it down so that I may relive my shame and not forget my weakness.

Grandfather told me to run through the forest, but not to hunt, and to return an hour before daybreak. I questioned him, but he told me to do what I was told. So I ran. I was tempted to take a hart whose trail crossed mine, but I resisted the gentle urging of the Beast and ran. Animal vitae is thin and tasteless in any case.

Still, I wondered what the test would be. I know now that Grandfather set me to running to deplete my body of vitae. When I returned to Grandfather and Liolya, I was hungry and tired, but determined. They sat quietly on the edge of a clearing. In the center were three piles of wet leaves, piled high and smelling of wet earth.

Grandfather told me he knew I must be hungry. I said nothing.

"You must hurry and find your food," said he, "lest the Beast overtake you in your hunger."

At last, I thought! A test of my resolve against the Beast. Determined not to let it rut through the piles like a pig hunting for truffles, I carefully inspected the piles — their size, the way the leaves were turned, the footprints around them. I tried to recall any clues Grandfather might have mentioned, and to second-guess his intentions and his camouflage. I made my choice. I was wrong.

"You have no time left to hunt this night. Let the Beast torment you. Tomorrow you will hunt."

I was furious. I had tried to use reason to accomplish a task that the Beast could have easily completed. Had I only released it to scent for me like a hound, I would have found the meal before the blood had cooled. The Beast howled and raged, but I was determined not to compound my failure by loosing it in a rage when none but myself was to blame.

Tonight, when I woke, Liolya and Grandfather had gone. Cursing them, I first hunted, then set about finding them. They were making little effort to hide their passing. None of us has spoken, but Grandfather seemed satisfied when I rejoined them.

Next time, I will not be fooled. Next time, I will pass the test.

More Lessons

From the final confession of Gerard:

Grandfather's next lessons to me were on the dangers of degeneration. The hunt is not mere pleasure for the Ferals, and it is more than a necessary activity for survival. We must hunt to maintain our supply of vitae — this is the fundamental fact of Cainite existence — but vitae does more than that. It gives us the sustenance we need to defend ourselves and the spiritual might we need to act as we should. If we allow ourselves to become weak, we become easy prey for others. Worse, we become easy prey for our own Beasts, who will seize upon our weakness and take control. Grandfather's next test taught me that lesson in no uncertain terms.

Riding the Beast is a great test. To set it loose and to maintain control is like riding a wild horse. At first, it can only be guided and persuaded, not controlled. Yet by imposing my will upon it, I gain a measure of cooperation from it, not because I have defeated it, but because I showed it that under my control it will be well satisfied and kept well pleased.

Grandfather added a caution here. Some Ferals, he told me, become so enamored of the Beast, and of the sensation of riding it when it rages, that they try to let it free always. Some claim this is the only way to gain a deeper understanding of our condition. Others simply

lack the discipline and judgment to know when to take control and when to let it go. Either way, one risks becoming too taken with one's own rage, and while it may serve one well for a time, the Beast inevitably conquers in the end.

After my failure with the piles of leaves, we traveled for a few more days. Once he deemed that I had recovered, Grandfather urged me to give the Beast its head and hunt all night, every night. I did not understand the reason for this, but I must confess I was not unhappy. I lost myself in the hunt for three nights, stalking and slaying without pause. The Beast was in control and at first, I was unconcerned.

But on the fourth night, Grandfather re-appeared. He had with him a mortal, a young and sturdy lad. I sprang forward, but Liolya blocked my way.

"Stop!" she cried. I could only growl.

"This kill is for Gerard, not his Beast," said Grandfather.

I was furious. I wanted blood. All their blood. Grandfather was old and weak. Liolya would put up a fight but I could surely overcome her. The Beast howled and slavered.

Yet some small spark of intellect understood what must be done. I tried to exert my willpower, to force the Beast back, but it would not go willingly. I turned and ran, howling in confusion and rage. I was determined not to fail this test, but the Beast did its best to resist me. I knew I had to force it down, to take control of myself.

Then I discovered the Beast's cunning. It must have feared the strength of my will, for it gave way. But it did not surrender. Instead, it began to ask questions. How did I know what the test really was? I was wrong last time, after all. Why was Grandfather testing me so? Had Liolya not told me that the road was simple? Why all these tests? Perhaps they were torturing me? Laughing at me? Why not take them? If I struck quickly, I could surely slay Grandfather. If I let the Beast loose, I could take Liolya's blood as well. They had set the Beast free and were afraid of it, because they were weak. And the weak are fit only for the slaughter.

I screamed. I could not make the thoughts stop. I slammed my head against a tree and howled and ranted and cursed. Slowly, I made my way back to my two mentors. They were waiting. They did not hear me approach until I dropped from the trees, landing between them. The Beast reached out, intent on killing Grandfather.

Then I saw the mortal. I remembered who I was. Somehow, I made my hand stop. Grandfather stood watching me, motionless and expressionless.

The Beast raged. I forced it down. It nearly had me, but I shut out its howls. It was beaten and it knew it.

"Congratulations, Gerard. You have vanquished the Beast."

Then Grandfather let the mortal free, and we three hunted together for the first time. His blood was hot and salty from fear and exertion.

The Wilderness of Man

Here at last is the meat of Gerard's confession. We must learn the source of the strange power this Liolya seems to have held over him. I remember Gerard before he strayed from us. He was a doughty warrior and a loyal servant. He had truly earned his place among our ranks. I do not believe that his betrayal was the result of an incorrect selection for the Embrace. Rather, I think Liolya bewitched him somehow.

This mastery of the self of which he speaks continues to fascinate me. Is it simple willpower, or are there secret techniques involved? Rituals or enchantments? Gerard has been unable to tell us anything of use. We must capture more of these Ferals — Liolya would be a great prize — and discover what it is that they know.

Imre

From the journal of Gerard:

I have triumphed over the Beast. Grandfather and Liolya put me to the test some nights ago and though I struggled, I prevailed. Truly I can now call myself a Feral.

At last, I am at peace with myself. I know not how or when I may return to the Pyramid. Perhaps I can find a way. Perhaps not. Either way, I am not concerned. I am the master of myself, now, and from that mastery all else will flow.

This will be my last journal entry. I have no need to record my thoughts any further. But I will keep it in my possession, nonetheless, in case I ever wish to see how far I have come and to remember the progress I have made.

Gerard

The Words of Liolya

From the final confession of Gerard:

You have read my journal. You know that I gave in to my weakness. I was ready to abandon the Pyramid. I was ready to place my own needs, the urges of my Beast, ahead of those of Clan Tremere. In my heart, I had already done so.

I know it is a crime for which I can never atone, save perhaps with my destruction. But I cannot deny the thrill I felt, the sense that I had finally become what I was always meant to be. I ran wild and hunted with abandon. I roamed as a true savage, with no thought other than slaughter and destruction. Eventually, I allowed my reason to reassert itself, but never to place itself above the Beast. Rather, I learned to use it to guide and assist the Beast. At last, I felt whole.

Still my instruction continued. I knew not why, but I was glad of it nonetheless. After passing the test of controlling my Beast, Grandfather left us and Liolya and I continued to travel. We were bearing north, but were in no hurry and Liolya seemed to have no destination in mind. We passed by several towns, some of them quite large, and this seemed to encourage Liolya to talk. She knew much of my own history by now and evidently decided it was time to talk of cities and civilizations.

I will tell you now what she told me. It will explain much, I think.

It is said that the Ferals are barbarians, outcasts, an unruly mob of monsters who use any excuse to justify their hunger. It is said that they hate civilization and that they seek only to roam and kill like animals. These are all falsehoods. The Ferals — we Ferals — do not hate civilization but despise it. We see through its falsehoods and pretenses. We see through those who choose to bind themselves to it.

Ferals do not say that reason and learning have no place. To abandon reason altogether is to abandon oneself to the Beast entirely, and that is not our way. We want the Beast as a willing ally, not as a slave and certainly not as an adversary. It is reason that elevates us above the lower creatures, and that prevents us from becoming animals ourselves. Some Ferals have gained many insights by studying the works of mortal philosophers. Does not Plato make an allegory about the soul being like a chariot, drawn by two horses? The horse of reason and the horse of passion must both obey the whip of the self if the chariot is not to be wrecked at the first obstacle.

Civilization's Great Deceit

Because we see through the lies of civilization, it poses no threat to us. This is our great advantage. We can exist apart from it or in the midst of it if we choose. But never do we allow ourselves to be fooled into thinking that it is necessary to our survival or better than roaming the wilds.

The foundation of civilization is the submergence of individual instinct, knowledge and desire to the needs or laws of the state. This means suppressing instincts and accepting the dominion of another.

We understand the rule of the strong. We understand hierarchies and social orders, where everyone has their place. When we need to, we can function in civilization quite well, but we refuse to be deceived. Were we to entrust ourselves and our survival to civilization, we would be surrendering our own judgment and relying on someone else's — the very antithesis of our way.

Why do civilizations end? Why did Rome burn? Why does every empire decline and fall, with only death and disaster for their citizens? Because mortals deceive

themselves. They believe they have become "civilized," that they have conquered their desires and instincts and replaced them with something better or more refined — human laws and rules.

How then can a Feral exist in civilization? It is surprisingly easy. The same rules apply as in the wilds. We claim territory and defend it against all intruders. We claim the place to which our strength entitles us. We avoid being drawn into schemes and intrigues. We can move through the ranks of our fellow Cainites — we know and accept who and what we truly are.

We pride ourselves on being able to thrive anywhere, to go wherever we please. Cities simply provide different challenges. A few among our number hunt and prey on the very highest levels of mortal and Cainite society. Usually, they keep themselves hidden from mortal view, to better camouflage themselves for the hunt.

I do not pretend to understand the thinking of these Ferals. Their claim is that the most dangerous prey is man. Therefore, to hunt him in his chosen environment, they say, is the greatest challenge. The Beast must be carefully watched, loosed at precisely the right moment and then caged again before it rampages.

I can understand the delight of the hunt, but I wonder if such tastes are too refined. Still, the skill of these Ferals cannot be denied, nor the strength of their control over the Beast. To be able to function as a hunter under such circumstances is a truly remarkable feat. Do not ever fall into the delusion of thinking our city-dwelling cousins are weak or soft. They are dread hunters indeed, make no mistake.

The delights and sophisticated pleasures of the city are intended to distract its inhabitants from their true, savage nature. This is true for mortals and Cainites alike. Move among them and be not fooled. All we must remember is that the key to our existence lies within, in our hunger and rage, not in some poem or hymn or building.

The Wilds Call

But the Beast howls loudest when it is caged most tightly. It will find a way to make its desires known. The wilds call to us all. That is why even the city-dwellers among us spend time away from the centers of civilization.

Time spent in solitary meditation is an important element in our spiritual growth. Freed from the distractions and diversions of mortal civilization, we can turn our focus inward and work toward a true understanding of our inner natures.

Spending time in the wilds is also dangerous, but this is ultimately of benefit. For while we are the greatest hunters in the world, we need to spend time with the beasts to ensure that our instincts remain strong, our reflexes quick, our intelligence swift and brutal. To do

this, we must expose ourselves to the wilds, to ensure that our predatory skills remain honed.

The forests are full of creatures that would hunt us down and destroy us. Most notably, they are home to the Lupines, perhaps our greatest foes. Filled with wrath and possessed of immense power, those Ferals who pursue them can put themselves to no greater or more dangerous test.

Neither should one fall into the trap of thinking that hunting in the wilds is the simple, natural solution to all of one's problems. I have already said that making one's haven in the wilds is difficult because of their sheer danger. We do not look for easy answers and soft ways. Our way is the way of fang and claw, of death and struggle.

A Dangerous Compromise

Even those of us in the cities, however, feel the call of the wild. Rare is the follower of our road who doesn't escape into the wilds from time to time. Even if it is only to observe our rites — few though they are — spending time in the wilds to revel in the fury and passions of the Beast is a vital part of our existence.

We can feed on animals if dire need is upon us. They provide vitae, but it is thin and weak fare indeed, akin to the gruel some mortals are forced to consume. Rare indeed is the Cainite whose Beast will be satisfied with a diet of animal vitae. Eventually, if the Cainite refuses to find better prey, the Beast will rampage until it does.

After all, we cannot escape our hunger, so some proximity to mortals is necessary. Some try to find a compromise and claim domains along major roads. Others become nomads, roaming the nights and preying on the edges of human society.

Those Ferals who hunt in cities scoff at such behavior — why play timidly on the edges when the truly bold plunge in directly? Those of us who dwell in the wilds also scoff — why dally with such foolishness when one could simply withdraw into the forests altogether? But others claim to find in such a pattern of existence the ideal balance between our conflicting needs. Just as the Beast must be balanced against reason and intellect, so must the trappings of man be balanced with the wilds he avoids.

Some Ferals lead nomadic existences, moving from place to place and never claiming a domain or even a territory. This sort of existence is not without hazard, of course. Not having any permanent domain or safe haven means that the nomad is entirely on his own, and one crippling injury in an unfamiliar place can spell doom.

Nomadic existence is likely to become harder, as the mortals spread their cities and their civilization further into the forests and plains. Our Wardens find it more difficult with each passing year to travel to and from our sacred places and our Lorekeepers bring tales of kings and

princes who wish to control their borders and restrict who will enter their realms.

All we can do is to focus on our strength. We trust in the voice of the Beast. It tells us where to roam, where to hunt. We believe it will guide us true every time, as long as we have the courage to listen carefully and follow fearlessly.

The Hunt is the Test of the Hunter

From the final confession of Gerard:

My confession is now almost done. Liolya and I turned directly north and gradually, I realized that we were headed for a gathering of Ferals. I began to notice others traveling near us, and finally we arrived at a secluded wood some distance north of Riga. The ancient trees seemed to whisper, and game was plentiful. There were no villages or towns for leagues in all directions. The meeting area was a large clearing ringed by stones. In its center was a fire pit.

I would guess that there were close to two-score Ferals in total. Liolya and I were among the last to arrive. Never have I seen such an assemblage of glorious hunters. Ferals from further north were dressed in heavy furs, with thick, braided hair and massive, thick hews. A group from the Isles of Britain arrived, nearly naked except for their tattoos and war-paint. Wardens arrived with massive hounds who fed on the blood of their masters, making them at once obedient and terrifyingly vicious. Still others I mistook for Lupines at first, so animalistic was their appearance. They had long snouts, tufted ears, clawed hands and feet. Three arrived together, like giant wolves with long, red-brown fur. It was not until I heard them speak that I realized they were not simply some other Feral's massive war-hounds or some fearsome, forgotten monsters from the deep wilds.

Around these animalistic Ferals there was a degree of space. Some seemed to hold them in awe, for their daring in drawing the Beast forth so often and wearing its visage so boldly. Others drew back in fear, reckoning that for the Beast to mark them so heavily, they must be deep in its clutches.

The next two nights were my introduction to Feral society. I fought many challenges, winning some, losing others. These were more akin to wrestling or brawling matches. Their purpose was simply to establish the order of dominance, not to hurt or kill others. Yet that is not to say that there were no deaths. There were three in all. The destruction of those weak enough to perish in such friendly fights was not mourned, though.

We will send out parties at once to locate this site. We cannot allow such gatherings to take place so close to our holdings. None of our spies or informers detected the movement of 40 Cainites through our lands! This cannot be tolerated. Our spymaster has failed us utterly.

Imre

Know When to Fight

Liolya was concerned that I might not understand the purpose of the fighting, or why only the newer Ferals, those such as myself who had only recently taken up the road, were fighting. She explained that among the older Ferals, the order was established. Any challenge would be a more serious affair, and would as likely be resolved through a hunt that only one would survive as through some form of ritual combat.

She spoke at length to a group of us newcomers. We place great import on hunting and killing, but how should we exist from night to night? Our road is not one of constant violence, endless struggle and lonely nights spent looking over our shoulders. Even animals take time to play, and to do nothing but hunt would quickly drive one into the arms of the Beast.

Could we imagine, she asked, surviving if we challenged every insult with a duel to the death? We are hunters. That is to say, we use cunning and guile as much as brute force and savagery. It is important to know when to stalk your prey and when to strike. But only a fool risks his existence needlessly. Unless it is strongly provoked and weakly controlled, the Beast is unlikely to lead one into a pointless confrontation over a trifling matter.

"So how should we react when we have been wronged?" asked one of the neonates, a Brujah named Halla.

There is no hard-and-fast rule, Liolya explained, and it is not always easy to judge. The one certainty is that one must never, no matter what response one makes, appear weak or indecisive. Demand satisfaction for a wrong, but make sure that the demand is commensurate with your station, that of your opponent and the harm done to you. If you demand a dreadful reckoning of the most trivial of slights you will appear foolish and harsh. This can be just as dangerous as allowing a slight to go unanswered.

But a strong response, I said, can be a most effective warning to others that you are not to be trifled with. Making an object lesson of a tormentor — especially one without powerful friends or allies — can provide a salutary lesson. When outright confrontation is required, no mercy should be shown. Your fury should be ridden and your enemy destroyed. Such a kill should not go unnoticed. It should be a warning to others, a warning of your strength and your determination. Liolya seemed well pleased with my words.

Liolya reminded us that, although we do not enjoy or advocate playing politics, extremities of behavior are to be expected in the name of revenge. The Beast is not stupid, although it can be short-sighted, and the greatest hunters are those recognized for their cunning as well as their savagery.

One must be prepared to wait to take revenge if need be, but to wait too long is a mistake, unless a surprise attack is being planned. There are few things sweeter than the surprise and the shock of an assailant, who was expecting little or nothing by way of retaliation for a wrong, taken unawares.

Allies

Liolya rested, and a new speaker stepped forward. An Iberian Brujah, he called himself Rodrigo. He would tell us, he said, how to find our way and choose our allies if we chose to brave the dangers of the city.

First and foremost, he said we must choose our allies carefully. The qualities he said to look for are strength, steadfast purpose and strong will. Unless one is looking for a pack of weaklings to dominate — and who will, in all likelihood, fail or abandon you in a crisis — one should find Cainites with similar strength to one's own.

He cautioned against being fooled by friendly overtures. You will not be well served, he told us, by friends, who will only add their weaknesses to your own. We seek strong allies with whom we share a common purpose.

The Beast is a selfish master, and it lurks within us all, whether it is acknowledged or not. So Rodrigo said that if we trust in the selfishness and self-interest of others, we do not leave ourselves open to any unpleasant surprises. But when we find companions to share our nights with, we must be sure to preserve the strength of the association by not alienating them.

All groups need a leader, he said, but it is not imperative that we act as leader merely because we are Ferals. Rather, it is imperative that the strongest leads the group. And he gave us a caution — strength is not always measured solely in terms of physical might. Wisdom and knowledge, cunning and deviousness all have their role to play and thus their strength to contribute.

Rodrigo also advised against tying oneself by oath or blood to any ally or companion, no matter how trustworthy or loyal you think they might be. To reveal all one's secrets is unwise. Better, he said, to keep yourself to yourself, so that if the worst comes to the worst and your packmates turn on you, you can escape and rebuild your strength. Then you can return and take your revenge.

Finally, he spoke of information and where to find it. The struggles of a city-dwelling Feral can often be greatly aided by information. His suggestion was to gain the trust of the city's Nosferatu. Many of that clan follow our road.

Those who do not may still be sympathetic to our cause, especially when it lies against a member of a High Clan, and almost all well understand the need for revenge on a foe who has delivered a telling slight.

Other useful sources, and the most likely to offer a simple trade, rather than payment in ill-defined "favors," are the Low Clans. We share an abhorrence of the society of others and respect strength. This, Rodrigo said, makes them natural allies of any Feral.

Initiation

I learned many things at the gathering of Ferals. I was intrigued by those who had received no mentoring, no training and no help, either from their sire or from a Lorekeeper like Liolya. I suppose this makes sense. At its heart, the Road of the Beast is simple, its tenets fundamental. Those who are left to their own devices usually arrive at a set of values remarkably similar to those who are tutored. This is further proof, if any were needed, that our road speaks to the fundamental truths of our nature. These are the primacy of the hunt, the importance of the kill, the place of the Beast.

I spoke to several Ferals who had effectively initiated themselves onto the road. They had all begun their existence as Cainites alone and in the wilds. They recommended such a period of isolation as an excellent way to comprehend one's true nature. To leave all the trappings of civilization behind and exist as an animal, rising with the moon, reveling in one's bestial side, is a powerful experience. This much I could agree with, from the weeks I had spent traveling with Liolya. I longed to spend some time alone like this, in close proximity to the Beast, not resisting its urges. I longed to experience the freedom and power of the Beast without needing to report to clan elders, command my soldiers or discharge any responsibilities.

Packs also initiate their members, and such ceremonies, I learned, are often bloody affairs. They almost always involve a hunt. Sometimes the would-be member is hunted by the pack and his worthiness judged by the chase he leads. Sometimes, if the chase is deemed especially poor, the Cainite is not only rejected but slaughtered for his temerity.

Also common is the joint hunt. The would-be member is usually required to lead the pack, or to beat them to a kill. Success is not always the only yardstick in such cases, especially when the pack deliberately obstructs the hunt to judge the new member's temperament.

Final Triumph?

From the final confession of Gerard:

I judge a man by his friends, a warrior by his enemies. I made some enemies at this gathering. When some of the assemblage learned of my clan, I was immediately accused



of being a spy. Liolya came to my defense, saying that I should undergo a ritual of initiation. If I was untrue, the Beast would know. This was the moment she had been preparing me for. I felt no fear. I remember the ritual down to the last detail; indeed I will never forget it.

I was led away and sealed into a small cave. I was not told what would happen. For three nights I was sealed in, left in total darkness, not knowing if I was being initiated or executed. At the beginning of the fourth night, half-crazed with fear and the fury of the Beast, I was let out. Before me was a circle of Ferals. Liolya stepped forth.

"You must now hunt. Three nights travel from here is a church. Below it is a dungeon. We have just received word that the churchmen have captured Serge, one of our brethren. Travel to this church. Discover his fate. Free him if he has not been killed. Destroy the churchmen in any case. You will be followed, and if you fail, others will do this task. But you will be the first to try. This mortal was to have been your hunt. But this test is more fitting. Drink your fill and be gone."

One of the bestial Ferals, looking like a small bear with human features, pointed ears and a hairless chest, shoved a terrified mortal forward. I seized him and drank deep of his blood, taking every drop of sustenance I could for the test ahead. The Beast stirred. Then I was away.

For three nights I ran. At the end of the third night, I reached the church. I had little time, so I quickly scouted the surroundings, made note of the stables and the small compound attached to the church grounds, then slipped into the courtyard. I found the dungeons easily. The monk set to guard it did not stir as I passed. But going downstairs, I was bitterly disappointed. All the cells were empty and there was no sign of Serge — save for a pile of ashes, still smoldering, in the farthest cage.

I found a pile of papers and ink on a nearby table, and a chair. The papers were full of scribbled notes. The table was in fact a torture table. Had Serge been interrogated? Where then was the priest? The moon was low in the sky; hastily, I retreated.

The next night, I arose early and returned to the church. I felt eyes upon me, but sensed no other presence. I guessed it was one of the senior Ferals, a Lorekeeper perhaps, come to watch my actions.

I stole into the compound again. This time, I headed for the priests' quarters. It was easy enough to find the

priest. I asked him about the prisoner, about the interrogation. I was not gentle. He told me a traveling Inquisitor name Nikola had interrogated the demon. He was expected to return on the morrow. I thanked the priest for his time, then broke his neck.

For good measure, I killed the other monks and wrecked their compound. I slew the horses in their stables. I tipped the altar and burned the pews. Then only one task remained.

The hunt was easy enough, and Nikola's cries to his God amused me. I killed him quickly, then dragged his corpse back to the chapel and tore it to pieces. The bear-like Feral was waiting for me when I was done.

He sniffed the air, looked at me, looked at the burning remains of the church.

"Good," he said, then was off.

I returned to the gathering place, but when I got there everyone was gone. Everyone save Liolya.

"You are truly a Feral now," she told me. "What will you do? Your clan will most likely not have you back."

I knew she was right. I shrugged, then fled into the wilds.

You know the rest. I wandered for a few nights but was captured by a patrol of Tremere from this chantry. Sorcery to find me, sorcery to capture me. I do not regret the deaths I caused. If our soldiers cannot stand against a Cainite like me, they are not fit for service.

My absence was questioned, and my answers did not satisfy. You have tortured and beaten me. The Beast is mighty, but it cannot break the bonds with which you hold me. It cannot grant me power to escape. I have turned my back on the Pyramid, but I will still serve. Perhaps a Cainite is needed for an experiment. Perhaps you will make an example of me. It matters not. I am done. On these pages is the last of my loyalty, and good riddance to it.

This ends the transcription of Gerard's confession. He is a wretched subject, but the information he has brought us will be invaluable, I am sure. I will confer further with Xavier, who has witnessed the interrogation and has been interested in these matters for some time. Perhaps he can be persuaded to share some of his research materials with me.

Imre





CHAPTER TWO: THE ENDLESS HUNT

When hunting for foxes, prepare to meet lions.

—Anonymous

From the collection of Xavier, Mage of House Tremere:

My dearest Elsa,

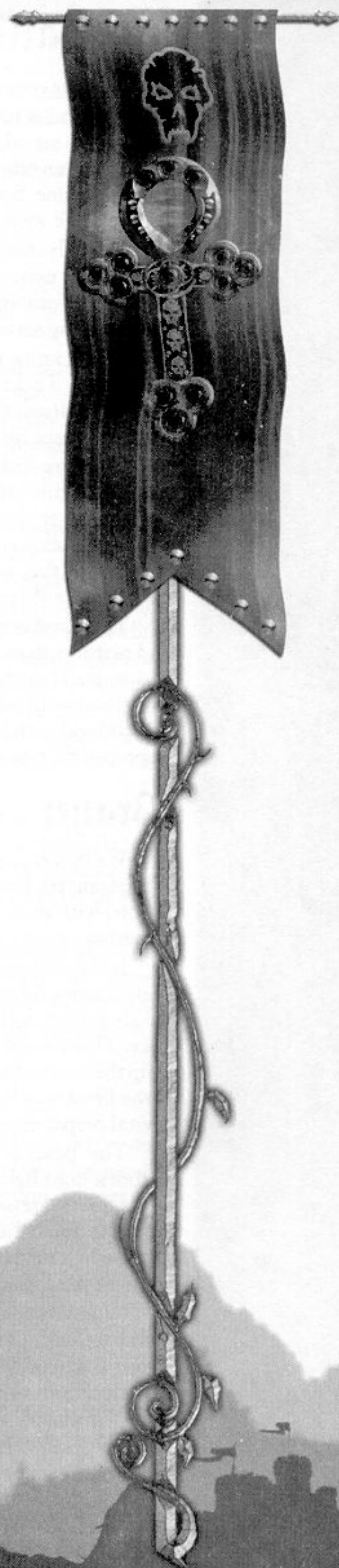
My research goes well. I am becoming accustomed to these nights in Lithuania, but I still find the peasantry distasteful and the surroundings primitive. Nevertheless, I have continued to accumulate information on the ways of the Cainites. To my delight, I was able to acquire a large collection of writings, all from the same hand.

The author — one Rodrigo — is, as far as I have been able to determine, a Feral. That is, he follows the Via Bestiae. Despite his frequent references to the road's oral tradition, he has taken considerable effort to set its practices down on paper. He is a Brujah, so perhaps his inclination to scholarship and his urge to consider matters of philosophy (more common among the so-called "High Clans") have led him to undertake this task. Philosophical treatises are at odds with his beliefs to some extent, though I daresay he would be quick to point out that it is not forbidden for a Feral to record his beliefs.

I have noted a certain tension in his writings between the faculty of reason and the primitive urges he describes as "the Beast." I believe that these Ferals may have achieved a considerable understanding of our common condition. Do not discount the insights and practices recorded.

For your convenience, I have removed all but the relevant content. The names, and what details I could glean of Rodrigo's correspondents, have been taken down and passed on to other agents of our clan. I have also taken the liberty of including a number of comments and notes throughout the collection. I await your thoughts and impressions most impatiently.

Yours,
Xavier



Rites and Rituals

From the correspondence and writings of Rodrigo:

Our road is not known for its formalities. We have no schools, few sacred texts, no appointed teachers or leaders or members of an official hierarchy. We have no catechism, no formal doctrine. Some believe we are the Children of Caine. Some believe we are descended from gods far older.

The only thing we all agree on is that it is the Beast that gives us our existence. The Beast should not (and indeed cannot) be contained or trapped. Rather, it should be made into a willing servant or ally.

We all know what happens when the Beast is denied its release. To keep the Beast placated we carry out a number of rituals that serve to remind us of our true nature. They keep our instincts honed and our thoughts simple.

Some are little more than habits we all seem to have acquired, while others are little short of formal ritual. I will note, however, that they can vary greatly from place to place and from follower to follower. They represent ideas and experiences that are common to us all, not formalized rituals we must slavishly enact.

The Lorekeepers often meet and exchange new ideas and new practices. In this way, some rituals have spread far and wide. Though the precise practices may vary, a Feral from Iberia will still be able to participate in a hunt or rite in Scotland with little trouble. Nor will she be accounted improper if a new ritual baffles her.

Prayer

We bow to no god save perhaps the Beast. We have no formal prayers, but many of our number maintain a dialogue of sorts with their Beast, coaxing, persuading, cajoling and sometimes even chastising it.

It is common to utter a few words to the Beast before commencing a hunt. We may ask for fleetness of foot or a steady pursuit, a challenging chase or a good fight from our prey. These words help the Beast loosen its chains. They help the hunter focus her will on the struggle to come. And if the Beast is to be loosed and allowed to run free, they are a vital preparation.

The Beast is powerful and cunning. Prayers uttered before a hunt help ensure that it does not take the hunter unawares and seize control. Being in the proper, composed frame of mind helps the hunter prepare for the Beast's onslaught and ride its fury, guiding and controlling it without surrendering to it completely.

When the kill has been made, another round of prayers may be offered. These have the opposite purpose to those said before the hunt begins. They are a way to focus the mind, to give the faculty of reason an opportunity to return, to step out from the shadow of the Beast's fury.

Especially when the Beast has been ridden in a hunt, it can be difficult to put it away. It is usually exhausted, sated and full from its exertions, but that does not mean it slinks quietly back into its cage. When it has been given a taste of blood, it generally wants more. It does not like to be caged,

We pray at other times too, of course. Usually, we use our prayers to placate and control the Beast. When placed under great stress or temptation, we might step back and talk to the Beast, talking it out of its urge or its intention to kill all who defy or thwart it.

These prayers are particularly important for followers of our road who move in civilized circles. The temptation and frustration that await us in these settings are considerable, and the Beast must be constantly reassured that revenge will be taken for slights as necessary.

It is particularly appropriate to turn one's thoughts inward when a significant event has taken place. The defeat of a long-standing foe, a moment of clarity and understanding of one's nature, the Embrace of a new childe — all are times when a moment of reflection on the Beast and its nature may come to us. This meditation is one way in which we advance our understanding of our inner nature and progress along the path we have chosen for ourselves.

Study

We are not completely without learning, however, and this is where our Lorekeepers play a crucial role in the propagation of our faith.

These humble musings notwithstanding, our faith is not one that has been recorded in words. Our roots lie with the great nomad nations and times before writing, so we have no written tradition. Aside from our epics, our oldest records are the paintings and etchings in the caves that housed our ancestors and elders. These depictions of the hunt are the earliest physical record of our road.

We do, however, have a great tradition of poetry, song and verse. It is the Lorekeepers who keep these traditions alive by telling our stories and reciting our epics.

Lorekeepers

The first and most important task of a Lorekeeper is to learn our epics and our songs. These are the record of our road's exploits, its triumphs and its defeats. They give us inspiration and courage and demonstrate how the greatest among us have made their way through the dangers of these deadly nights. We have no formal liturgy, but these tales are our closest parallel.

A Lorekeeper begins by listening to the tales told by others. When he thinks he is ready, he approaches another Lorekeeper who, once satisfied of the junior's potential and intentions, begins teaching by a simple process of repetition. Once the teacher has imparted as much (or as little) as he thinks necessary, he and the student part company and resume their travels, gathering new stories and telling the old ones. For those of us who are not Lorekeepers, we too learn by listening. Whenever two Ferals meet they exchange stories. Whenever we Ferals meet for one of our gatherings, any Lorekeepers who are present will (or should) volunteer their tales.

Most Ferals know the most famous stories of our road, some of which have become traditional. These include the Birth of Caine (that is, his birth as a childe of the Beast, not

as a mortal), the Fall of the Second City and the Lesson of Ennoia. Some of these tales are cautionary. The death of Christ is such a one, as is the Lay of Shabaqo the Nubian. We also have legends, perhaps not literally true but possessed of fundamental, philosophical truths instead.

When Ferals hear these stories, we learn and we are given comfort to know that our way is the true way — our path the clearest and our hearts the purest. I would write these stories down, but I fear what would happen were I to be discovered. Some among us believe writing to be a tool for the weak-minded, effete priests and cowardly rulers — to write down what they would dare not say to another face. I do not deny that this is true for some, but neither would I deny my willingness to meet face-to-face any that would accuse me of cowardice.

Ritual

Our rituals are simple, bloody affairs. We revel in the Beast, and these events are intended to show our devotion to it.

We are not, as a rule, particularly attached to the minutia of our rituals. What I describe here are simply the practices that I have observed or that I have heard tell of.

When two adherents of our road have a dispute — for example, over a hunting ground — they usually settle it by fighting. After all, the weak must necessarily submit to the strong.

The Ferals observe two ways to do this, depending on the importance of the matter at stake. If it is important but not worth dying for, the fight will be to submission. Such rituals are often held to determine who will Embrace a promising mortal or who will lead a hunt. They are also the usual means of resolving challenges for leadership of a pack. Whenever the issue is not sufficiently important to justify the loss of a pack member, such a challenge takes place.

A clear space is found, and the combatants enter naked and unarmed. Depending on the seriousness of the matter, the use of fang and claw may be forbidden, but powers of the blood may be used freely. When a fighter is ready to admit defeat, or when his opponent has drawn first blood, he bares his throat to the victor. The victor then “throats” the vanquished, nipping the foe on the neck.

If the victor loses control to the Beast at this stage, he is considered to have lost his claim, even if he emerges victorious in the ensuing fight (for whatever consolation that may hold to the loser).

For a more serious dispute, the combatants may choose to let their Beasts decide the winner. In this case, restraint is neither expected nor given. The challenger calls out his opponent and insults him, claiming that he is not worthy of the Beast. The challenged must then hunt the challenger. Again, both must be naked and unarmed, but this time, tooth and claw are not only permitted but expected. The victor shows his opponent no mercy and may commit diablerie upon the loser, taking his Beast as well as his unlife if he desires.

These duels are called over matters of only the greatest importance, such as betrayal or theft of domain. A senior Feral who calls out too many juniors soon finds himself shunned by his fellows. There is, however, no particular stigma in challenging an inferior. If a weak Cainite is foolish enough to anger an elder enough that the elder feels justified in challenging, then he deserves the punishment that will surely follow.

Punishment

When we wish to punish a fellow adherent, we follow two procedures: one for significant (but still forgivable) crimes, and one for deadly crimes.

When a Feral has brought shame and embarrassment upon us, but neither death nor harm, he may be shunned. This is a less serious punishment that generally involves no physical harm — we don't really care enough about the opinions of others to kill or seriously harm our fellows over what outsiders think.

The Feral being shunned is made to stand at the center of a circle. His accusers then step forward and make their accusations. The accused is allowed to speak. When all have spoken, those who believe he should not be punished step forward. If more remain outside the circle than within, the accused is guilty and will be forced to run the gauntlet. All present form two lines, and the guilty must walk slowly between them as the other Cainites strike their blows. Once the gauntlet has been run, the hunt begins. For the remainder of the night, the guilty may be hunted and even fed upon, but not killed.

In more serious cases, a similar procedure is followed. The accused stands naked in the center of the circle. The trial proceeds as it does normally. If the guilt of the accused is proven, he will be hunted by all assembled and killed when he is finally brought to ground.

In all cases, the decision reached is final and will not be rescinded, even if it is later found to be unjust. The strong do not allow themselves to be brought low by false accusations. To do so is proof enough of one's weakness and is cause enough for destruction.

Others

Occasionally, we wish to make it known to others that they have trespassed upon lands sacred to us. This usually happens when a new Cainite tries to claim domain over one of our holy sites. It is not always possible to simply attack and destroy such individuals, especially when our numbers are few and when the offending Cainite has arrived with strength.

We first offer a warning. Usually, something of value to the Cainite is taken and held — a favored kine or retainer is best. We then send an emissary with a message telling the Cainite to cease their activities.

If they cease, the hostage is released and harried and chased back to safety. If they do not cease, the hostage is delivered to the Cainite, one piece at a time. Then the conflict begins in earnest. The message to be sent is clear. We ask for little from our brothers, but we expect to be given that little and left in peace. To do otherwise is to invite disaster.

I have seen this procedure but once, but I doubt that I will forget it. A local Ventrue lord had decided to claim some caves on the coast of Normandy. The caves had a number of paintings we have always held sacred, and three Wardens banded together to abduct the lord's favorite child. I had the privilege of delivering the following message: Abandon all claim to the caves and to all lands within three leagues of them. The lord — a fool named Guillaume — laughed at my message and demanded the return of his child.

So we returned his beloved Martin. It took three nights, but I believe the steady stream of body parts, delivered by a variety of animals we directed using the powers of the blood, was most effective. I was somewhat saddened to be forced to this course of action. Martin himself was nowhere near as foolish as his sire, and indeed would have made an excellent (and respectful) lord. No matter.

We used the beasts to besiege Guillaume's manor. We trapped him within and destroyed all messengers he tried to send. His territory was isolated, and we were patient. Eventually we heard cries in the night, and we knew that the Beast had taken Guillaume. We waited three nights longer and entered. Guillaume had devoured his retainers, and we found him, slaving and mad, in a corner of his modest dungeon.

We set him free almost immediately. The hunt was brief, but satisfying. His successor, a fine young Toreador named Mathilde, has been much more respectful.

Celebration

We are Ferals, and our Beasts are our willing allies. We set aside a number of special times to gather and revel in our true selves. These gatherings are not formal, nor is attendance mandated. But we enjoy gathering, to exchange stories and lore, as well as to strengthen our bonds with each other and our Beasts.

We have two formal celebrations, for blood and for death.

Blood

The midsummer celebration celebrates blood. We revel in the power of blood to give us power and vigor. We gather at our holy sites, and the Lorekeepers recite the tales of Caine and Ennoia. We then have a ceremonial hunt. Traditionally led by a Gangrel, to symbolize the wisdom of Ennoia, we gather a number of mortals — the Children of Seth — and set them running. The hunt is loud and wild, and the victims are run down and brought back, still living, to our circle. There they are offered up to Caine. The lead Feral throws the victims to the hungry throng, where they are torn limb from limb as the revelers let loose their Beasts and give themselves over to the hunger for mortal blood. Sometimes the mortals are released a few at a time, allowing their companions to watch. To bring the final kill to ground is an especial honor and has been the cause of many fights. It always amuses me to see two Ferals brawling while the last mortal flees, but it has afforded me a number of final kills, so I should not complain.



Death

The midwinter celebration celebrates death — the death of our companions and the death of our mortal selves. It is an altogether more somber experience.

Again, we gather at a holy site. After verses are sung, all become silent. One by one, as the urge takes us, we shed our clothes and slip away in the snow. We do not return until we have made a kill. It is a matter of pride to bring back something large or challenging, but killing other hunters — wolves, foxes and the like — is forbidden. As these gatherings typically take place far from mortal settlements, and as few of the kine venture out at night during the winter, bringing back a mortal is considered a good omen.

When all have returned, the corpses are thrown onto a large bonfire and burned as offerings in memory of fallen hunters, and in memory of Caine's sacrifice to God. In some places, the offering is dedicated to older, darker gods.

Then ballads are sung to remember our friends. The Lorekeepers take this time to sing new songs and to honor the courage of the fallen.

Revels

When a Feral has a hard victory or great success, he may call a revel. These are wild and unruly affairs. The host should ensure that there is plenty to hunt and plenty of stories to tell. Victorious packs often call revels in order to spread their fame and their boasts far and wide.

We require no formal procedure for a revel, beyond a hunt. Sometimes a revel is little more than a group hunt. Other revels are more ritualized and may involve Lorekeepers, fights and raids on small settlements. One such revel, in which I have participated several times, is the Grey Hunt. This is a gathering of Grey Hunters (Ferals, such as I, who inhabit the cities and courts) to hunt a chosen victim through the city streets. Man, in the environment he has built for himself, can be a most cunning opponent.

Ministry

We do not take pains to spread our faith. We believe that an individual will be drawn to it if he has sense enough to understand his true nature and needs. If someone needs to be told about what he really is, then he is probably not a good candidate for our road.

Nevertheless, other Cainites are aware of our road, and it exerts an irresistible pull on some. They hear our Lorekeepers reciting our epics or meet a Warden on the road or encounter a Feral as he hunts, and they marvel at his freedom and his peace with his bestial side.

We are always ready to welcome a new member to our road. We have no formal requirements. When a Cainite, be he neonate or elder, wishes to take up our road, all he must do is leave his old path behind and demonstrate that he has gained mastery over the Beast. Usually, the Cainite will spend some time alone in the wilds, taming the Beast. Some are devoured by their own Beasts and become savage

hunters who must be destroyed. These individuals are no loss, for they lacked the strength to master themselves, but they provide a salutary lesson in the dangers of letting the Beast reign unchecked.

In some rare cases, the supplicant may have help from one of our number if he and his "mentor" have become companions or have some other bond. Lorekeepers usually perform this function, as they not only have knowledge of how best to master the Beast, but also the ability to pass that knowledge on to others. In truth, the help offered by such a companion amounts to little. The ultimate struggle is against one's own Beast to restore the proper balance to the soul. There can be no allies in the fighting of this battle, only in the preparation for it.

Penance

It sometimes happens that one of our number falls from the Road of the Beast. There are two common ways for this to happen. Spending too much time in "civilized" company is one, although I must assert that I do not find it much trouble.

Sometimes, though, a Feral will be forced to deal with a prince or a court hierarchy, and this brings many potential traps for the unwary. The need to hunt is lessened, and I have seen more than one prince who thinks it somehow beneath his dignity to hunt his own prey. Still others prefer their vessels to be brought to them when drunk or drugged so they can share in the intoxication. Deliberately weakening oneself in this manner is not only decadent, it is dangerous. Who can defend himself properly when drugged? It is easy, especially for our more unsophisticated brothers to find themselves caught in such situations. Drinking poison is an activity in which mortals indulge, and we would do well to recall that we are above mortals.

A Feral unprepared for the rigors of the city faces other dangers than drunken Cainites, however. He may also find himself staying his hand, or making concessions to others for reasons of simple expediency. He might begin restricting your hunt or showing mercy to dangerous individuals simply because he enjoys their company.

When these afflictions befall a Feral (and they can befall any who dwell near a city, not just those who move in court circles) atonement and purification must be made. I know a number of ways in which to do this.

A pilgrimage to one of our holy sites (which I shall discuss anon) is perhaps the best way. This requires the pilgrim to divest himself of all possessions, worries and weapons and make his way on foot. He may meet Wardens along the way, and they will direct and guide him. As he travels, he will be forced to rely on his wits and his instincts. By the time he has reached the site, he should have recovered much of what had been lost.

When a pilgrim arrives, it is customary to make a kill and dedicate it to his Beast as a symbol of his renewed commitment to it. He should run his prey to ground and bring it back to the site alive. Often, a Warden is there, to witness the deed (if the pilgrim so desires). The pilgrim releases the prey and then releases the Beast and lets it take control.

The pilgrim may then remain at the site until he feels ready to leave. The journey back affords more time for reflection and several more hunts at least. For this reason, Ferals on pilgrimage choose sites that are at least a week's journey away.

Some of our fellows lose themselves to the Beast completely when attempting such a pilgrimage. Rest assured that if such a fate befalls you, the Wardens will find you and give you a swift, painless death.

Here There be Beasts

Elsa,

The following catalogue of sites holds out much promise. Of course, I feel it likely that some of these sites ("Caine's valley" in particular) are probably nothing more than especially intense wellsprings of mystical energy. Still, though, suppose that such a place truly does exist....

Xavier

We often visit our holy sites, to meditate or reflect on the events and individuals that are important to us and on our progress along the road. Other places are of import to us for different reasons. Such places are often difficult to find, as once a place gets a reputation for being desirable (for example by having few Cainite inhabitants but a plentiful supply of mortals), it will in all likelihood quickly attract ambitious or desperate Ferals all seeking a new domain.

In a number of areas, powerful mortal and undead rulers place pressure upon our domains. Some are being built into cities; others are sites of mortal conflict that are becoming increasingly difficult to inhabit safely. Regardless, we fight to hold these places, and any Feral who wishes to join the fight receives a welcome from his road-mates.

I have listed some dozen places. These are a sampling of the locations and sites we hold to be important. Were I to write this list in a century's time, I do not doubt that it would be different, as it would be had I written it a century ago. Nevertheless, the places I mention are the ones that occupy our thoughts tonight. The Wardens could doubtless tell you more, as they are the guardians of our holy sites and the watchers of our pathways.

Holy Sites

What then are the places we hold to be holy? They are mostly the places where our forebears undertook great acts, where the Beast was triumphant over our enemies and where we now travel to draw inspiration when our strength is flagging.

Many of these sites have rituals associated with them, or other special practices or requirements for entry. Each usually has a Warden present (or at least, in the local area) at all times. We guard these places jealously. They are held sacred to the Road of the Beast, and we allow no one but the followers of the road into them, with few exceptions. We do not want our places

to become pilgrimage destinations for the Cainite race at large (and certainly not for mortals); they are our domains and we intend to keep them. Interlopers who intrude upon them do so at great risk to themselves. Desecration of such a site would lead to one being hunted not only by the Wardens, but by all Ferals.

Caine's Valley

Our most holy site is the place where Caine committed the first act of murder. Even those who deny their ancestry or who claim descent from other forces are forced to admit that the site exerts a powerful call upon the Beast.

The journey to this site is long and dangerous. It lies in a hidden, fertile valley in the northern reaches of the Holy Land. The valley is said to be a remnant of the Garden of Eden that God has allowed to continue to exist in memory of Abel and his pleasing sacrifice.

By all accounts, Ferals who find their way to the place experience something unique. The Beast rages at first, remembering God's curse. Then it becomes calm, and the pilgrim feels the perfect balance between the Beast and the faculty of reason that is our ultimate goal — perhaps for the first time ever.

Sadly, it is impossible to remain in this place. Although it is lush and full of game seemingly ripe for the hunt, it is said that no beast can be caught. They are too swift and cunning. But no Cainite who visits feels the need to hunt, and many do not return, simply remaining in a state of bliss until they slip into torpor.

This tale comes to me from a Feral named Job, who is the only guide to this site, and the greatest of the Wardens. Job has never entered the valley, but he claims to have watched numerous Ferals enter and to have heard their tales when they have left — those, of course, who had the will to leave.

Ennoia's Theatre

It is said that when Ennoia left the Second City, she wandered for 40 years in the wilderness, until she was satisfied that she had mastered her Beast. She then emerged and began to teach the beliefs and doctrines of the Road of the Beast to her fellows — at first, her Gangrel clanmates and eventually, to any Cainite who would listen.

It is also said that the place where she gave her first lessons was a small amphitheater on the outskirts of Athens. Tonight, it is a small ruin that is sometimes used by mortal playwrights to show their works. It is somewhat dilapidated but the structure holds.

The amphitheater has become a place of quiet pilgrimage, especially for Lorekeepers or those who wish to become so. To sit and meditate on Ennoia's lessons, even while watching a performance by a troupe of mortal performers, is a lesson in itself. In each mortal lies a seed of the Beast, and their plays, though they do not seem to realize it, often teach lessons we can benefit from. What is the tale of Medea but the story of a woman who could not control her Beast and was eventually brought low by it?

We can only aspire to reach Ennoia's level of control over the Beast, but by retracing some of her steps and watching the stars and listening to the panting of the Beast, it is said that insight comes more easily.

The Warden who watches over this site is Helen, a young Lorekeeper. She is well versed in the philosophy of her mortal ancestors and has achieved considerable insights into the nature of the road. She and I enjoy an irregular correspondence, which I believe brings great wisdom and other benefits to us both.

The Great Mosque at Córdoba

The tale of Shabaqo the Nubian is well known to most Ferals. Once a follower of our road and a mighty warrior, Shabaqo took up with the Cainite Sultan of Córdoba and abandoned the Road of the Beast in AD 1005 to adopt the ways of Islam. He specifically repudiated what he called his "bestial" behavior as a great sin that only the mercy of Allah could forgive.

The place of this conversion was the great mosque in Córdoba, once the finest such building in the world. It is the destination of many a pilgrim's journey, but it has seen better days.

For Ferals who come to the mosque, the pilgrimage is well worth the effort. Instead of a feeling of peace, the pilgrim feels the Beast rising up in outrage and indignation. Ferals who venture here understand the great error of Shabaqo and feel assured that their path is the correct one.

I have heard that some few foolish Cainites have been overcome by their indignation and sought Shabaqo out. This is unwise. Despised though he may be by the Ferals, he was Embraced centuries before the birth of Christ. If he is to be brought to justice for his insult to us, it will not be at the hands of an enraged neonate.

The Ruins of Bjørn's Long House

On a small outcropping overlooking the fjords of Denmark lies a patch of burnt ground and the ruins of a long house. This is the place where Bjørn made his last stand.

Bjørn Svensson was a Gangrel and a follower of our road. He kept the old ways and spent his summers raiding the lands to the south. He was Embraced, by most accounts, toward the end of the eighth century and left to fend for himself. He quickly adapted to his condition, mastered his Beast and redoubled his efforts, but he directed them this time at the Catholic Church and its spread. He was unwilling to allow its poison and weakness to spread and infect his people, so he dedicated himself and his war-band to its destruction.

Eventually, he made too many enemies. The Ventrue sent emissaries to convince him to cease his campaign. He laughed. The Lasombra sent assassins to stop him. He returned the assassins' ashes to their masters.

Finally, the Ventrue retaliated. They tracked Bjørn to his long house and used mortal retainers to fire it. Bjørn was protected in the ruins, and when he emerged, he fought his last battle.

He led his war-band out against his enemies. Although greatly outnumbered, they fought gladly. Although they knew they would perish, they let loose their Beasts and slew their foes until the bodies were piled high.

But the Ventrue had planned carefully. They used a herd of mortals to thin the numbers of the war-band and destroy the weak and wounded. Then they allowed a number of their knights to ride into the melee, slaying all but Bjørn.

Alone and surrounded by the bodies of his war-band, he bellowed his challenge. The Ventrue were determined to break his spirit, but his Beast only raged the harder. Roaring his defiance, he leapt into the midst of the Ventrue, intent on slaying a path through their ranks and making his escape.

It was not to be. Though he laid about him on all sides with his ax, it availed him nothing. Overcome by numbers, he was hacked to pieces and his remains left for the sun. The ruins were left as a warning to all and are under guard by the local Cainites, but many young Ferals, especially those dedicated to the Path of the Savage, come here. They claim to be able to still hear Bjørn's Beast howling in defiance at its enemies.

Desirable Regions

Some places are better for the Ferals than others. In some cases, this is because the hunting is plentiful and easy. In others, it is because the land is wild, though this often makes hunting more difficult. Most such places have been claimed, but our domains are shrinking. As the princes and their enemies politick and scheme and Embrace new individuals in a quest for allies and short-term advantage, hunting grounds become scarce.

I am certain that this foolishness will come back, in time, to haunt those who play the games of politics. In the meantime, we all must suffer as the mortal herd expands its sprawl and cultivation into our wildernesses and as the new Cainites try to find places to claim as domain. I believe that my own homeland of Iberia is a prime site for this. If the *Reconquista* is successful, there will be much room for new domains to be claimed. I would advise all my fellows who wish to carve out a domain for themselves to travel south and partake of the bloodshed.

Iberia

Iberia is the land of my birth, and I remember with fondness the beauty of its landscape by day. The broad plains are ideal for hunting of all kinds, and its mountains and streams are abundant with wildlife and game.

More to the point, the Christian nations of Europe have committed themselves to the *Reconquista*, and, knowing the determination and fierce warrior pride of the northern nations as I do, it is surely just a matter of time until the Arabs and Berbers are pushed from our shores forever.

Many ancient Cainites roam this land, dating from the days of the Roman Empire and before. A number of Gangrel inhabit the central plain as well. Some are taking part in the *Reconquista*, but most are unconcerned with the doings of



Christian, Muslim and Jew. Many of these Gangrel follow our road, as it favors their simple existence. They have begun to realize, though, that many Cainites are entering their hunting grounds with the intention of claiming permanent domain. I venture to say that Ferals of a warlike bent who make allies of these Cainites will have every chance of claiming and holding a domain from the lands that are to be claimed from the southern kingdoms.

The kingdoms of the north are also in a ferment. As mercenaries, crusaders and priests flood into the peninsula, they bring with them Cainites with all kinds of agendas. Followers of our road who prefer a courtly existence will find that the princes of Aragon, Navarre and Castile are very receptive to brash warriors who come to offer their strength.

The Holy Land

The reader may wonder at seeing the Holy Land listed as a place where Ferals gather. A religious war that will never be won rages, and the Cross and the Crescent are locked into a bitter struggle. The region is a cauldron of dissent and chaos. Assassins roam the streets at night, merchants ply their trade, and diplomats and soldiers and priests jostle for space as mighty armies clash.

In such turmoil, the hunting is rich. For a Cainite whose Beast simply craves bloodshed and carnage, I would direct them to the Holy Land. The killing does not stop when the sun goes down, and a mercenary has his choice of allegiances, if indeed he feels the need to adopt one. If the

Feral does not mind hiding in a city, the hunting never ends, and he can roam undisturbed.

Followers of the *Tariq el-Bedouin*, or the Road of the Nomad, dwell in these lands. The followers of this road share many beliefs and values with us, but do not be fooled: The Nomads are not your friends. Indeed, they are as cunning as we are, and to let your guard down if you meet them is to invite your doom.

The wilds of the region are far less hospitable than those of Europe, however, so beware if you mean to keep clear of civilization. The oases are small and far between, and it is rumored that packs of Lupines and stranger creatures roam the wastes. Strange, though, that werewolves could survive in the deserts, given that natural wolves stay close to the forests....

I need not say that the challenge of hunting such creatures, in their own homes, would be a great feat worthy of a mighty epic. I have heard of no Ferals who have undertaken such a task, but I am certain that our Lorekeepers would be only too eager to speak to any who return victorious from such an expedition.

Wales

Wales is still a relative idyll for followers of our road. The countryside is as untamed as our hearts, and the people are as devoted to the cause of their freedom as we are to the cause of the Beast. The population is relatively dense, which makes for good hunting, but werewolves hunt here as well. Do not intrude on their holy sites, for they guard

them with unmatched ferocity. I know not what they are guarding, and in truth, I care little, as long as they are left to it. I believe the Ferals of Wales share this view, for I have heard no stories of them hunting the werewolves. They seem content to let them be.

Of more interest to me are the fae, for I have heard tell they thrive in Wales. I have never hunted a faerie, but those who have tell incredible stories of enchantment and grave peril. Perhaps I will search Wales for such a creature one night.

As the campaigns against the English wear on, the native mortals feel pressure to grow crops and clear the forests to build fortifications and other structures. This, in turn, has put forth some difficulty on our Welsh brethren, but not much more than the march of civilization places on us in other regions of war and conflict. Still, I believe that this is one of the best places to settle, as the constant depredations of the English border barons keep the Welsh in a state of turmoil and make hunting all the easier.

Sites of Conflict

These last are places where we are under attack. It may be due solely to the conflicts brought on by the princes, or it may be due to an infestation of Lupines or faeries. Regardless of the cause, these are places where our road is in danger. If you wish to gain prestige among our kind, or to hone your skills as a hunter, then these are the places you should visit.

Some of them are home to werewolves. The Ferals who attempt to dwell in the moon-beast's domains are among the fiercest hunters in the world. They nightly match skills with nature's most dangerous killers, and simply surviving is a notable feat. Some of our number claim to have killed Lupines in single combat; others prefer to use their mastery of the Beast to assume the shape of a wolf and run with their packs. These madmen risk painful death should they be discovered, but those who try it claim to have the ultimate mastery over their Beast. I have never personally spoken to such a Feral, though I would relish the chance.

In other places, the pressures of civilization and conquest have resulted not in fertile chaos but in increasing order and regimentation as mortal nations fortify borders and bring areas under tight control.

Lithuania

Lithuania is a land where civilization has made little impact and where the people still follow the old ways — that is, they are pagans. The people are fighting a savage war against invaders from the west. The Teutonic Knights are determined to bring the Cross to the people of this land, even if they have to kill them all to do it. I admire their brutality and determination, even as I pity their misguided faith in the Church's teachings.

Some Cainites, mostly Ventrue, who wish to destroy the last pagan kingdom in Europe and claim it as domain aid the knights. The pagans have a great spiritual leader — the Krivê — who I believe is actually a Cainite. Ferals who claim to be guided by, or descendants of, older gods, have

joined the fight, to preserve the wilderness and strike back at the Church and crusaders they despise.

For a Child of Caine, the woods are wild and the nights long and dark. The peasants are fearful and superstitious, their overlords full of fear. Woodcutters, hunters, skimmers and more all roam the forests. This makes hunting easy, for such individuals often go missing, and it is assumed that they have run afoul of a wild beast in a moment of incautious activity.

Scotland

The Highlands of Caledonia are known for their rugged beauty and the ferocity of their inhabitants. This is just as true of the Children of Caine as it is for the Children of Seth. Followers of our road have traditionally held the highlands and kept them free from the worst ravages of civilization. The lochs are home to a number of small holy sites, and the few packs of werewolves who also claim the hills as home exist in a state of casual warfare with the Ferals that both sides have come to regard as unchangeable.

In recent years, however, the Toreador have been making a concerted effort to seize control of all Caledonia, I presume as a stronghold from which to launch schemes against Mithras and his domains in England. As yet, they are still concentrated in the cities, but they have begun making inroads into the Highlands, and I suspect they will not be easily dislodged.

The Highland Ferals are fierce, and they do not take kindly to outsiders, even those who come as allies. They have been betrayed before and are wary of those not of their own blood. But they are sore pressed, and any who demonstrate adherence to the Road of the Beast may find a cautious welcome in the Highlands.

Eastern Europe

The lands of Eastern Europe are a place of great unrest and political upheaval, not only for followers of the Road of the Beast, but for all the Children of Caine and indeed, the Children of Seth as well.

It is well known that the Gangrel chieftain Arnulf makes his home in these lands, and that he and his brood are struggling nightly against the spread of civilization that threatens to tame these once wild and forbidding lands. The tilled fields and established villages and cities are an affront that he intends to remove.

At first, Arnulf's strategy was simple: Harry the settlers and make the establishment of civilization precarious and difficult. His childer often aided him in these endeavors, as did others of his clan and road.

Arnulf has been absent in recent years, though his childer continue his work. Many would like to know where the ancient Gangrel has gone and what he is doing. The best place to begin such a search would be the wilds of Hungary and Transylvania. Many Ferals run wild and free in these areas, but the dangers are many, not least from the Tzimisce and Tremere who seem to have chosen this corner of the world for their ongoing conflict.

It is possible, if unlikely, that Arnulf is aiding one side or the other in this conflict, but I personally believe he has left the area and is looking for allies in his cause, not aiding another.

Black Forest

The Black Forest is home to one of the most feared packs of Ferals in all Christendom. The *Schwarze Rudel* (Black Pack) is led by the Nosferatu Gregor, a fierce hunter and warrior. I will speak more of his pack presently, for now let me tell you of their domain and why you might wish to travel there.

The Black Forest is home to a sizeable number of Ferals, mostly Gangrel and Nosferatu. The *Schwarze Rudel* claims most of the forest, but a number of smaller domains escape their notice, or so I am told.

The Ferals fight a war against the werewolves here, and they are slowly winning. The Lupines are being driven from the forest by Gregor and his allies, and unlike many other packs, the *Schwarze Rudel* welcomes recruits. The test of loyalty is as simple as it is effective. The new pack is taken on a raid against a werewolf coven. If the new pack fights bravely and survives, its members are trusted comrades.

Needless to say, not many survive this first test, but those who do soon become hardened hunters. The main danger, apart from the werewolves, is falling to the Beast. The Cainites of the Black Forest are notoriously lax when it comes to observances and pilgrimages. Likely, this is because they are in constant communion with the Beast — for how else could they survive?

Russian Steppes

The steppes of Rus are home to many of our ilk, and for good reason. Constant strife and the lack of a dominant ruler mean no shortage of good hunting.

The Tzimisce pillage these lands relentlessly, which keeps local rulers terrified and keeps their attention on the marauders who would steal all their flock, not the lone hunters who steal singly from it.

Many Ravnos also call these lands home. Some few of them follow our road, but most do not. Even those who do are difficult to trust. They are born tricksters, and their Beasts smack more of the cunning fox than the ravenous wolf.

The greatest danger, perhaps, is the creature called the Baba Yaga. Not merely a creature of myth, I have heard stories that she is in fact an ancient Cainite who makes her displeasure known to any who offend her. Fortunately, she seems to understand the needs of our kind, for I have heard no stories of her attacking or destroying lone hunters who take only what they need to sustain their existence.

The other great danger (apart from the Tzimisce war parties, which are easy enough to avoid) is the distance between settlements. This land is perhaps best suited to followers of the Path of the Nomad, for maintaining a permanent haven can be difficult, with small isolated communities and the suspicious outlook of the constantly besieged. If it is isolation and simplicity a Feral craves, he should make for the plains of Rus.

Paragons and Leaders

Elsa,

There is much of interest in the following. We must locate and interrogate the Cainites listed here who still walk the nights. Leonard and Chester Giles, in particular, pique my interest. Perhaps we should notify our chantries in the Low Countries and in England?

Xavier

Though each Feral must look to himself for guidance, we have our leaders and exemplars, those who best embody our beliefs and whose deeds guide us all. I have not had the good fortune to speak with many of these exalted few, but the reader deserves to know something of them. I will also write of our most notable packs and our greatest enemies — those who have abandoned our road.

Exemplars

Some Ferals have achieved great wisdom and mastery of our road. We look to them when we wish to see how our road should be put into practice night after night.

Ennoia

Supposedly the progenitor of the Gangrel clan, Ennoia is also widely reckoned to be the founder of our road. Even among those who do not claim descent from Caine's crime, to which Ennoia is linked by her years of company with him, she is revered as perhaps the first exemplar of our road and remains one of our central inspirations.

Ennoia focused much energy on spreading the Road of the Beast far and wide. She taught its ways to many of our kind and was responsible for carrying it to regions beyond the boundaries of Europe. After spending centuries learning about the Beast and its true nature, she was truly its master.

We revere Ennoia by learning her powers of the blood (some of which are still named for her) and by dedicating our hunts to her. Some still believe that she watches over us from the wilds. I do not give much credence to such stories. I do not deny, however, that such thoughts are attractive.

One of the reasons for our continuing fascination with Ennoia, I believe, is the purity we associate with her. She learned at the feet of the bringer of our curse and added her not inconsiderable wisdom to his own, then shared it with those who would listen. There is little I would not sacrifice to meet with her for even one hour.

Charisse de Grey

Charisse de Grey is perhaps the most civilized Feral one could ever meet. A rarity among us, she was a Toreador who influenced our road greatly during her short unlife. She graced the "romantic" courts of southern France and northern Iberia for only a few decades, but her legacy is considerable.

Charisse was a child of privilege and was married to a noble lord in the Languedoc. Her life might have been joyous, but she

was raped and left for dead by crusaders slaying the Albigensian Heretics (and anything else in their path).

She was saved, after a fashion, by a local Toreador who had long been entranced by her beauty. She arose from the wreckage around her and fled to the wilds. For the first few years of her existence, she lived like a savage beast in the woods, mastering herself and coming to the realization that the Beast lies within the heart of every creature, alive or dead. She then reasoned that, if all creatures harbor the Beast, then there was no reason to shun their company or the places in which they dwelt. So she returned to the courts and pretended to the life she had before her ruin and Embrace.

She became the most beautiful, ruthless hunter of the courts we have yet seen. She regarded every fellow Cainite as either prey or a fellow hunter, and she soon gathered around her a circle of hungry predators who were only too keen to hear her lessons about the Beast and to see the world through the eyes of the wolf, hawk and hound.

By seduction, by politicking, by manipulation, she hunted and stalked. And when she had run her prey to ground, she pounced with a ferocity that was fearsome to behold. At first, she hunted only mortals who offended her, but soon this was not enough and she began to hunt members of the courts she visited. Eventually, she made sport of the Cainite Prince of Rouen. Her hunt was unsuccessful, due to the intervention, it is said, of an assassin sent to dispatch the prince. A terrible battle ensued, and it is said that the assassin perished and the prince was forced into torpor.

Charisse has not been seen in a court since, but the legend of her grace and courtesy, her letters, songs and poems are considered treasures of great worth.

Rumors surfaced some years ago about a beautiful savage in the Pyrenees between France and Iberia. Some say that this was Charisse, gone to the wilds to recover from her ordeal and to reconsider her place in Cainite society. Detractors of the city-dwelling Ferals claimed that even she had need to return to the wilds to purge herself of the corruption she had incurred in her time at court.

The matter was never resolved, as the savage was never found. None knows to this night whether or not Charisse still exists. I like to think that she does, but I admit that this is a wishful fancy as much as a reasoned conclusion.

Qarakh the Untamed

Few can claim to have met this fierce nomad warrior, and fewer still can claim to have shared insights about the Beast with him. He remains a figure of mystery.

I will tell you what little I have heard. Qarakh was a Mongol tribesman who was Embraced on the steppes of Russia and quickly adopted the Path of the Nomad. Hunted by his own people (for what reason, I do not know), he fled west, to Europe.

Qarakh is a mighty hunter. We all know of the ferocity of the Huns, as well as their great patience and savagery. Qarakh is no mere berserker, charging into combat heedless of the cost and prevailing by sheer force of ferocity. He is,

the stories tell us, a patient, relentless and utterly savage hunter. He cows his opponents and has an uncanny sense for their weaknesses.

In recent years, however, he has vanished from view. Few are so foolish as to believe that he has been killed. I believe that he is in hiding, perhaps building up a pack or some other force to strike a devastating blow against his enemies.

Leaders

These Ferals are those who currently give our road direction. We trust our instincts to carry us safely and strongly into the future. Nevertheless, we know that the world is changing and that direction is often needed. These are the figures to whom we look for such direction and clarity.

Leonard the Lorekeeper

Leonard was a quiet man when he lived, a Jew from Poland. He was a merchant and a collector of stories from the many seafarers who passed through his home, the port city of Danzig.

I have been corresponding with Leonard for several decades, and I know a little of his past. He decided to accompany a caravan on a trade expedition to see the worlds beyond his city, but a band of robbers set upon his caravan, and he realized that his caravan master was in league with the bandits. He was left for dead but Embraced that night by a figure who asked him if he wanted vengeance on those who had betrayed him.

Leonard rose and took his revenge on the traitor, tearing him limb from limb. His sire, a wandering Toreador named Fyodor, invited Leonard to accompany him, but Leonard politely refused. He then retired to the wilds to understand what he had become. He struggled to reconcile his Judaic faith with the Beast, but he could not. A Lorekeeper found him, and as she recited her tales, Leonard realized that she had found a way to avoid damnation by embracing the devil within.

Entranced, Leonard decided to devote himself to learning and telling these stories, and he began the wanderings that continue to this night, to learn all he could about the Beast and to pass it on to his fellows.

Many consider Leonard to be our finest Lorekeeper. His knowledge is incomparable, and his guidance is just and wise. He is a regular at our greatest festivals, and his rich voice carries a song without need for accompaniment.

Chester Giles

Chester Giles was a commoner by birth, a woodsman by trade and a Brujah by Embrace. None of these things were his choice. Becoming a follower of the Road of the Beast was, he says, the first important decision he had ever made for himself.

His sire, a Prodigal named Hugh Fitzhugh, claims he Embraced Chester because the clan was in danger of being overrun by educated scholars who had lost touch with the struggles and the plight of the commoner. I wonder if

Chester has disappointed him, for his first act was to retreat to his familiar forests and adopt the ways of the Ferals.

Rumors about Chester abound. I have never met him, however, so I will limit my comments to the most commonly told versions of his unlife. He moved with the First Crusade to the Holy Land, where he soon became one of the Saracen's night terrors. Eventually, a *Banu Haqim* assassin was sent to hunt him down and dispatch him. The Assamite, an honorable warrior named Massoud, announced his intention, and the two hunted each other through the streets and alleys of Jerusalem for a fortnight before Chester brought Massoud low. The battle between Chester and Massoud has been the subject of several of our songs. The Christian Cainites claim he and Massoud fought alone; the Infidels claim he had help, and that he ambushed Massoud.

Chester took Massoud's Beast, and he continues his hunts with redoubled vigor. It is claimed by some that he cares little for the cause of the holy Church, only for carnage and death. That would make him different from the crusaders themselves.

He has attracted a small following of Ferals. They appreciate his simple approach and his sensible alliance with the powers that be that has allowed him to do much as he pleases without fear of reprisal. I believe that he embodies much of the approach that will serve us best as the realms of man encroach on the wilds.

Wilhelmina

Wilhelmina is a fierce huntress of the northern lands. A Viking warrior-maid who served as one of Bjørn's shield-maidens, she survived the burning of his long house by being fortunate enough to be elsewhere.

When she heard of her war-band's death, she set herself to the task of revenge. First she slew the mortals who burned the long house. Then she began hunting down the Cainites who took part. This quest has taken her across the length of Europe, but she remains undeterred.

The lesson of Wilhelmina, and her importance to the road, lies in her uncompromising pursuit of those who wronged her. Many Cainites would not seek revenge against so mighty an institution as the Catholic Church, but the size of her quarry has only hardened her resolve to destroy it.

But I fear she has not been cunning enough, and the Lasombra who move within clerical circles are not short of cunning or ruthlessness, even if they do prefer to have others handle their killing. In the meantime, we all thrill to the stories of her latest triumph, and few Ferals would be unwilling to lend a hand in her great hunt.

Packs

Many hunters are solitary creatures. Some, such as wolves, do hunt in packs, and we Ferals draw our inspiration from the greatest hunters of the world. This means that we often gather in packs, whether for mutual safety or simply for ease of hunting. Some packs have managed to accrue a great deal of notoriety among the clans.

The Schwarze Rudel

The *Schwarze Rudel* is led by Gregor, a massive Nosferatu who, the story goes, was a Teutonic Knight when he lived. The pack inhabits the Black Forest and is locked in a struggle with the werewolves who live there. As I've said, they appear to be winning this war.

In his mortal days, Gregor was known for his temper and his brutality. Indeed, he earned many a rebuke from his seniors and was eventually imprisoned after an attack on a monastery he claimed was withholding tribute from his liege lord.

In what some say was an act of revenge, Gregor was rescued from his prison by a Nosferatu, who Embraced him then set him loose, alone and uninstructed, into the night. Gregor took quickly to his condition and soon mastered his Beast. He seems to have no interest in his clan or his sire, and he moved to the Black Forest after hearing of the werewolves who gathered there.

He quickly gathered a pack of like-minded warriors around him. His lieutenant, Loris, is a Gangrel from Sardinia, who was hounded from his native home, it is said, when an arrow from his bow went astray and killed his prince's favorite horse on a hunting expedition. Loris is the pack's chief tracker, and it is said he is a formidable shapeshifter, capable of running with wolves and (the legends say) even werewolves without being discovered. No one knows why Loris has thrown in his lot with Gregor. Sardinia is rich in silver, and it is said that Loris left with a great treasure, certainly enough that he could easily masquerade as a lord if so desired. Perhaps he simply loves the hunt.

I have heard different reports as to the size of the pack, from as many as a score of Cainites to as few as three. They gather regularly to hunt. They spend their time apart from each other in reflection or reconnaissance, as they search for clues as to the werewolves' whereabouts and devise the means by which to combat them.

Many have speculated as to what Gregor and the *Schwarze Rudel* might do once the Lupines have been eliminated from the Black Forest. It seems unlikely that their plan is to claim the forest for themselves, as they welcome new packs and foreign Cainites. Those few who survive their first hunt of a werewolf are considered to have proved their hardiness and are allowed to stay.

One thing is certain, though. Were Gregor to take his pack elsewhere, he would have little trouble recruiting new members or naming his price as a mercenary. Indeed, his fame has spread far and wide throughout Cainite society, and it is rumored that a number of princes and bishops have secretly approached him with offers of rich rewards in exchange for services rendered.

The Hounds of Iberia

The Hounds of Iberia are, I must confess, a pack whose motives and loyalty to the Road of the Beast I sometimes question. Nevertheless, they are nominally of our road, and their actions may have bearing on the fate of my homeland.

The Hounds have dedicated themselves to opposing the *Reconquista*. They are mostly Gangrel, Nosferatu and

Brujah with a number of *Banu Haqim*. All are Muslim by birth but Ferals by choice.

I say I do not trust them because of their close alignment with their faith. They claim to be simply defending their lands. They have members spread throughout a number of the *taifa* kingdoms in southern Iberia, but they meet, it seems, every few weeks to organize and conduct raids against their Christian foes.

Their claims, I must admit, carry at least a grain of truth. The *Reconquista* threatens the domains of all Cainites in Iberia, some of which have been held for centuries. But is it not convenient that they mostly raid the most devout Christians and rarely (if ever) attack Muslims, some of whom are actively betraying their fellows?

The leader of the Hounds is Abdul, a powerful Gangrel from Seville. Abdul, from what little intelligence I can gather, was a *mullah* Embraced by an equally devout Gangrel, who was disappointed that he turned to his Beast, not his God, for salvation.

The most troubling of them, however, is Jasmina, a *Banu Haqim* noted for her subtlety in planning and her savagery in attack.

The Hounds' ferocity is unquestioned, and surely their targets are worthy, but I find their motives suspect. For a true Feral, survival is the greatest cause and culture matters little, except as a source of pleasures unavailable elsewhere. I would like to know if they are being sponsored or manipulated. The *Banu Haqim* are the most likely, I believe, to be behind any such moves, and the presence of Jasmina alone makes their involvement all but assured.

JOINING A PACK

Not all Ferals choose to join packs, but for those who do, it is a moment of great import. The advantages of pack membership are great, but so are the responsibilities.

Being surrounded by other followers of the Road of the Beast can be a great boon, especially if the pack contains a Lorekeeper who can keep the members entertained and educated with his store of legends and lore. Our ways are unique and often misunderstood by those who do not share our perspective. Running with a pack removes this problem. And many Ferals are not particularly solitary by nature. Some join coteries of varying roads and clans and find companionship therein, but such individuals still need time among their own kind. I believe that membership in a pack is a great boon.

Yet, I must mention the disadvantages. It can be too easy to succumb to the Beast if a pack is undisciplined and lacks a strong leader who understands the nature of his own Beast and the tenets of our road. The pack should be a way to gain understanding and companionship, not an excuse for endless savagery.

Each pack chooses its own members as it will. My best advice is to find a pack you wish to join and approach a member. You will most likely be sorely tested, but as a pack member, you will be entrusted with the unives of others, so the trust of your packmates must be fairly earned.



Apostates

Finally, I come to those who have abandoned our ways. These apostates are remembered well, for they show the perils and weaknesses that beset us all. The Beast has no patience for doubt, so it is easy to fall from our road. The lessons of the Apostates show us the ways in which this can happen.

Shabaqo the Nubian

Shabaqo the Nubian is a figure we at once respect and revile. For many centuries, he was one of our finest, a mighty hunter with neither remorse nor, it seemed, weakness. But he betrayed his faith by turning away from the Beast and embracing Islam, claiming that he had committed monstrous crimes and that only the love of Allah could redeem his awful past.

Little is known of Shabaqo's mortal life, save that he was a warrior priest in distant lands long before the birth of Christ. He served his gods faithfully and was eventually given the Embrace following a great battle.

The Embrace shattered his faith, and he wandered for centuries, coming to terms with his new self and learning the lessons of the Beast. He engaged in rigorous debate and was always searching for new lessons and new means of enlightenment. His wanderings took him far and wide but eventually, they undid him. He came to the city of Córdoba at the height of the city's glory and converted to Islam.

For Ferals everywhere, the shock was tremendous. Shabaqo was one of our great exemplars, a magnificent hunter and an implacable foe. His control over the Beast was formidable but he was somehow convinced that only Allah could save him from damnation. Our anger at him stems mostly from his weakness. Many of those who followed his example or sung his praises now feel that their own judgment has been called into question, making them feel that they have been taken for fools.

Shabaqo remains at large, and packs periodically try to hunt him. None have succeeded, however, and I believe that none are likely to do so. Shabaqo is still one of the greatest warriors in Europe, and to search for him in his adopted homeland of Iberia is great foolishness. His Beast will overcome him in time, then we will hunt him down and he will die without ever understanding his error.

Wilfred the Apostate

Wilfred's crimes are worse than Shabaqo's in many ways, but he has made powerful new allies and is well protected by them. It is to my everlasting shame that I corresponded with him for a while.

Wilfred was an English monk, Embraced by a Nosferatu allied with Mithras of London. A man of great learning and great passion that he kept tightly controlled when he lived, Wilfred refused to be overcome by the passions of the Beast and quickly adopted our road. I believe, in retrospect, that he never entirely let go of his faith in the Christian God, but reasoned that he needed to follow the Road of the Beast until he had mastered his impulses.

During this time, Wilfred was a great scholar of our road, and he participated enthusiastically in our rituals. He also corresponded with a number of his more learned companions — myself included — and his insights were acute.

Yet, his letters and appearances suddenly stopped. Rumors began to circulate that he was following the Road of Heaven. It was said that he had mastered his Beast and turned his face to God.

I believe that he fell to some terrible temptation and lost faith in his own strength and ability to control his darker impulses. So he turned to the faith of his mortal days for strength and succor.

Wilfred is not actively hunted at the moment, but I am greatly concerned that his correspondences and diaries should fall into the wrong hands. Allies among England's Cainites protect him, but I believe action must soon be taken to prevent our road being persecuted.

Ferals and Cainite Society

Elsa,

Much of interest in these notes. I believe they give many insights into how best to control and manipulate the Ferals. I am sure we will be able to turn this information to our advantage.

I am equally sure that, were his fellow Ferals to discover these writings, Rodrigo would soon meet his end. We must find him and persuade him to tell us more....

Xavier.

Alone among the other Children of Caine, we accept our desires and our true nature. This makes us at once objects of fear, loathing and envy.

Some fear us because they believe us to be little more than berserkers, ready to fly into frenzy at the slightest cause. Like an untamed beast, they watch us carefully and rarely speak in our presence except to mutter meaningless pleasantries and exchange pointless gossip.

Others loathe us, for they do not see a way to fit us into their plans. They believe we are unreliable allies who do not sufficiently understand the intricacies they hold so dear. Indeed, many think that their plots and schemes are vital to the survival of our race and regard us as dangerous fools who give not a thought to the long term. In this second assessment, perhaps they are correct. The future will take care of itself if we trust our instincts and act accordingly. The former opinion is only partly wrong. We are not fools, but we are indeed dangerous.

And, many Cainites do indeed envy us. Other vampires entangle themselves in pointless schemes, but we avoid the plotting and manipulation that infect our race. We are at peace with our divided nature, and we strive to accommodate all our needs and requirements. This makes us free — free of political ties and most importantly, free of the constant fear of the Beast. That is a fear we face and master, so it loses its hold over us.

A Place to Call Home

So what is our place in Cainite society? Where do we fit it? We are not outcasts, after all; those in need of a strong arm and an uncluttered conscience often turn to us when times are desperate. We can command a high price in such matters, and rightly so.

Outside the Courts

Outside the reach of the courts, in the wilds, we and not the Scions rule. Ours is the path of harmony with the Beast, and many of our adherents prefer to stay as close to the Beast, and as far from the cities, as possible.

Most of our Gangrel members inhabit the wilds, matching their wits against Lupines and faeries and even the bands of mortals brave enough to attempt to hunt the hunter. Our Wardens roam the Earth, searching for new places to hunt and new places to celebrate our rituals and host our gatherings. They also bring news of the world, and especially of new and unknown dangers that may take the uninformed unaware.

We do not make friends easily, but we understand the value of allies. All Cainites know that no Feral will allow his domain to go undefended or his allies to go un-avenged. We are regarded as good neighbors, if you like. It is not our way to seek power and influence once we feel we have claimed sufficient territory, but neither will we suffer others to take our domain from us. I believe we are respected, and that is exactly what we want. Friendship is a fickle thing, based on pretty words and false deeds as much as on trust and genuine fellow feeling. Respect, on the other hand, is held no matter what the other thinks of you, so long as your actions make you worthy of it. And no Feral would act in such a way as to be unworthy of respect, so it is there that we place our trust.

Our Lorekeepers are equally respected, for they bring news of the world to those who might not otherwise hear it. Their penchant for collecting stories means that they often know what is going on in distant lands. For this reason, Lorekeepers are often made welcome in the domains of others. Ferals generally allow them to pass through their lands without interference, usually only demanding a song or poem as tribute.

Followers of other Roads who exist in relative isolation are usually also receptive to traveling Lorekeepers. Their news and information is always valuable, and if the Lorekeeper can be coaxed into performing a lay or reciting an epic, a memorable night's entertainment is in store.

Within the Courts

The situation is much different once one enters the cities and courts. They are not, by and large, our natural place, but some among us — myself included — believe that the growth of cities will continue, no matter what efforts we make to prevent it. This growth occurs at the expense of the wilds, so it is simply a matter of waiting to be driven from the forests.

This does not mean that we have abandoned our traditional ways, nor our love of and need for the wilds. It simply means that we are wise enough to understand that

those in the courts are extending their grasp over the wilds, however indirect it might seem at the moment. If we wish to keep our domains secure and ourselves free from subjugation to the wills of others, we should hunt our enemies and our potential enemies in the places where they gather.

Once a Feral's road becomes known to members of a court, it is common for reactions to the Feral to change. A certain distance or wariness may well creep into their dealings with the Feral. As I noted earlier, civilized Cainites often fear us and not, I might add, without good reason.

With the fear and envy of other Cainites in mind, we try to keep some distance between ourselves and the machinations and maneuverings of the court. This is not always easy, and I will admit that "civilized" Cainites, especially among the High Clans, are often skilled and subtle manipulators who seek to use us in their schemes. Many among us, in all likelihood, would not even realize that they had been made pawns.

The best approach is simply to trust one's instincts. If a courtier seems honest and straightforward and instinct says to trust him, then so be it. If a courtier seems dishonest and manipulative, treat him as such. Any request that makes one feel uneasy or uncertain should be refused (or at least investigated further before one accepts). Because of our reputation, one rarely risks giving offense with such a refusal, and rarely risks making an enemy.

The courts house some skilled manipulators who are experts in feigning trustworthiness, though. How can one know whom to trust, especially when all seem honorable? The best answer, I believe, is to let the Beast decide. When a Feral is uncertain of another Cainite, many ask their potential ally to accompany them on a hunt. When hunting, the Feral sets the Beast loose. Then the Cainite's true face will be revealed and their worthiness may be judged. I suppose that some schemers might hone their skills and their control of the Beast, but such individuals — unafraid of the Beast, in control of it and certain of their physical power — are exactly the Cainites we respect and wish to ally with.

It is impossible, of course, to avoid all entanglements. We move among our cousins so that we can maintain control over our destinies. The best way to do this is to give loyalty and respect only to those who truly deserve it. Revenge and retribution for slights, betrayals or attacks should be taken, regardless of what the rest of the court, or even the prince, might think. We do not exist at their beck and call, and we should not apologize for our actions. Strong retribution will only make others think twice before attacking a Feral or drawing one into their schemes. This is how it should be.

The Traditions of Caine

The princes claim they are bound to uphold the Traditions of Caine. These Traditions are explained to all neonates who are brought before a court, but as most followers of our road do not participate in the courtly dance — and as many have had no introduction to the Traditions of our kind from a sire or mentor — we often violate the Traditions simply by

ignorance. While the forest-dwelling Feral might well claim that no prince holds dominion over him, the princes hold and keep power for a reason, and woe betide the prideful Feral who blusters too loudly in the domain of Mithras or Lord Jürgen.

The First Tradition: Covenant

Most followers of our road hold that the First Tradition speaks a fundamental truth of our existence. We carry the Curse of Caine, which is the Beast within. In truth, it is both punishment and blessing, as the Beast gives us our existence and the power to hunt.

Some among us, however, claim that the Traditions of Caine are but a fiction used by the princes to legitimize their own power. These Ferals say they respect only strength and only princes who hold their domain through rule of might and personal command, not through reliance on false traditions. Others claim that Caine shunned all cities and civilization after the disaster of the Second City, and the undead should follow his example, wandering as Caine did and holding no permanent haven.

And some of us claim the story of Caine is false in every detail. These are our brethren, mostly from the far north and east, who claim that any connection between our race and the religion of the popes is a jest in poor taste indeed. They say that, if Caine truly exists, then they would revere him as the most powerful of our kind, not as a hope of salvation or redemption.

The Second Tradition: Domain

We Ferals wholeheartedly support the Second Tradition. Indeed, holding a domain or hunting ground is a fundamental concern for all of our road's adherents. A hunter is as nothing without a hunting ground, and the ability to hold a domain is paramount as the War of Princes reaches new heights.

This may be one of the reasons why I have heard reports in recent decades of small packs of our brethren forming to collectively protect a large domain. In this way, I suppose, each member is able to claim enough space to hunt, while drawing on the strength of the pack to defend it.

We do not tolerate intruders in our domains, of course. If an interloper can identify himself as a Warden or Lorekeeper, then he will be allowed to pass through unmolested. But other travelers are not welcome, and the nights of Ferals allowing strangers to hunt in their domain, even if only for a few hours, are gone.

We city-dwellers have much smaller domains, of course, but do not think that we guard them any less jealously. As more Cainites rise to stalk the nights, and as they crowd into the cities, defending an urban domain becomes increasingly difficult.

The Third Tradition: Progeny

We have little respect for this Tradition, but we do not often Embrace anyway. Still, to allow a prince to tell us who, how and when we may sire is too great an incursion on our actions. We Embrace who we will, when we will.



In practice, this is rarely a problem. My own efforts notwithstanding, we do not spend much time proselytizing, and we are generally uninterested in creating large broods. The Cainites who do so generally wish to be protected from rivals and think that creating a cadre of childer to protect them is the answer. I need not say how often jealous childer band together to destroy an overbearing sire.

When a follower of the Road of the Beast does wish to Embrace a mortal who is deserving of our great gift, he does so without hesitation or consultation. The childe is usually then left to fend for himself for a time. If he cannot, he was not truly deserving of the gift in the first place. If he holds up well under the newfound challenges of unlife, his sire sometimes returns and instructs him on his new path.

The Fourth Tradition: Accounting

We claim responsibility for none save ourselves. To allow oneself to be held accountable for the actions of another would be antithetical to our ways. This is why we do not give our childer much, if any, help. They must find their own way, and any faults or crimes they commit must clearly be of their own making.

This is not to say that we never help our childer, or that we abandon them to the machinations of the princes. Arnulf's brood lends him aid and supports his crusade against the enemies that threaten us all, but they do so as respected equals, not as servants for whose actions he is responsible.

The Fifth Tradition: Silence

We feel no need to hide ourselves from the mortal herd. We do not fear them, nor do we share the princes' fears. We do, however, act in accord with this Tradition, but for reasons of expediency. The wolf does not hide his nature from the sheep, but neither does he parade himself about the flock before the hunt. To do so would be foolish, and would only alert the shepherd and make the hunt more difficult.

I do not deny that some few of our number enjoy such sport, terrifying their prey before striking. But to do so is not normally our way, and it is surely a sign of degeneration.

The Sixth Tradition: Destruction

This Tradition is a farce, pure and simple. It is a tool, used by princes in a vain attempt to protect themselves from enemies they are too weak to fight, or too afraid to confront.

That is all. We hunt as we will. None shall gainsay us that right.

The Dogs of War

Since the fall of Constantinople, the princes have been at war with each other. The death of Michael's Dream has shattered their foolish belief that Cainites could build a sanctuary or new world that Cainite and kine could share. Fools! We already share the night, as the wolf shares territory with the flock of sheep. We take our prey when our hunger demands. It is good that the Dream has been shattered—perhaps now the Children of Caine will awaken to the truth.

Michael built from the wrong principles. He wanted Cainites to master the mortal world before we had mastered ourselves. He did not understand that the Beast is what brings us low, even as it raises us up. Only by mastering the Beast can we achieve the stability of the soul needed to then build a stable society. As a result, his Dream was a castle built on shifting sands, and when its foundations—the childer and allies he depended on—succumbed to the uncontrolled urges of their Beasts, everything came undone.

The Cainites of Constantinople were unable to even curtail the mortals who came to their city with dreams of slaughter and booty. They were unable to convince the Cainites of other cities to come to their aid or to prevent the destruction in the first place. If the greatest work of the greatest Cainites cannot bring about this goal, then surely it is a fool's task.

The princes, in their blindness, are making the same mistakes as Michael, but they are making their decisions in a panic. Even though Michael was wrong, he built his dream carefully and slowly. The modern princes are building too quickly, and their dreams will fade and fail with equal speed. This is why our road, with its small ambitions and its focus on the self, is the only true way forward for our race. But we cannot ignore the world we share with others.

We are often called upon to choose sides. Do we support the prince or the pretender? Do we wish to join the cabal plotting against the Bishop? Do we surrender to politics or do we give in and become what we despise?

These are vexing questions, and I know of no easy answers. I do not believe it possible to remain at court and yet be unaligned to the various factions that are hatching their schemes. If we wish to avoid these political choices, then we must leave the cities and return to the wilds. There we are able to lead simple existences, surviving by our wits and the strength of our wills.

But as I said, I believe the days of the unfettered wilderness are drawing to a close. The princes wish to rule everything, the wilds included. They threaten our holy places, our sacred gatherings and our very domains. They wish our fealty and loyalty. At the very least, they wish to identify us as either friend or foe, for they do not believe in—and they will not allow—Cainites who are simply uninterested in their battles. More and more, they are forcing us all into camps variously for and against them.

I do not believe it is necessarily fatal to our road to join this war, as long as one is aware of what one is doing. Indeed, I believe it may be possible to use this war as a way to advance our cause, to gain recruits to our road and to make alliances and allegiances that will protect our interests and advance our goals.

In time of war, the Beast is allowed to run free. Despite what the princes might think, and despite their pretensions of being able to bring down a foe through political machinations alone, in the end matters always resolve themselves through bloodshed or threat of bloodshed.

That is where we can gain advantage. We can become the force behind the rulers. We can demonstrate, through our mastery of the Beast, that we are the troops to use, the assassins to send and the hunters to loose upon an enemy. We can also

show that our way is best. The more we are seen as holding the keys to immortal existence, the more Cainites will come to us for help and guidance. And the more Cainites who take up our road, the safer our ways and our places will be.

How then does one decide whose deadly weapon to become? The morals or beliefs of a prince or a plotter matter not. These are just the convenient lies and fictions they use to make their ambitions sound as if they are for the good of all. In truth, Cainites only seek power for its own sake. If helping some, or hurting others, is the way to gain power, then that is what will be done.

So one should observe one's fellows and learn about the most powerful among them. But remember, in political circles, power may take other forms than personal might. A web of allies, well-advanced plans, even influence among the kine can all make substantial contributions to an individual's power when fighting a political battle. So we choose carefully, and we choose the strong. The weak are the snakes who will betray their allies at the first setback. This is a trap that snares many Ferals. Complex plans and networks of spies and informers are the hallmark of the betrayer. Their plans too often go awry, despite the care with which they have been constructed, because of the unreliable nature of the plotters and their minions. It is certain that someone will lose control of their Beast and bring the scheme into great peril, if not immediate failure. Best to follow simple plans laid down by strong individuals who are unafraid to take direct action against their enemies.

I believe that leaders such as these should be approached equally directly. Fealty should be offered for a price. Loyalty is the most valuable gift a Feral has to offer, and its value should be made known at the outset. To ask for nothing in return is to say that you place no value on your service. A Feral should drive a hard bargain, demanding certainties and promises. Then, the Feral should demonstrate his ferocity and not shirk his duties. That way, when the leader's plan comes to fruition, the hardy ally will be free to claim the benefits and rewards that are his due.

And if an ally's plan comes to naught, I do not believe that running and hiding is always wise. The bold Feral presents himself to a former foe and offer his services. It is wise, of course, to arrange an escape beforehand. But if the Feral has earned his former enemy's respect as a loyal and bold fighter, there is no reason why a wise victor should not accept his service. After all, do not other Cainites specialize in shifting allegiances and understand the value of an ally who has already proven that he will not abandon his allegiance until its defeat has been ensured?

The Wolves at the Door

Those who are aware of our presence in the courts and cities may wonder how we keep ourselves free of the entanglements and corruptions our brothers who dwell in the wilds so fear. Indeed, some among those who shun the cities claim that we are not "proper" followers of the road at all, or that our practice of it is somehow debased. The very fact that I am writing this account would not please many

of them, believing as they do that writing is just another symptom of the weakness of civilization. If a tale cannot be remembered, they believe, it is not worth retelling. If words are written, they will be seized and manipulated and used against us.

They are wrong, of course. We are so little understood by the courts that we are often placed in danger for no reason. "Blame the Beasts," the court often cries, and it is unclear whether they refer to the Gangrel or to the Ferals, or whether in fact they bother to draw a distinction.

But the cities are growing and will not be stopped. We must learn to adapt and make them our new wilds. Indeed, I have found many unique pleasures for the Beast in my hunts through the city, many new challenges and satisfactions that have brought peace to my soul. Does not the wolf seek out its prey where it is most plentiful? Does not the task of outwitting the shepherd make the eventual kill all the more satisfying?

It is in our interest to make others realize that they follow foolish roads. Our very presence at court shows them that we are not mindless savages and our mastery of the Beast shows them that we, alone of all other Cainites, walk the true road that will preserve our existence. Most of the Cainites we deal with are far too involved in their own plans to pay us any heed. (Indeed, many dismiss even those of us who attend court.) There are those who watch us closely indeed, though, and who may come to appreciate the wisdom in our way, in time.

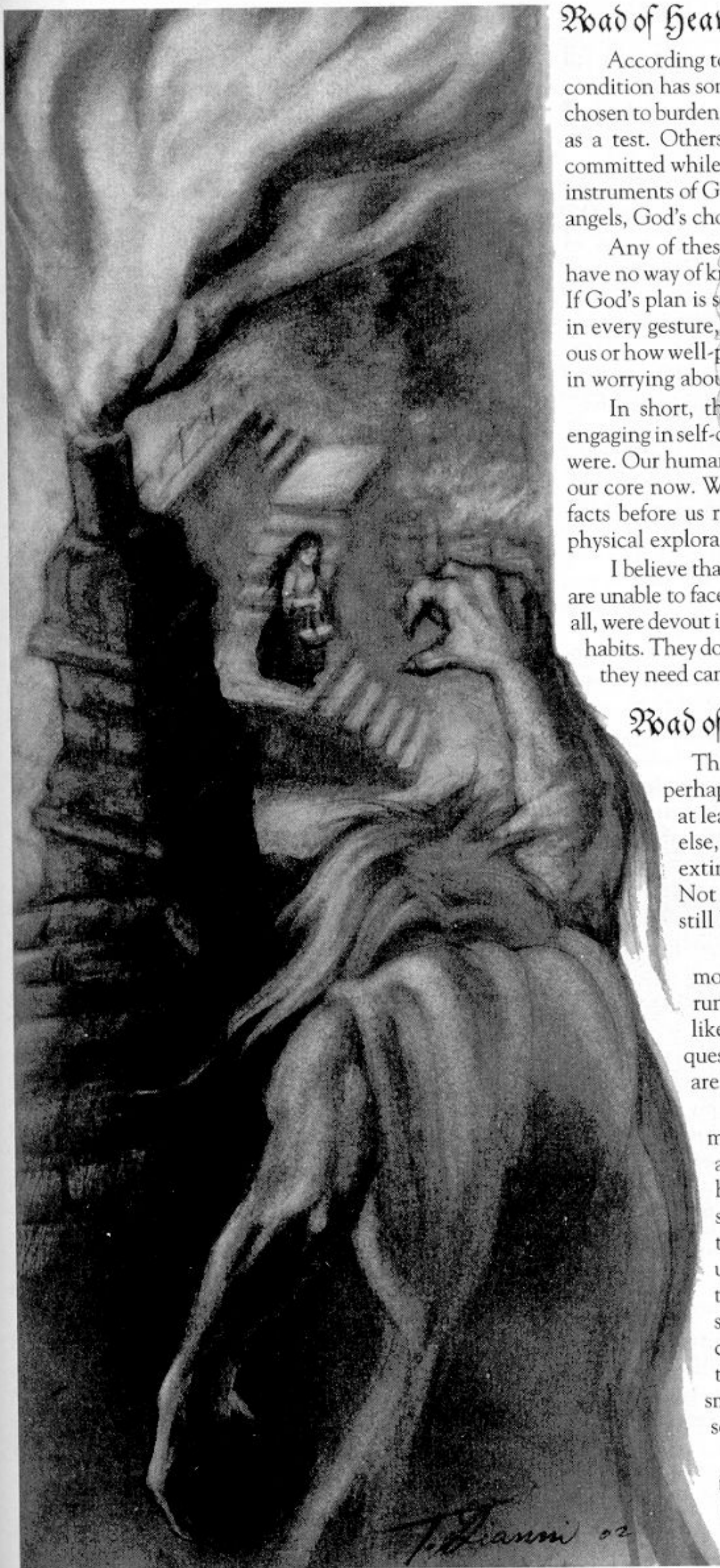
The relationship to the court is of great importance, particularly to the prince. Many princes are worthy of respect. After all, they hold power and influence over a pack of scheming Cainites who are all seeking to advance their causes without a care for the cost to others. Such princes should be supported as a loyal pack member supports the pack leader.

Other princes are weak, mere puppets for unseen masters, who may or may not be present at court. These should be paid all courtesy but given neither trust nor respect. A strong prince can be dealt with. A weak prince cannot give promises or assurances unless his masters approve, and without knowing who those masters are, how can his words be trusted?

And for those of us who move among court, the hunts that are to be had are magnificent. We take little joy in politicking but find much in the hunt for a favor or a prized mortal. I have even heard tell of secret packs of Ferals who hunt the members of their court and take their Beasts at hunt's end, but I know no more of this, and I would hope it to be a falsehood.

The Roads

We understand that not all Cainites are wise or strong enough to follow our road. We believe the followers of other roads to be misguided. In some cases, they are near to the truth, but in others, they are far from it. But we must relate to them, and here are my observations from my time at court with these Cainites.



Road of Heaven

According to the followers of the Road of Heaven, our condition has some divine purpose. Some say that God has chosen to burden us with the Beast and its attendant hungers as a test. Others believe we are being punished for sins committed while we lived, or that we have been made into instruments of God's wrath. Some even believe that we are angels, God's chosen messengers.

Any of these possibilities might be the truth, but we have no way of knowing, and God has not seen fit to tell us. If God's plan is so subtle, so unknowable that it is enacted in every gesture, every Embrace no matter how spontaneous or how well-planned, then there seems to be little point in worrying about it.

In short, the followers of the Road of Heaven are engaging in self-deception at best. We are not what we once were. Our humanity is gone, replaced by the Beast. This is our core now. We Ferals prefer to face the true, knowable facts before us rather than to delve into pointless metaphysical exploration or speculation.

I believe that the followers of this road are Cainites who are unable to face the realities of their nature. Some, but not all, were devout in life and have simply continued in their old habits. They do not seem to understand that all the purpose they need can be found in the arms of the Beast.

Road of Humanity

Those who walk the Road of Humanity are perhaps the greatest fools of all. The other roads at least accept that we have become something else, that the gift of Caine has transformed and extinguished our connection to mortal man. Not so these fools. They believe that they are still human, despite their condition.

Do mortals drink blood to survive? Do mortals fear the touch of the sun? Can mortals run with the speed of the hart or hunt by scent like the hound? How can anyone answer these questions truthfully and still believe that they are human?

Self-deception is a subtle force. I have met Cainites who admit the truth of these assertions and yet maintain that they are human nonetheless. These fools take their self-deceit even further. They claim that the Beast is some otherworldly force that urges them to commit monstrous acts. So they attempt to keep it locked away, occasionally permitting it some small release and comforting themselves with the pretty lie that, after all, no man is perfect, that the small sin is preferable to the great. They then seek penance through good deeds.

I can understand the gamekeeper taking care of his herd. But should the wolf starve himself because he feels that in his heart, he is a sheep?

Road of Kings

The Scions come close to true wisdom but sadly fall short. They believe — rightly — that we have been set forever apart from the mortal herd. They believe in force of arms and strength of mind. They strive to master the Beast, just as we do.

But their reason for seeking dominion over the Beast is that they see it as an impediment to their plans. They are like moneylenders, carefully calculating how much power to expend on a task, figuring the return and plotting their movements. The Beast is seen as an unwanted agent of change and chaos. They fear that it will slip its leash and bring their careful calculations undone.

Ultimately, the Scions have decided that their role is to rule over others. But they do not truly rule themselves. Instead, they try to lock the unruly faction, the unwanted claimant to the throne, locked away in a dungeon. But this bastard heir knows the secret passageways and the ancient paths. It despises what is being done in its kingdom and will seek to bring these plans tumbling down in ruins.

Road of Sin

Of all the roads, this one is both the closest to ours and the furthest from it. The Sinners embrace the Beast wholeheartedly and do not shrink from its urges. They act directly and follow their instincts but are not incapable of subtlety.

But they believe that sating their desires amounts to the full meaning of their existence. Perhaps they believe that God has abandoned them. Perhaps they are unable to resist the Beast and give in to it wholeheartedly. It matters not. If they were content to keep their decadence to themselves, they would be harmless, even amusing.

They do not, however. In their weakness, they succumb to the Beast. In order to keep it from taking over completely, they seek to amuse and pleasure it with ever more bizarre and decadent experiences. This satisfies the Beast and makes it hungry for more, so they trap themselves into a destructive cycle of ever-greater depravity.

They have not realized that one should never give in to the Beast. It is one thing to guide it, to direct its passion and fury as we do, and quite another to simply submit. The Road of Sin is a path to damnation, nothing more. Perhaps some of its followers could be saved if they were taught the Road of the Beast, but to be honest I doubt it. And making the effort would likely be more risk and trouble than it would be worth.

The Clans

Cainites commonly divide the clans into two groups — the High Clans and Low Clans (or at least, the High Clans divide the clans so). I would dispute these classifications, but nevertheless they are widely accepted. For convenience's sake, I will adopt them also.

The High Clans

As a group, the High Clans are not terribly well disposed toward our road. They are the clans who value order and hierarchy. With that said, many of the individuals from these clans take up the Road of the Beast in the belief that one must first master one's self before mastering others. The Brujah and Tzimisce, in particular, have an affinity for our road, which I believe we should encourage.

Brujah

My clan prides itself on its scholarship. Indeed, we are philosophers and warriors, and the Beast lies close to the surface in all of us. Why this should be the case is a mystery to us, but a surprising percent of our clan walks the Road of the Beast. The immediacy of our own Beasts constantly reminds us of the need to control our urges.

Those of us who follow the Road of the Beast have become our Road's most prominent and prolific scholars. We believe that by embracing reason and instinct in equal measure, we can approach the unity of the soul that Plato spoke of. Thus, we divide our time between the refined pleasures of the mind and of society and the primal pleasures of the Beast, always seeking to balance these aspects of our soul.

Those "Zealots" who follow other roads struggle endlessly to control themselves. It is clear to us, after many decades of observation and argument, that their souls are tormented.

When Cainite scholars gather, the Brujah debate matters of philosophy. In such cases, we Ferals put forward our case most strongly. For all our talk of revolution and radical thought, many members of Clan Brujah are pompous, windbag bantlings. We Feral Brujah are different. We state our case boldly. We answer questions directly. And if the clash of ideas becomes a clash of bodies, we are only too willing to demonstrate the benefits of our mastery of the Beast.

Cappadocians

Ah, the Clan of Cappadocius. I respect their knowledge and learning. I respect their wisdom and influence. I respect their dedication to their goals. But they are so cold! Not even the hot blood of a fresh kill can warm their icy flesh.

The Cappadocians would do well to learn from the example of my own clan. We too are scholars, but we are also warriors. We do not deny our violent urges.

The Graverobbers study death. Perhaps they should study the power within that gives them life instead. One does not learn to hunt by studying the kill. By the time the prey lies dead, the hunt is over, and what is there to learn? A hunter learns by stalking and striking.

I have only ever met one Graverobber who followed our road. She said that she had grown weary of her clanmates and their obsessions with corpses and graveyards. By denying the rage of the Beast within, she claimed, the clan was transforming itself into a collection of zombies.

Her clanmates thought her decision signified her ultimate failure and defeat, but she realized that it was a new birth. In time, she learned to balance reason and instinct, thought and passion. She lairs now in a remote mountain valley in the Alps. We correspond perhaps once a year, and her insights are most remarkable.

Lasombra

The Magisters are a clan of clerics and manipulators. The values they represent are almost directly antithetical to those of our road. We value individual action, trust in instinct and disdain scheming and manipulation.

Scheming and manipulation, however, are the Magisters' stock in trade. I know of no Lasombra who have turned to the Road of the Beast, though I suppose some might exist. If so, I am sure their brethren would consider them outcasts.

The Lasombra struggle for power within the Church and, through that institution, to influence both mortal and Cainite affairs. Many of them profess to worship the God of the Church. These Magisters are deluded fools. By trying to please God by suppressing their urges, they prove not that they are virtuous, but rather that they are hiding from themselves.

Others cynically hide their depravity behind the rituals and litanies of the Church. These are just as contemptible. Rather than face the truth of their condition, they pretend to be agents of the Devil, or Caine, or even of their own ambition. Never do they admit that the Beasts fuel their appetites and their hunger for destruction. They try instead to beat it into submission through ritual and distract it by scheming endlessly.

If you encounter a Lasombra, the best way to ruin his schemes is to coax his Beast into frenzy. In their pride, they rarely stop to consider what might happen should they give vent to their urges, and that shortsightedness can ruin them.

Toreador

The Artisans present an interesting conundrum. On one hand, their obsession with the great works of literature, architecture, painting and art marks them as effete snobs who care little for the natural world, so rapt are they in the works of man. On the other, they revel in the sensual pleasures of the kill.

Very few Toreador follow our road, as the majority of the clan (rightly) regard it as uncouth and uncivilized. Yet some few realize that the Beast is the source of the passion they feel for art.

Many Toreador could be made to see the virtues of the Beast if only it were explained to them properly. Many of this clan suppress a dangerous, vicious side. This comes, of course, from the Beast, and the savagery of a Toreador who has been provoked to frenzy is a terrible thing to behold. If we could but show them how to guide the Beast with a light hand they could be impressive Ferals indeed.

In the meantime, do not underestimate the usefulness of Toreador allies. Many of them appreciate the beauty of

the hunt and lust after a satisfying kill. Sharing these activities is a good way to show the essence of our road and secure their friendship.

Tzimisce

The Fiends have a number of followers of our road among them. This is understandable. They have close ties to their land, and they brook no challenge to their domains. They also have a great capacity for cruelty and decadence, and this sometimes holds them back from a true understanding of the Beast.

The only Feral Tzimisce I have met in my travels is a *voivode* named Zavid. I was sojourning in Paris, and Zavid was on an errand whose nature he would not disclose. We hunted together, through the slums of the great city. It was an unnerving experience. He transformed his shape into something akin to a great hound, but with elements of both ape and lizard as well. He slipped his Beast free of its shackles immediately and ravaged a number of peasants, drinking his fill and then reveling in the power the blood gave him. I was horrified but also fascinated. The Gangrel may assume the shape of the hunter, but the Fiends can apparently wear the face of the Beast itself.

We should encourage the Fiends to adopt our road whenever possible. Not only are they formidable hunters, but they have a strong power base in the eastern lands and are dedicated to halting the spread of the Church and its "civilizing" virtues.

Ventrue

Next to the Lasombra, the Ventrue are the clan with the least interest in the Road of the Beast. Ventrue are obsessed with temporal power, and their attempts to conceal that obsession beneath a veneer of *noblesse oblige* do not fool me. The Patricians most often Embrace nobles, crusaders and wealthy merchants. The only use most of them had for the wilds when they lived was as a source of power and perhaps game for hunting. Now that they are the Children of Caine, they have even less interest, seeing the wilds as dangerous lands full of Ferals, Lupines and faeries.

As with the Lasombra, I suppose there must be a Ventrue somewhere who follows our road. If I were ever to meet him, I would be delighted to test his control over his Beast. Never forget that this is the clan that extends its reach into areas that have long been denied them, the clan that seeks to bring order and the rule of law to every corner of creation. There is no place in their rigid, ordered world for us.

The Ventrue are not to be trusted. If one claims to be a follower of our way, test his commitment before giving your trust. If you have any doubts, drive him out.

The Low Clans

The Low Clans provide the bulk of the road's members, with the Gangrel and Nosferatu being the clans who most often embrace the Feral way. But in truth, the road is common among the other clans as well, as by and large

none of them place an excess of faith in formal hierarchies, and they stress the value of controlling the self ahead of the value of fitting in with Cainite society at large. The only real exceptions are the Assamites and the Tremere, both of which have a somewhat unique perspective on our condition.

Assamite

These warriors are fierce killers, and for that they have our respect. Some follow our road, but others follow an assassin's code.

This code must serve them well, for their patience is legendary. This makes them formidable foes. The hunter must often lie in wait for his prey and the Assamites are careful and methodical in their methods.

But behind their cold façade and their assassin's demeanor lurks the Beast. I saw one of these killers fighting once. She remained completely silent throughout the battle. She used the powers of the blood sparingly, but to terrible effect. Her control over her emotions was chilling. But I fear that her clan's rigid adherence to their strict code has robbed them of something. They revel in death and violence but deny the Beast its release.

This seems foolish and dangerous. The Beast's appetite can only be strengthened by bloodshed. Eventually, it will slip its leash, no matter how tightly it is held. Does not the hound need to be set free to bring down the hart?

I have been told that the Assamites call themselves the *Banu Haqim*, after their progenitor. Perhaps bowing before one's master helps keep the Beast in its cage. But no Cainite has a greater master than his Beast. They would do well to recall this.

Followers of Set

The children of Set are so close to true wisdom. They are not afraid of the urges their Beasts give them, but their obsession with serving their god blinds them to their true potential.

Their skills in the hunt are formidable. They have an uncanny, unnerving sense for their prey's weaknesses, and they know all too well how best to exploit them. But instead of destroying their enemies, or taking their prey, their love of pleasure brings them undone. They charm and beguile and seduce. They wish to bring more servants before their god, to weaken the cities and kingdoms so that they may more easily spread their influence and pave the way for his coming.

In truth, we rarely encounter the Serpents. Those few of our brothers who hunt among the courts and cities sometimes meet them. They keep their distance, not because they are threatened by the Setites, but because we Ferals are not interested in the things they offer. And we take no particular pains to hunt them down. If civilizations were to fall, it would not hinder us much. Followers of other roads feel differently, of course.

I believe that they follow their own unique religion, dedicated to the service of Set and the spread of decadence to prepare the way for his return. I know not whether this

is actually their goal. I do know that they weaken their own Beasts by giving themselves over to lives of decadence and soft pleasures. That is reason enough to avoid them.

Gangrel

Of all the clans, it is the Gangrel who are the most closely associated with the Road of the Beast. I believe that we Brujah have a special affinity with the road due to the particular savagery of our Beasts, but we also pursue affairs of the mind and are more than willing to move in civilized circles. The Gangrel disdain the works of man to a far greater extent, and you will find very few among the courts of princes.

Gangrel who follow our road run particular risks, however. Every time the Animals loose the Beast, their appearance becomes more bestial. Thus, after only a few centuries, a particularly vicious Gangrel may render himself virtually unrecognizable as anything other than a monster. This, in turn, makes it more difficult for them to move in social circles, further isolating them from the mainstream of Cainite society.

I fear that if the Gangrel following our road do not somehow take this situation under control, they will isolate themselves completely from their fellows. I doubt that many see this as a problem, but their greatest failing as a clan is not to realize that knowledge of other Cainites' doings gives one protection against them. I fear that this will one day come to haunt them.

Lhiannan

The Druids are largely a mystery to me, I must confess, but their ancient ways do not preclude them from following the Road of the Beast, almost to the exclusion of all other roads. Their ancient faith surely does not acknowledge Caine as their progenitor, but they are nonetheless what we would call "Cainites" and are subject to the whims and urges of the Beast.

I doubt that they would identify their ways with the Road of the Beast, but the fact remains that their practices are essentially the same and that some few Druids take part in our ceremonies and celebrations. They are fractious and territorial among themselves, and they have suffered terribly at the hands of the Church and its Cainite adherents. As opponents of the Roads of Heaven and Humanity, one could not ask for more willing or implacable allies.

The Lhiannan often gather in packs, and they have great knowledge of the wilds and their inhabitants, including the werewolves and the fae. One night I must seek them out. Their ancient wisdom on these and other matters should be recorded and shared, lest it be lost forever.

Malkavian

I confess to often being discomfited by the presence of Malkav's childer, but the acuity of their insights can startle.

Madness can be very effective at stripping away pretense and the veneer of civilization and "civilized" behavior. The Madmen are often given direct insight into their true nature. I believe that when Embraced, they stare into the eyes of the Beast, and the Beast stares back.

Madness is the result, but somehow they find the strength to resist its urgings. We all hear the call of our Beast, but I believe that in the case of the Madmen, the Beast does not whisper, it shouts. For this very reason, many find themselves falling into its arms. Some succumb entirely and are lost forever. These unfortunates are usually hunted down quickly and given the mercy of a quick death.

Others search desperately for a way to drown out the constant howling of their Beast, which gives them purchase against it, enough to resist its urgings and maintain some control of themselves. It also drives them to the extremes of madness that we all fear.

Nosferatu

I have little but respect for the Nosferatu. They wear the mark of the Beast on their skin always and stand apart from Cainite society as a result. Many of them turn to the Church for comfort and scourge themselves in an attempt to atone for the sin they believe has brought their cursed state upon them.

Others have more sense. They face the Beast every time they see their reflection or watch a stranger recoil. This drives them to embrace and understand the Beast, so that they may understand and master themselves.

I regularly correspond with a number of Nosferatu who follow the Road of the Beast. Their obsession with secrets and information makes them most worthy correspondents. Their condition and their affinity with animals gives them a number of unique insights into the Beast and our relationship to it. If nothing else, they have transcended the obsession with appearances that plague so many of our fellow Cainites. If the Gangrel are the heart of our road and the Brujah are its mind, then I believe that the Nosferatu are its soul.

Ravnos

I have never met a Ravnos, and I am in no hurry to do so. I believe some of them follow our road, and that among the Feral Charlatans, the Path of the Nomad is especially popular.

In many ways, the Ravnos should be consummate Ferals. They are largely nomadic by nature. They reject the rules of courtly society. They have a penchant for deceit and trickery that is used to mock the lordly and the pompous.

But I wonder if their often-lighthearted way of unlife allows them to truly understand the Beast. Contending with our nature is a serious task, and their relatively carefree existence does not lend them the will to truly master the self and yet give the Beast the release it craves.

Tremere

The Usurpers also present a puzzle for us. The Gangrel and Nosferatu despise them for their abductions and experiments, to say nothing of the venom the Tzimisce reserve for them. As the former two clans most often roam alone, in the wilds and without allies, they can be easy targets for the hunting parties sent to scour the wilds for servants and experimental fodder. A dark fate indeed awaits those unfortunate enough to fall into their clutches.

And as the Gangrel and Nosferatu they capture are most often followers of our road, they are usually regarded as enemies. But I believe they could become powerful allies. At the very least, many of their number, especially those who have been Embraced for their martial skills, not their abilities as mages, would be very interested in learning about our road.

The tight-knit structure of their clan makes it ideal for the Road of the Beast. As members of a giant "pack," they would test each other but also give full vent to their destructive urges. I believe it could bring an end to their vicious experiments. After all, if the Beast must sate itself with torture and vivisection, we can only expect their murderous behavior to continue. But if the Beast were to gain regular satisfaction then their faculty of reason would be better balanced.

Factions Baths and Offshoots

Elsa,

We must make it a priority to find and interrogate as many Wardens and Lorekeepers as possible. They hold much information that would be of great use to us. The Grey Hunters, on the other hand, could teach us much about the courts and how best to gain influence without compromising one's independence.

Xavier

The Road of the Beast, as I hope I have made clear, is not a group of supplicants bending their knee to a remote god. Rather, it is a collection of individuals whose essential beliefs are similar and whose similarities outweigh their differences. I have spoken often in these missives of "Ferals" or the more clumsy "followers of the Road of the Beast."

I have concentrated so far on the things that unite us, the beliefs and values and stories we hold in common. I wish now to turn my attention to some of the things that mark the differences between us. I have spoken of the Wardens and Lorekeepers and those Ferals, like myself, who live among our fellow Cainites in the princes' courts. I have mentioned the Paths of the Nomad, the Hunter and the Savage.

I will now explain each of these, that the reader might understand the great diversity we encompass. We are a changing group, and these are the constants in our existence. I have traveled much, and sometimes speak with our Lorekeepers and Wardens and with Cainites from lands far from the settled heart of Europe. But any sensible

Cainite is guarded, especially when it comes to discussing matters of such fundamental importance. What I offer are my observations and impressions, nothing more.

Wardens

The Wardens are the keepers of our sacred places and the guardians of the roads that lead to them.

Many of our number prefer to wander. Others feel drawn to a particular place of importance to us — a sacred site, a particularly rich hunting ground or an ancestral forest, for example. These individuals often become Wardens. They charge themselves with protecting and maintaining a site, or with patrolling the pathways that lead from one to another. Such pathways are a kind of common domain for those Wardens who guard and patrol them. Any may hunt, as long as he is known to a Warden. Newcomers are advised to travel in the company of such a Warden until their names and faces become known.

Wardens also serve as information-gatherers and sometimes couriers for such missives as might travel from Feral to Feral. Unsurprisingly, many Gangrel choose this station, as it allows them to lead simple existences far away from the worst excesses of civilization. Many followers of the Path of the Nomad are obviously drawn to becoming wandering Wardens, for similar reasons. They can perform work that brings them into contact with many Ferals, and so advance their understanding of the Beast, without the worries of constantly intruding on the domains of others.

If one wishes to become a Warden, one simply assumes the duties, patrolling a road or guarding a site (or joining those who guard an existing site). If the supplicant performs these duties credibly, eventually the word spreads and in time, the would-be Warden will be asked to lead a hunt. This marks one's acceptance as a Warden. Their network is no more formal than this. Many Ferals drift in and out of their ranks as their whims and travels dictate.

Their most important duty lies in controlling access to the sites they guard. We are not without enemies, and some of our places are containers of great power. Greedy Tremere mages, mortal wizards, Lupines and faeries (not to mention ignorant Cainites of all stripes) may wish to gain access to these places and use them for their own reasons. The Wardens have developed a number of techniques to determine the true intentions of the visitors they must deal with, but do not let the informal requirements for "membership" deceive: The job they perform is vital, and the dangers they face is considerable.

Lorekeepers

Lorekeepers tend to spend much of their time with our mightiest heroes and greatest exemplars, but this is only the most visible part of their duty. They also spend time in company with adherents of clans and all degrees of devotion to our ideals. The Lorekeepers are our priesthood, if

you will, and they spend much time not only telling tales but also in conversation and debate with followers of the road, probing and testing their knowledge and imparting it to others. Their verses and songs teach many lessons, from how to quiet the Beast when it stirs to how best to maintain some control over it when it rages. The timely words of a Lorekeeper have saved many a Feral from the Beast — or an excess of conscience.

Most packs seek to include a Lorekeeper among their numbers for just such a reason, as well as to have someone on hand to record their deeds. A pack can avoid many needless and wasteful challenges and losses of members to the Beast if a Lorekeeper is on hand to help members when they are struggling with their bestial urges.

Similarly, wise Ferals often seek out a Lorekeeper when they are struggling with the Beast, hoping that a wise word will help them. When we gather, for a night before and a night after the event, Lorekeepers remain in the area and receive many visits from those whose faith is in crisis or who feel the need for some direct advice.

As with the Wardens, the Lorekeepers have no formal initiations. One simply starts learning the songs and composing new ones. When we gather, songs and poems are offered up and those who perform them well are highly regarded. If a Feral learns much of our body of lore, and is often asked to perform at gatherings, he might be accounted a Lorekeeper.

Lorekeepers are not librarians, however. In order to increase their store of knowledge, they travel far and wide in search of new adventures, new insights and new stories. Often, a Lorekeeper will join or accompany a Feral pack or a band of adventurers in the hope that they will achieve sufficient prowess or notoriety to be worthy of a song or an epic.

Our earliest Lorekeepers were Northmen and Celts, but the romantic courts have produced a number of fine singers and poets in recent years. Some have attracted criticism from more traditional Lorekeepers for writing down their compositions. I understand the reasoning behind such complaints, but I am sure the reader will not be surprised when I say I cannot agree with them. Once a thing is written down, it is available to all, and understanding can more easily grow. Knowledge grants power, after all, and we must spread our knowledge or perish.

Lorekeepers often meet and exchange songs and tales, but they are a fractious and competitive lot, and many save their best new compositions for our larger gatherings. The competitions between them are marvelous events to behold, especially when a master Lorekeeper is unveiling a new composition and is accompanied by musicians, or when a notable bard sings without any accompaniment at all. All who are present are not only well entertained, but they may, if they listen carefully, learn of the goings-on elsewhere in the world, or gain some new understanding of their road.

Norse Gangrel Einherjar

The Gangrel of the north follow a road they call the Road of the Slain (*Via Einherjar*). This road is very similar to ours, and I have been debating with a number of my colleagues whether we should regard the followers of this road as fellow Ferals or not.

The Road of the Slain is a curious mix of religion and practical belief. As I understand it, like the Road of the Beast, the focus of the road is on controlling the Beast so that its rage and power may continue to grant us power and fortune. But unlike our road, which teaches that the Beast can only be mastered from within, by imposing one's will upon it, the Road of the Slain teaches that the way to control the Beast is to follow the traditions of their Norse heritage.

These include some customs of honor that many Ferals would scoff at. The *einherjar* do not believe in stealing or asking for help, neither of which a Feral would regard as sinful. Likewise, while some Ferals do boast of their prowess, the *einherjar* consider it a sacred duty to do so. Yet in other areas, they are remarkably similar to us. They abhor cowardice, are loathe to shirk a challenge and do not hesitate to kill when necessary.

The common link in all these is the practical nature of the Gangrel. After all, the founder of the clan pioneered our road, so it is only sensible that the ways of Gangrel in other lands should be similar.

More to the point, I believe we should make *einherjar* welcome at our rituals and gatherings and regard them as fellow Ferals as far as is possible. They are mighty allies, and their insights into the Beast, though somewhat different from our own, are no less valuable as a result.

Mongol Anda Nomad

Our Gangrel brothers report that a bloodline known as the Anda split off from their clan some centuries ago. Of Mongol descent, the Anda have recently re-entered Europe as they accompany the armies of the Huns.

I believe we can make common cause with the Anda, and that the similarities between our road and their religion will provide us with the bridge to do so.

Their way is called the Road of the Yasa (*Via Yasaq*, in Latin). My best translation is "Road of the Clan." This road has much in common with the Road of the Beast, and also with the Road of Kings. Not unlike the Road of the *Einherjar*, the Road of the Yasa places great importance on mastering the Beast and using its power to bring glory and success, but it does so by adapting some of the traditions and customs of the mortal culture from which it springs. These include protecting one's herd, family and honor, which to many Ferals seem too much like mortal ethos to be comfortable. However, the Anda make a point of not lingering in any one place, and so bear a curious resemblance to the Ferals who walk the Path of the Nomad.

Again, we should make the followers of this road welcome. With the proper inducements we should be able to direct the fury of the Huns so that it will do the most damage to our enemies and yet deny them complete domination of Europe. Ideally, we can weaken both sides sufficiently that we Ferals will be able to hunt freely and without impediment.

Path of the Hunter

Ferals whose focus lies almost solely upon their role as a predator follow the Path of the Hunter. Hunters are uninterested in finding a balance between the Beast and their other faculties, or in the insights into the soul offered by the presence of the Beast. They hunt, and that is all.

Hunters are generally solitary, and they usually dwell alone in the deepest wilderness they can find. Of all the Ferals, they are the ones who contribute most directly to the stereotype of the mindless beast stalking the forests, killing or driving off any who intrude in its domain.

They can be lured from their domains, however, by the promise of a challenging hunt and a rewarding kill. They are often recruited by other Ferals when a particular enemy is proving difficult to remove. The simplicity of the Hunters' worldview often provides useful insights and surprising wisdom.

The path developed comparatively recently, and its founder is generally reckoned to have been Manfred, a Saxon Gangrel who reveled in the hunt both as a mortal and as a Cainite. He refused to be deflected from his greatest pleasure, and he saw the Embrace as a means by which to become an even greater hunter. Rather than become involved in the affairs of his clan or his road, he retired to the estates of his mortal ancestors and played a game of cat-and-mouse with his descendants for over a century, picking off their greatest hunters and daring them to find him. He only gave the game up when his family was driven from their land by invaders. He has since retired to the deep woods of the north, although he supposedly journeys south to run with the *Schwarze Rudel* in the Black Forest sometimes.

Most Cainites will never interact with a Hunter unless they are warned off a domain or witness an attack. Those who are aware of the path consider it little more than an excuse to give in to the Beast almost completely. As a result, Hunters are not well regarded by Cainite society (not that any Feral truly is). They do, however, command respect from followers of the Road of the Beast, who often admire the purity and simplicity of their approach, even as they acknowledge that it is not a path that they themselves might follow.

Path of the Nomad

Ferals with an incurable wanderlust often follow the Path of the Nomad. Heavily favored by Malkavians and Ravnos who follow the Road of the Beast, it teaches that the perils of civilization are best avoided by remaining forever on the move. Settling down in an area — claiming a permanent domain — is seen as equivalent to placing oneself in a cage. They believe that the Beast gives them freedom, so they refuse to let themselves be hemmed in or tied down to any one place.

The path also has a strong ascetic streak, believing that an excess of possessions (usually considered as anything beyond the basic tools needed for survival, such as weapons and those few possessions that can be carried on the person) only serves to strengthen one's ties to civilization. Extremists disavow all possessions and run through the night naked and free.

Nomads make up the great majority of those Wardens who patrol the pathways between Feral sacred sites. Others serve as messengers between other Cainites, who tend to regard them as eccentric but useful. The fact that most are illiterate, or at least uninterested in the politicking the missives they carry might involve, makes them trusted messengers. For their part, the Nomads are content to take such commissions upon themselves, but none would dare take up a regular route. Rather, they will announce their next destination and offer to take messages that lie along their route. They generally desire no payment except free passage through the lands they intend to traverse. It should be noted, however, that the more extreme followers of the path regard such work as a great betrayal and a terrible concession to civilization, actually aiding and abetting its spread.

The Nomads have been around since the earliest nights of the Road of the Beast. Indeed, those on the path who have an interest in such things generally claim to have been inspired by the examples of Caine and Ennoia. After all, did they not wander alone in the wilderness for long periods in order to master their Beasts and gain insight?

Nomads are also the most solitary of the Ferals. They are happy to travel in company from time to time, but their refusal to become tied down (to anything) often makes it difficult for them to become tied down to a traveling companion or pack.

Path of the Savage

The Savages present a difficult conundrum for the Road of the Beast. Of all the road's paths and offshoots, the Savages embrace the Beast most directly. But they are also seen as short-sighted, brutal and mindless killers with nothing to contribute to Feral or Cainite society, and they face frequent calls for destruction and banishment.

The Path of the Savage is as old as the Road of the Beast itself, perhaps founded at around the same time as

the Path of the Nomad, and for similar reasons. Some Cainites who heeded the lessons of Ennoia took to heart the disasters of the Second City and came to the conclusion that the problem lay not with the fractious nature of Caine's brood, but rather with the institutions of civilization itself. They then dedicated themselves to the destruction of all civilization and organization larger than a village.

Savages are particularly prevalent among all the Ferals from the north of Europe, with their traditions of raiding and Viking, but there are also a surprising number of Feral Brujah who subscribe to its tenets. These Brujah believe that the most fit course for both mortal and Cainite alike is to return to an unspoiled, natural state.

To most Cainites, the Savages are prehistoric throwbacks to a bestial past best forgotten. Their war-bands and raiding parties are pursued and wiped out whenever possible. They are seen as little more than pests to be exterminated. For their fellow Ferals, the position is a little more complicated. Most Ferals admire their dedication to a basic interpretation of their condition, but they abhor the violence and extremity of their lifestyle. The Grey Hunters, in particular, hold the Savages in complete contempt, a feeling that is warmly reciprocated. Indeed, most Savages do not regard Grey Hunters as true Ferals at all and will not hesitate to kill them if the chance presents itself.

Path of the Grey Hunter

I am what many would call a Grey Hunter. We take our name from Charisse de Grey, the greatest hunter of the courts who has yet lived. I have spoken of Charisse already, but I will now speak more of those who follow her ways.

It is not always easy for a Feral to thrive in a court, but Charisse showed us how. She was a creature of studied elegance and enormous grace. The key to our survival is to realize that, while the courts offer pleasures unavailable elsewhere, they are not necessary. That is, we must never lose sight of the basic needs of the Beast: the hunt, the kill, the trust in instinct.

I believe these insights give us a crucial advantage dealing with other "tamed" Cainites. They hide behind their codes of conduct, their laws of God or their beliefs in their own essential goodness or wickedness while we press our claims forward, unencumbered by such pretenses. We strive to divide our fellows in court, as Charisse did, into two categories: prey and rivals. Prey is to be mercilessly hunted until they are brought down and offer up to us whatever we want from it, be it blood or favors or something else entirely.

Rivals are to be warily circled and stalked. We take it as fundamental to our continued existence never to turn our backs on a rival and never to show mercy or respite — not unless some gain is to be had.

Some of our number have taken it upon themselves to act as advocates for Ferals in general and are actively trying to spread an understanding of our ways so that we



might gain some degree of influence. I believe that the first part of this plan is well advised, but I do not believe that political influence, beyond that needed for personal security and survival, is a worthy ambition. Perhaps I am mistaken in this, but I do not think so.

Recently, the "Grey Court" has been assembling for a hunt. This is our celebration, and it involves hunting through the slums of a city in search of a nominated, marked prey.

Elsa,

This concludes the useful information, culled from Rodrigo's documents. I have been in possession of these for some time now, but I have been collating and taking additional notes. But more information may soon come to hand; we have captured a captain named Gerard, who claims to have strayed from our clan's great struggle by embracing the Road of the Beast! I must attend his interrogation and ensure that he confesses all.

I will write again soon.

Xavier

† † †

The chantry lay in ruins. Qarakh stepped forward. "A good night. Much blood. Good hunting." He sniffed the air. "But there is more to come."

He looked down at Gerard.

"You are weak. You were caught. You spoke." He looked at Liolya, then at Rodrigo.

"This is my price. My Beast still hungers. I will hunt this one. If he survives, he is free."

Gerard stood. His body was mostly healed, but his mind was still reeling.

"But we came to free him," Liolya protested.

"This is my price. Would you stand in his place?"

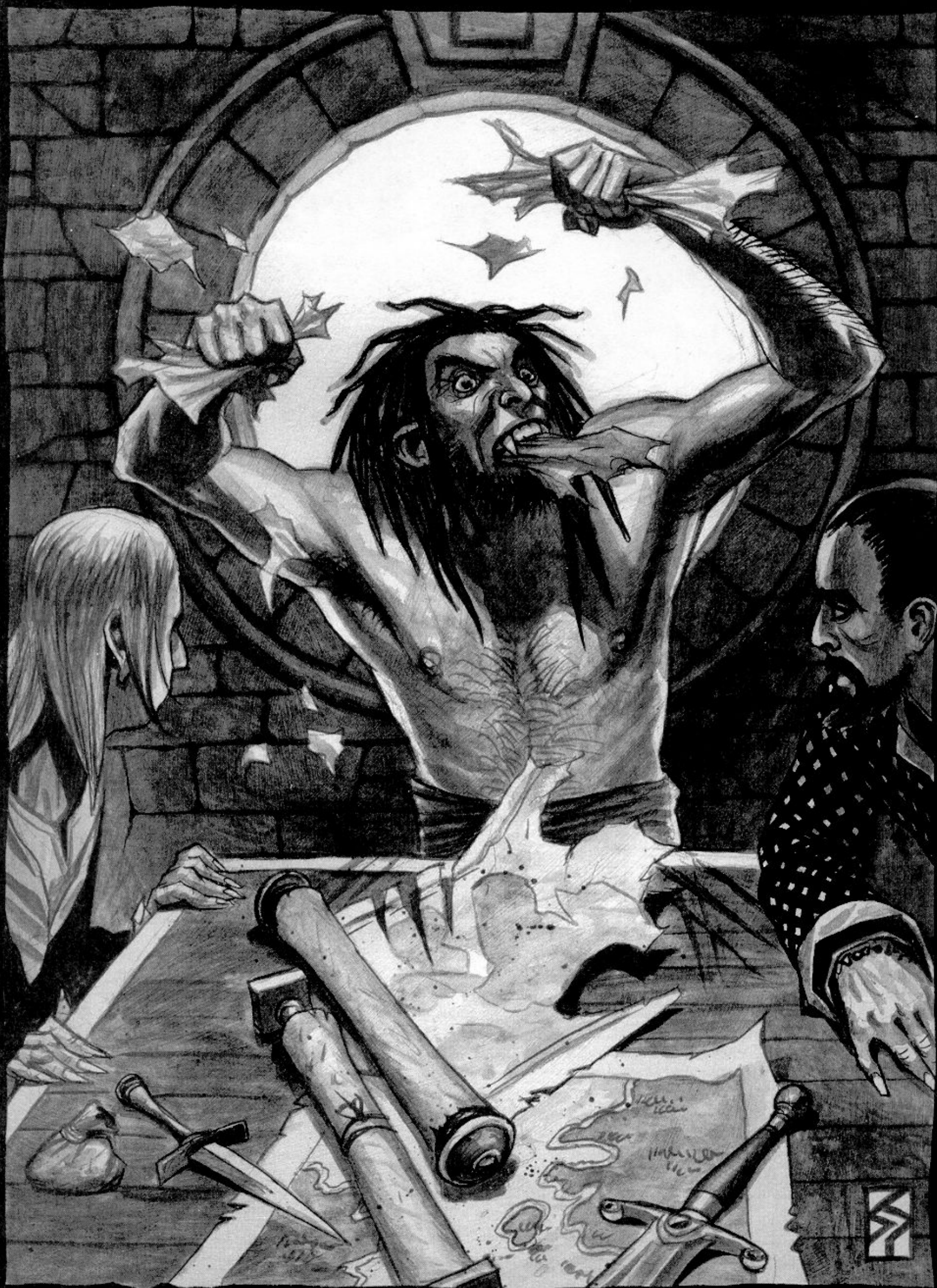
"Liolya... let it go. You taught the boy well. It is not long until sunrise. If he is crafty, he may see another night." Rodrigo had a peculiar gleam in his eye.


Gerard spoke.

"I understand. I am a Feral, and I am bound by the hunt. Allow me one minute's lead, then let the hunt begin."

Qarakh nodded. It was hard to tell, but he seemed impressed. He nodded to Gerard.

"Run."





CHAPTER THREE: SYSTEMS AND ADVICE

And therefore be ye alle hunters, and ye shal do as wise men
—Edward, Duke of York, *The Master of Game*

Advice for Playing a Feral

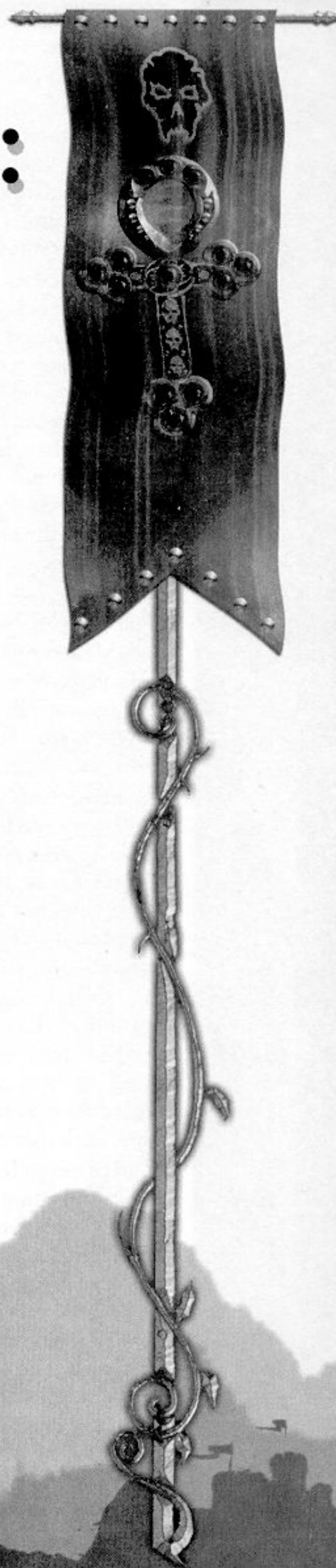
You are not an animal.

That's the key, really. The best advice for any player with a Feral character is to remember that the followers of the Road of the Beast are not simple-minded, animalistic killers. They have a consistent, coherent philosophy that guides their actions. The fact that they espouse violence and savagery is, in a sense, beside the point.

An easy, lazy and uninteresting stereotype of the Ferals is that they are a disorganized bunch of Gangrel who follow their hunger and call it a road. That's not to say that Ferals don't sometimes make use of that stereotype to further their own ends, but as every Feral knows, there's more to the road than that.

Ultimately, Ferals see themselves as the only Cainites honest enough and strong enough to face the truth about their natures. The other roads, with their talk of humanity, God's (or the Devil's) curses or blessings, their search for power over others or the satisfaction of their lusts, are simply exercises in self-deceit. Power over one's base self is the ultimate power. After all, how many elaborate Cainite schemes have ended in disaster because the schemer lost control of the Beast at a crucial moment?

Talk of divine favor (or disfavor) is pure speculation. The suggestion that the Embrace is divinely ordained can never be tested. The Beast, on



the other hand, is all too real. Therefore, Ferals choose to deal with it directly rather than looking for answers from a God (or Devil) who is clearly uninterested in providing them.

Ferals see the other roads as other Cainites' attempts to distract themselves from their true natures. This is not to say that they hold all other Cainites in contempt, though. Ferals respect strength, and a great number of very powerful Cainites follow other roads. Such individuals are seen as impressive but fundamentally misguided.

The Feral takes the hunger of the Beast as the bedrock of her existence. From this force, all else follows. When the Beast hungers, it must be fed. Frenzy, degeneration and madness result if this simple drive is ignored. But careless or indiscriminate feeding is also likely to result in calamity, so Ferals can be quite subtle hunters. You should give some thought to both the why and how of your character's hunting habits. Is she a risk-taker, trusting in her instincts to locate and kill prey? Does she stalk her prey carefully, waiting for the most opportune moment to strike?

Cities

Ferals are divided on the issue of cities and civilization. Most strongly believe that, as creations of man and as the playgrounds of Cainites who plot and scheme (and so are roundly despised), cities are best avoided. Others, however, see cities as rich hunting grounds, and thus fitting territories to inhabit.

Some Ferals assert that mortals will continue to build more and bigger cities. If this is the case, they say, then all Cainites must learn to adapt to them if they wish to survive and prosper in the nights to come. Such long-range thinking does not always sit comfortably with more traditional Ferals, so those who hold such beliefs typically keep their opinions to themselves.

When it comes to portraying your Feral, it's helpful to think of the road's hierarchy of sins. At first glance, the Hierarchy appears to be a simple behavioral guide. But if you look closer, you'll see that it contains a great deal of information about how Ferals act, or at least how they think they should act.

For example, the greatest sin a Feral can commit is to avoid feeding when hungry. By itself, this is simple enough to understand: Any creature, living or undead, that does not seek out sustenance will die. The Ferals, however, do not just accept that fundamental truth, they make it the very cornerstone of their beliefs, such that a Feral to who chooses not to feed risks losing her mind to the Beast. The fact that this most basic precept of the road also holds true for many other ethos (even if it isn't given the same gravity) is misleading, for moving even one "step" up on the hierarchy of sins against the Beast reveals their character even more.

The second major sin for Ferals is a proscription against showing mercy. And yet, later on the hierarchy, we find

that tormenting others needlessly — playing with one's food, as it were — is considered a sin. This isn't contradictory, it's merely indicative of the Ferals' priorities. Predators do not show mercy. If they choose to let their prey escape, it is because that prey is not worth the risk of trying to capture it, not because they are overcome with guilt. Likewise, old wives tales about cats aside, predators do not prolong the deaths of their prey — why give one's dinner a chance to escape by not killing it cleanly? Ferals, taking their cues as they do from natural predators, hold mercy in contempt as useless and weak, but those more advanced along the road see torture in roughly the same light. Both behaviors are, to an enlightened Feral, *unnatural*.

Motivation

What motivates a Feral? How can you ensure that your character is credibly motivated to take part in your Storyteller's chronicle? Ferals place little emphasis on long-range plotting and scheming. Their first inclination is to concentrate on the present. They trust that their instincts won't betray them or their future. This faith stems from their belief that if one always acts on instinct, one will be acting "correctly" and in a manner beneficial in both the short and the long term.

This, in turn, means that Ferals can be quite adventurous. As long as they see some personal gain or benefit in an expedition or other venture, they're likely to be favorably disposed toward it. On the other hand, it's a rare Feral who would put herself at risk in the name of a "higher principle." Ferals are not at all likely to be moved by appeals to virtue or justice or compassion or one's "better nature." For the Feral, one's "better nature" is the Beast, which is only interested in satisfying its hunger.

Therefore, the player must strike a balance, in play, between self-interest and group harmony. You won't have much fun if your character walks away from every story hook your Storyteller provides, even if you are "just playing in character." One of your responsibilities as a player is to make a character that will be interested in involving herself in the chronicle. One way to keep your character involved is to make sure that her place in the coterie is well-defined. Ferals understand hierarchies and pack mentality quite well. Your character may decide to accompany her coterie on an errand or mission simply because she recognizes that she's stronger with them than without, and that to remain behind would break the bond between them. Or she may insist on receiving some particular benefit or reward, such as first pick of the loot or the right to a particular kill.

Likewise, always keep the Beast in mind. If the Beast is interested, the Feral will be interested. A Cainite's primal drives are not centered around lust or greed, normally, but around the blinding, naked hunger for blood that makes every vampire a monster. But what do those drives suggest

to your character in particular? Perhaps a particular kind of blood quiets the Beast — the blood of the clergy, for instance, or the blood of Infidels. Maybe the Beast nudges the character toward accompanying the coterie because it wishes to indulge in diablerie. The Beast is not intelligent *per se*, but it isn't mindless either, and is capable of "pushing buttons" in order to manipulate the vampire.

Playing with Others

Another question that will arise for your character is how much risk she's willing to take for her coterie-mates, especially when she has the option of turning her back on them. Does she try to single-handedly sneak into the enemy castle, for example, on a risky, solo rescue mission? In such situations, as always, she should let instinct guide her.

Such risk calculations are commonplace for all predators. Trusting your instincts doesn't make you an idiot incapable of recognizing your own long-term good. If a task or cause is utterly hopeless (breaking into Ceoris or Alamut, for example), then it's unlikely your character will go ahead. (Then again, who would?) If the risk is moderate and your character is confident, then she should trust her cunning and prowess. Consider what will happen if you don't help. Will your coterie-mates tell their captors all about you (either willingly or under torture)? Are they likely to break out by themselves, then hold a grudge toward you or seek revenge? In such cases, the risk of not acting may well outweigh the risk of action.

The Most Dangerous Prey

It's also worth considering your character's attitude toward hunting other Cainites and diablerie. Ferals pride themselves on being the ultimate predators, so what prey could be more challenging, and a greater test and proof of this claim than their fellow Cainites? Some take great delight in hunting their unliving brethren, but most are sensible enough to keep this behavior to themselves.

Diablerie does not suffer quite the same stigma within the Road of the Beast as in Cainite society at large, but known diablerists are not safe among them. The Ferals have no wish for their road to be outlawed and its adherents hunted down. If a Feral becomes known as a diablerist and brings shame upon the road, her blood and Beast may well be forfeit as the rest of the followers of the road take up the hunt.

All of this should give an aspiring diablerist pause. The "ultimate hunt" is one thing; becoming a target and scapegoat for every Cainite in the land is another. If your character is considering diablerie, she needs to think very carefully indeed. The extra power is seductive, but the Amaranth is not without its costs. While the Road of the Beast does not forbid diablerie, the Storyteller may rule that consumption of another being's soul still fuels the Beast enough to necessitate a roll to avoid degeneration.



WHAT WOULD A FERAL DO?

There's no easy answer. In fact, even if we break it down even further, asking, "What would my character, a Feral Toreador who converted from the Road of Heaven after witnessing the politicking among Faithful vampires, do in this situation?" (for example) yields no easy answer. As a player, you should not be able to confront any given situation and know, based on an entry on your character sheet, what the character would or would not do. This is true of any character, but especially true of the animalistic and pragmatic Ferals, who can easily become the "odd men out" of a chronicle.

Instead of trying to figure out what your character *would* do, consider instead what she *might* do. Has she been in similar situations? What happened then? Does she feel she has the correct skills to take a given course of action? Would she be violating a tenet of her road by acting, and if so, is she willing to atone later? And, perhaps most important, will the story be derailed entirely if she chooses a particular course of action?

People do things that might seem against their nature or personality all the time. You should not feel like you're selling your character short by having her take a course of action that she might not otherwise choose, especially if you help the story along by doing so.

Regardless, the Amaranth has other drawbacks (see page 258 of *Dark Ages: Vampire*).

Finally, consider the other players in the game. If you want to make hunting Cainites (for sport or for diablerie) a focus for your character, we can't stop you. Frankly, some great story possibilities exist there. But you should try to do it in such a way that it does not cause the game to devolve into a hunt for your character, and the characters' motives for such should be more interesting than merely wanting to lower her generation and thereby obtain more Disciplines.

Character Creation

If you've decided to make a character that follows the Road of the Beast, there are some things you should bear in mind when it comes to character creation proper.

It's worth re-iterating that putting numbers down on paper and assigning dots to the various traits that make up your character in terms of game mechanics is the end result, not the starting point, of character creation. It helps to have at least a general idea of the kind of character you want to play before you get started. You may well find that your ideas crystallize further as you assign points. That's fine, but you still need an overall concept to give shape to your efforts.

Clan

Ferals typically hail from the Low Clans. They're not unknown among the High Clans (particularly the Brujah and the Tzimisce), but as the Road of the Beast emphasizes the internalized, individualistic virtues (Conviction and Instinct) over the externalized, group-oriented virtues (Conscience and Self-Control), its members are often seen as socially embarrassing.

The road attracts a good number of Brujah, some of whom find certainty in its simple philosophical truths, others who feel the urge of their own Beast all too keenly and reckon that only by confronting it head-on will they be able to control it. And there are those whose philosophical bent inclines them toward the fundamentals of existence. This emphasis on the fundamentals of the Cainite existence naturally draws some Zealots to the Road of the Beast.

The road also finds a surprising degree of acceptance among the Tzimisce. Their cruelty and individualism both incline them towards the Beast. Although they expect absolute obedience from their inferiors, they allow themselves to behave exactly as they desire. The unfettered nature of Feral existence is deeply attractive to many Fiends.

Some small number of Toreador follow the road, believing that they are "beautiful predators." These Artisans tend to be ruthless politicians as well as fighters of considerable prowess. They revel in the sensations of the hunt and the joy of the kill. Some try to enhance these pleasures by imposing restrictions on themselves (such as following mortal customs, hunting with hounds or by seducing a chosen target). Others take a more visceral approach, finding beauty in the purity and unaffected savagery of the Beast.

The High Clan with the fewest Ferals is, without doubt, the Lasombra. The Magisters are deeply enamored of their social structures and hierarchies. One professing adherence to the Road of the Beast would likely be at a severe (and possibly fatal) social disadvantage. It is unpopular among the Ventrue for similar reasons.

The road is much more common among the Low Clans, with their lessened emphasis on formal hierarchy and position. Overall, the bulk of the road's membership comes from Clan Gangrel. They are obvious candidates for adherence to the road, as they are often abandoned by their sires with little or no training or instruction and have to come to terms with their newfound nature alone. These are natural conditions for coming to follow the Road of the Beast. Some Gangrel cling to mortal codes of behavior, but coming to terms with the Beast is a matter of simple necessity for many neonates, faced with a nightly struggle to survive in a world suddenly made hostile and alien.

Just as some Nosferatu find that their Embrace causes them to value their humanity above all, others find that it

would be foolish to follow any other road with the mark of the Beast upon their bodies. After all, it is the kiss of Caine that causes their deformities, and the kiss of Caine that looses the Beast. To accept the reality of one without accepting the reality of the other would, in their eyes, be a great folly.

Among the Malkavians, some find a small shred of certainty and sanity to cling to in the Beast, and they often adhere rigidly to the road's strictures. Others throw themselves screaming into the seething pit of inchoate desire and rage they find within. Either way, the result is similar. An insane Cainite given over to the Beast is a sight not to be forgotten (and not often to be survived).

Assamites, Setites and Ravnos have no particular affinity for the Road. Some follow their clan's distinctive roads (of Blood, the Serpent, and Paradox, respectively), but just as many do not. Some Assamite warriors enthusiastically embrace the Road of the Beast, believing it makes them better hunters. Others fear the unpredictable Beast and choose other paths.

The Tremere are a special case. The road is rare but not unknown among the Usurpers, who typically focus on disciplining their minds in order to better serve the Pyramid. Among the soldiers and messengers, however, the road is more common, as these individuals often work away from direct contact with the hierarchy and must often operate alone.

Nature and Demeanor

Nature and Demeanor plays a large part in defining just who your character is. On the whole, Ferals tend to be straightforward individuals, with similar (if not the identical) Natures and Demeanors. This is not to say that divergent combinations are never found, only that they are relatively uncommon. Most often, a direct Demeanor covers a conniving Nature. Deception is a useful weapon for any hunter.

Typical Demeanors include Barbarian, Rebel and Survivor. These are all Demeanors that flout the commonly held values or procedures of society in one way or another. Common Natures include all of the above, particularly Survivor, which is probably the most common Archetype among the Ferals. Barbarian runs a close second.

Ultimately, any combination of Nature and Demeanor can be accepted. They are, if you like, the prism through which an individual's expression of the road's tenets will be refracted. For example, a character with a Nature of Judge and a Demeanor of Jester might play the fool or revel in the joy of the hunt — and encourage others to do the same — even as she judges their worth by their acceptance of their natural instincts. Only by acting naturally can one be truly just and fair, after all. And by playing the fool, she puts others off their guard so that their "natural" selves will be revealed.

Attributes and Abilities

For most Ferals, the Physical Attributes are primary. The hunt is physically demanding and is not only a necessity for feeding, it is a sacrament in itself. The road's few rituals and festivals revolve around it. It would be highly unusual for Physical Attributes to be tertiary. Even the most bookish Feral understands and embraces the prime (and primal) importance of the hunt to their road.

Mental Attributes, especially Wits and Perception, are of great use to a hunter, and may even be primary (depending on the Feral's mortal life). Social Attributes are often tertiary; in any case, Appearance and Charisma should probably be rated higher than Manipulation.

Similarly, when selecting Abilities, Talents or Skills are most likely to be primary. Alertness and Athletics, as well as the usual combat skills (Brawl and Dodge) find favor with most Ferals. Empathy and Intimidation are also useful. Leadership, Performance and Subterfuge are less common.

Skills such as Animal Ken, Stealth and Survival are almost essential. Ride is not usually favored, nor is Archery, as Ferals would rather make their kills by hand. Conversely, skills such as Etiquette are widely neglected but are of especial importance to the Lorekeepers.

Knowledges are, as a category, not well loved, but a few are of particular interest to the Ferals. Hearth Wisdom and Occult are sometimes chosen. Law, Politics and Seneschal are not common choices, but again, what Abilities a character possesses depends just as much on her mortal life as her road (if not more).

Advantages

The selection of Advantages for your character is a great opportunity to consider how she will interact with the world around her. Attributes and Abilities indicate what she can do; Backgrounds and Virtues why she does things. Disciplines give the player a chance to decide what kind of supernatural bent the character has. A Grey Hunter is much more likely to learn Presence than a Nomad, but what if the Nomad would prefer to frighten off, rather than kill, peasants who blunder across her path?

Disciplines

Disciplines are a key area for all Ferals. As expressions of Cainite power, they afford unique opportunities to emphasize the power of one's Beast.

The brutal existence of the Ferals all but necessitates some skill in one or more of the three "physical" Disciplines (Celerity, Fortitude and Potence). These Disciplines are not difficult to learn, even for clans that don't typically exhibit them.

A number of other Disciplines are also worthy of mention. All Beasts generally learn Protean at some stage in their existence. As one of the most effective Disciplines

for a hunter, it is also seen as the Discipline that most clearly communicates a Cainite's true, predatory nature. The fourth-level power, Form of the Beast, is especially treasured, and mastery of it is seen as an act of considerable piety. Most mentors teach it to their charges, regardless of clan.

Animalism is also popular (and easier to learn than Protean), as it gives the user the ability to command the Beast in another. Obfuscate is useful when hunting, as is Auspex. Overall, any Discipline — even "civilized" ones such as Presence and Dominate — are seen as valid, especially when used to aid a Cainite on the hunt. Keep this in mind when making your selection. Conversely, a Feral who demonstrates a novel use for an unlikely Discipline will be well regarded for her cleverness.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds reflect your character's relationship with society at large. The best way to decide which to select for a Feral character is to keep in mind that she is unlikely to be tied closely into mortal society. Yet, even those Ferals who spew their vitriol against humanity and its civilized works are inextricably tied to it, for they must feed.

Generation and Status are important indicators not just of your character's raw power and place within Cainite society, but also of her relationships with others. A low-generation Cainite is at a considerable advantage over a high-generation Cainite, and the predator within the Feral is unlikely to forget it. Status not only represents being well regarded by fellow Cainites, it also indicates the importance your character places on the opinion of others. Before you decide that your character doesn't care about such things, remember that it also indicates her understanding of (and place within) the local hierarchies. Knowing the lay of the land, so to speak, is a crucial piece of information for any predator.

Influence can be a little tricky to settle on, but a relationship with a well-placed mortal, such as a master of the hunt, an esteemed craftsman or soldier, or a renowned breeder of war-horses could well yield considerable "pull" in mortal society.

The Mentor Background deserves a word here. It is extremely unlikely that any mentor will be closely supervising your character; such is not the way of the Beast. Not to say, of course, that players cannot choose the Mentor Background for Feral characters. High levels of the Background generally represent a more powerful mentor, not a closer relationship with a weaker one.

The Retainer Background might represent animal companions, especially for a Gangrel or Nosferatu. Contacts and allies are likely to be woodsmen, hunters and other such hardy souls who have the Feral's respect. Spies and informers might be drawn from brigands the character agrees to leave alone in exchange for news or other information. Herd might be drawn from similar ranks, or even from local animals.

Virtues

Instinct is, of course, the favored Virtue among Ferals. A high Instinct rating is necessary for advancement along the Road of the Beast, as most moments of clarity occur as a direct result of allowing (or not allowing) one's instinctive responses to a situation. The Virtue represents the character's ability to surrender herself to the Beast when necessary. If Instinct is her highest-rated Virtue, she will be "in tune" with her Beast and able to exercise a great deal of control over it.

Conviction represents your character's trust in herself. In essence, it's a measure of how much she trusts the Beast, whereas Instinct represents how easily she can let it out of its cage. If Conviction is her favored virtue, she trusts her Beast to see her through every situation, regardless of circumstance (which can have its disadvantages).

Lastly, Courage represents the savagery of the Beast, its confidence in its own power to survive and triumph over others. If this is your character's chief Virtue, she will be indomitable, using the Beast to doggedly propel her forward in the face of adversity.

Preludes

Don't forgo the opportunity to play out a prelude for your character. If your Storyteller is reluctant or unable to run one for you, then you should at least consider the suggestions that follow. They should help you get a solid handle on your character before play begins. Writing them down is an excellent way to get a clear picture of your character and her motivations.

Why bother with a prelude? A prelude gives you an opportunity to play out the crucial moments in your character's history. You'll find that these moments and events will be much more real if you've experienced them by playing them out in a prelude, rather than merely thought about them a bit. It's one thing, for example, to say that your character took up the Road of the Beast so she could take revenge on the Setite who slew her sire. It's quite another to play out the scene and experience the murder of her sire and her angry submission to her predatory nature. This gives the event an immediacy and impact it would otherwise lack.

Similarly, playing a prelude gives you an opportunity to fine-tune your character before play begins in earnest. If you need to adjust the numbers on your character sheet, check with your Storyteller, but as long as you're making minor adjustments and not re-writing your character, she shouldn't have any objections. Sometimes characters don't quite come out as we want or expect them to in play. It's far better to discover and remedy such issues before the chronicle proper gets underway.

If your Storyteller deems it appropriate, and if another player (or players) agrees, a prelude is a great opportunity to establish relationships with other characters. This depends largely on the Storyteller's setup for the chronicle, but if it fits within the story's parameters, actually playing out a first meeting and a significant moment or two between your character and another adds great depth to the back story of the game and the characters concerned. Doing so also makes it easy for the chronicle to get underway. This is especially true if the characters have pooled some of their Backgrounds.

Dark Ages: Vampire provides some excellent guidelines for running preludes (pp. 277-278) that focus on critical moments in your character's unlife — her Embrace, introduction into Cainite society, attitude toward other vampires, relationship with her sire and so on. These are important details for your Storyteller to uncover, so they can be used to inform her plots and characters. They also give her the opportunity to foreshadow events in the chronicle.

Note that it's very helpful to discuss your prelude with your Storyteller before actually playing it. Not only will your Storyteller need some basic information about your character so that the prelude can be properly executed, but you might want to suggest a scene or two — or even sketch out your character's history as you see it. Doing so makes sure that the important elements of your character's background and personality are covered. It's a rare Storyteller who won't welcome such input from a player. Getting a chronicle set up can be a big task, so it's always appreciated when a player takes the initiative and demonstrates some concrete interest in the chronicle.

Your Storyteller, in turn, may well make some suggestions about your character. These will probably be based on her plans for the chronicle, and be aimed at making sure that your character will be able to fit into the game easily and be able to participate fully. (Your nomadic Brujah scholar might not fit well into a game based around the Omen War raging in Hungary, for example.) Listen with an open mind and negotiate around any disagreements. Striking the right balance between the unique character you've dreamed up and the unique chronicle your Storyteller has in mind can be a delicate task, but it's well worth the effort to resolve.

Why Choose the Beast?

Few things define a Cainite as strongly as her choice of road. As a mortal, one has no control over one's birth, sex or homeland. As a Cainite, one has no control over one's sire, clan or generation. But every Cainite must choose a way to deal with the Beast. This choice — the selection of a road — determines the path a Cainite's existence will take, how she will face her struggles with the Beast and, to a large extent, how she will relate to her fellow Cainites and fit into their society.

Most Ferals reject mainstream Cainite society, seeing its constraints as artificial at best, and detrimental, even dangerous, at worst. Does your character share this view? Why does your character think thus? To deal with the Beast, a screaming, maddening, unceasing urge to kill, by giving reign to it, even occasionally, is a high-risk decision. Yet most Ferals see acceptance of their Beasts as a simple and honest acknowledgement of their true natures. Why has your character made this decision? Was there a single defining moment or incident, or was the decision made after a calm and rational consideration of her condition? Some Ferals have tried following other roads and found them wanting. These Ferals in particular see accepting the Road of the Beast as a kind of spiritual "homecoming." What kind of creature finds spiritual solace in an existence given over to mere survival — worse, surviving like an animal? Your prelude should have at least one scene that provides some insight into how and why your character made this choice.

Remember that each Feral's reason for adopting the Road of the Beast is unique and may draw on elements of any of the aforementioned suggestions. The overwhelming characteristic is often pragmatism. Ferals see the struggle against the Beast as the central fact of their existence.

What, then, are some of the reasons that Ferals choose their road, and what kinds of scenes can you include in a prelude to showcase these reasons? The following are some suggestions and examples.

Fear of the Beast

Some Cainites are truly terrified of the Beast. This is quite often (but by no means always) a response to one's first frenzy. Appalled by the overwhelming hunger and power of the Beast, a Cainite may well decide that such a power cannot be fought or repressed or overcome, only accommodated and guided.

A scene showing your character choosing the road for this reason would most typically be the aftermath of a frenzy. Your character is so horrified by her lack of control and the failure of whatever morality she has adhered to so far that she is, in effect, driven into the arms of the enemy, reasoning that only by embracing the Beast can she control it.

Acceptance of God's Will

Cainites who adhere to the Road of the Beast for religious reasons were often quite pious during their mortal lives. Once they gain some understanding of their condition, they accept it as God's will and try to cope with it as best they can. In the opinion of these Cainites, to see oneself as an instrument of God's or Satan's will would be the height of arrogance. One must simply accept one's fate and seek to understand one's true nature. Perhaps this understanding will reveal one's purpose to be aligned with God or the Devil... or perhaps not.

A scene depicting your character's choice of the Road of the Beast for this reason could take a number of forms. Perhaps she ran afoul of a Cainite or Cainites who believed they were emissaries of God or Lucifer and was horrified by their actions and arrogance. Or perhaps a simple act of grace or kindness from another drives her to reflect on her essence.

The Thrill of the Hunt

Some Cainites simply get a rush from hunting and killing. Perhaps the Cainite was an avid hunter in mortal life, reveling in the pursuit of his hapless prey. Yet, Ferals are not just mindless killers. Such Cainites are little more than animals to be hunted down and destroyed. The hunt is simply what a Cainite does and enjoys best. Does the wolf question whether it should kill? Of course not, and neither should the Children of Caine.

A typical scene to show your character exulting in the hunt (and with it, the Road of the Beast) would take place in the aftermath of a kill. Heady with her power and the sated lust for blood, she experiences a moment of clarity that tells her this is her true self.

Rejection of Humanity

It is clear to most Ferals that humans are inferior creatures, just as to humans it is clear that cattle are inferior creatures. Why would one choose to live in the society created by one's inferiors? Humans do not deign to live in the fields or hog wallows or chicken coops. Why should a Cainite do what amounts to the same thing, and dwell among humans? On a more philosophical level, it is the Beast that sets Cainites apart from the race of Seth. Surely the right approach is to embrace it?

An appropriate scene to showcase this reason for taking up the Road of the Beast would be one that reinforces to your character the essential worthlessness, or at least inferiority, of humanity. A schemer brought low, a disaster brought on by greed or lust or stupidity or even an easily manipulated mortal might drive her into the arms of the Beast. An especially pathetic show of apocalyptic fervor might also drive her to the road.

Disdain for Cainite Society

It is equally clear to other Ferals that Cainite society, as it exists in parallel to (and, some say, as a perversion of) mortal society, is worthless. With its cynical elders, ambitious neonates and constant scheming and intrigues, it's shameful to see Cainites stooping to the level of their food. There are generally two ways in which disdain for Cainites can drive a Feral to adopt the Road of the Beast. She may be sufficiently disgusted with mortals that she will reject any mortal trappings, including a Cainite society run along mortal lines. Alternatively, she may be disillusioned that Cainites have not used their superior

nature to create a better alternative. This is a particularly common motivation among Feral Brujah.

To show your character rejecting Cainite society, a scene showing a Cainite plot uncovered, or a mortal routine mimicked, is a good starting place. Religious observances can be especially effective, as they represent an acceptance of servitude in the Feral mind. Any event that demonstrates how little Cainites have advanced their thinking and relationships from those of the mortal herd can form the basis for a strong scene.

Abandonment

Many Ferals are abandoned by their sires after the Embrace, forced to fend for themselves or perish in the attempt. These souls must also come to terms with the Beast and they soon learn to accommodate its desires. Of all Cainites, these are the once who come closest to simply accepting their road rather than choosing it. But, once exposed to the other roads, these Ferals rarely abandon their choice — they have come to terms with the Beast (or at least decided how to struggle with it) and see little value in trying to impose other ethics or restraints on it.

Devising a scene to showcase this kind of decision can be tricky, as it comes closest to a mere acceptance. Perhaps your character is approached by an adherent of another road and a philosophical discussion (or fight) ensues. Or perhaps she encounters an important figure on the road, such as a Warden or Lorekeeper, and learns from her.

The Most Dangerous Prey

While many Ferals may spurn mortal and/or Cainite society, some revel in what they see as the most challenging, satisfying hunting grounds in the world. If a Cainite is the ultimate predator, surely the only prey worth the effort is mankind — or even other Cainites. To hunt and feed from animals is seen as below the talents of the Feral, a waste of potential or even a sign of laziness or weakness. Tooth and claw are not the only weapons in the Children of Caine's arsenal, after all.

A scene here should show your character's dissatisfaction with simply killing an animal, or perhaps taking incredible satisfaction from killing a human or Cainite and reveling in the satisfaction not just of the kill, but of the hunt and pursuit.

Apostasy

Cainites sometimes abandon their roads. They make progress, learn the underpinnings of their new philosophy then, typically, lose control of themselves completely. As a result, they sometimes experience a moment of clarity, realizing that the struggle to master the Beast — not the struggle to remain human, serve God or anything else — is the central fact of unlife. Such Cainites have experienced first-hand the futility of denying one's Beast,



so they change paths in an attempt to deal with the fundamental fact of their existence.

Why did your character reject her initial choice of path? Did she chafe under the road's restrictions, never feeling entirely comfortable with them? Or did she think she was doing well, only to have it all come undone?

Character Development

This section has a number of suggestions for you to consider as your character develops during play. Some relate to "formal" events with rules attached, such as embarking on a path. Others, however, are developments that can only be played out during the game — such as becoming a teacher of the road. Still others combine the two. The important thing to note is that the rules are there only to supplement the development of your character and to give her decisions meaning and validity within the game (for example, modifying your character's hierarchy of sins as a result of her taking up a path).

Moments of Truth

You can't spend experience points on a Road rating increase until your character experiences a moment of truth. So, when should you look for a moment of truth, and how should you play it out when it happens? As with most things, they can happen at any time. It's just a question of whether your character is ready to take notice.

There are a number of ways to represent this advancement during play. The first is to assume that, as she accumulates experience points (and as you save them up to purchase an increase in her Road rating), your character is reaching a point of realization — when an event that would lead to a moment of truth will be recognized and appreciated as such. After all, what makes one kill or one hunt or one recitation of an epic poem so much more significant than another that it triggers such a momentous event in her psyche? It's not too far-fetched to suggest that the key difference is her readiness to gain an insight — a frame of mind receptive to new lessons.

This change is only partly represented by gaining experience points. It should also be shown in your character's actions in play. Perhaps a change in her behavior would be an appropriate sign of her soon-to-be-found insight. She may become quieter, more reflective. Or perhaps she opens up and begins sharing her thoughts, talking with others about how she perceives herself and her behavior. Asking questions might be another response. If she's on the verge of receiving an insight into the broad question, "How should I act?", it's very appropriate for this new insight to be preceded by a period of reflection, speculation or questioning.

Dark Ages: Vampire discusses the types of events that might serve as moments of truth (page 266). What you need to consider is when to be on the lookout for such moments and how to play them out, so that your Storyteller will allow you to spend your character's experience points on an increase in her Road rating.

Having the points on hand is one thing. Convincing your Storyteller that your character is not only ready for, but also deserving of, a moment of truth is another.

In part, your character will improve by the aforementioned means — by acting like someone who's actively questioning and searching for answers. On the other hand, you might prefer to have a moment of truth hit your character like a bolt out of the blue. You can't choose to have an insight. It often arrives when it's not being actively sought. Either way, the decision lies with your Storyteller. How do you convince her that your character is ready?

The best way is to offer the possibility up as an opportunity to create or enhance a story. It demonstrates that you want to become an active participant in the game, taking a hand in creating stories and drama. The following are a few suggestions for the kinds of scenes you might suggest to your Storyteller as being a way to give your character a moment of truth.

Am I Beast Enough?

You might suggest a scene that makes your character question her beliefs. The murder of an innocent, an act of mercy, a meeting with a Feral whose behavior differs sharply from your character's — any such encounter could be a catalyst for some serious thinking about her dedication (or lack thereof) to the ideals of the Road of the Beast.

This might be highlighted in a scene wherein your character meets a more "bestial" Feral. This individual, whether she has a high Road rating (and is more in tune with her Beast) or a low one (and is losing herself to her Beast) could cause your character to question whether she's "bestial" enough. Alternatively, she might be inspired to see the example of a Feral existing in harmony with her Beast, or horrified to see one succumbing to it.

Am I Too Much the Beast?

Ferals do things that many would consider monstrous. They generally kill any vessels they feed upon, so their continued existence is predicated upon murder, usually against victims who have little or no ability to defend themselves. But it's one thing to claim to lead a remorseless existence, quite another to actually do so. This is the central problem for any faith — how to sincerely and faithfully live up to the code of behavior it espouses. Doing so is much harder for someone whose code endorses murder than one whose tenets instruct the follower to be morally virtuous, particularly when the would-be Feral is Embraced from a faith that abhors violence.

A scene wherein your character commits a great act of mayhem, but is then given reason to regret it, can trigger a moment of truth. Or perhaps a violent act committed earlier comes back to haunt her. The casual murder of a man-at-arms that results in a village taking

up arms against the monsters in the night, for example, may well haunt your character and cause her to question how well she truly understands the road.

What Have I Lost?

Sometimes, when a character is confronted with a strong reminder of a lifestyle or individual she has left behind, she wonders if she has made the right choice. Accommodating the Beast requires a complete break with mortal notions of morality and "right" behavior — but making that break is easier said than done.

Has your character killed someone who reminds him of an old friend, family member or lover? A scene showing such an event could well trigger a spiritual crisis or a moment of truth. And if it doesn't, why not? Go beyond, "It just doesn't bother my character," when thinking of an answer. Even the realization that something doesn't bother her might trigger further thought or reflection.

Becoming a Teacher

A natural evolution for your character, especially if you've been playing her over the course of a long chronicle, is for her to become a Warden or Lorekeeper or, more generally, to take on some responsibilities as an adherent of her road. There are no real game mechanics associated with this achievement. As stated in Chapter Two, a Feral wishing to take up responsibilities within her road merely does so and waits for acknowledgment to come.

To the limited degree that traits do affect such things, any Cainite with a Road rating higher than another's theoretically has something to teach or share. But whether your character is the kind of person others would turn to for help depends entirely on how you play her.

Therefore, a high Road rating is not all you need. Your character also needs a reputation among her fellow adherents. One way to garner such a standing is to attend gatherings and generally be active in raising your profile. A reputation as a strong advocate of the road's tenets can also help, though your Storyteller shouldn't discount the value of being a "quiet achiever" whose reputation is growing by word of mouth.

Your Storyteller should eventually present your character with an opportunity to instruct another. This is an excellent opportunity for both enjoyable roleplaying and intensive character development, as you'll not only be required to guide another character along a road, but also to articulate your beliefs and the reasons for them. It's also an excellent way to introduce a new player to an ongoing chronicle, and the dynamic between the two characters can be an endless source of story material.

If you're more interested in the character becoming a Warden or a Lorekeeper, the process is similar. She certainly needs to have demonstrated her ability to perform the relevant duties, but more important is the record of her actions, as seen by others.

There are no tests for your character to pass, nor any formal initiation required to become a Warden or Lorekeeper. She simply embarks upon the requisite activities and, if they're performed well enough, her new status will eventually be recognized. Similarly, if she stops, she'll simply be considered to have "dropped out." Ferals do not look at such Cainites as failures. They recognize that priorities can change from moment to moment.

Being considered a member in good standing of either group, however, is a mark of some small prestige and no little respect. Your character will need to be aware of her responsibilities. A Warden must either travel or guard a path or place considered important by the Ferals; a Lorekeeper must seek out other Ferals, learn their stories and be present at gatherings to recite the road's epics. Outsiders are not welcome in such contexts, so some negotiation with your Storyteller and your fellow players will likely be necessary. Indeed, becoming a Warden might be an excellent fate for a character who survives a long chronicle.

Joining and Leaving the Road

Joining the Road of the Beast is a relatively simple matter. Simple, but dangerous.

The Road of the Beast is a "root" road, as is the Road of Humanity. That is, it's a road onto which neonates often initiate themselves, by default as it were. Sometimes a sire or other sympathetic figure will help, sometimes not. Joining the road later in one's existence, after abandoning another road, is a little more complex. Quite apart from the rules involved (see page 267 of *Dark Ages: Vampire*), there's the matter of actually surviving the process.

To initiate herself onto the road, your character needs to start abiding by her new moral code until she experiences a moment of truth. As doing so involves submerging herself in the Beast and hunting in the wilds, she must not only negotiate the hazards of the wilderness, but also any other Ferals upon whose domain she may be trespassing. Alternatively, if your character knows a Feral, she might approach him for advice or instruction.

Under what circumstances should a Cainite consider adopting the Road of the Beast? A good rule of thumb is for the player to monitor the character's current hierarchy of sins, particularly if she's committed some sins or suffered degeneration recently. Take a look at the Road of the Beast's hierarchy and cast your mind back over your character's actions. Was her natural inclination to act in accord with her road's values? Did she sin against her current road by acting more in line with the Road of the Beast?

This process can work in the other direction too. Your character might be struggling with the Road of the Beast and find, after some reflection, that another road would suit her better.

Ferals aren't too concerned about adherents leaving the road, especially if they're relatively new or have

made little progress. To some extent, this is (to use an anachronistic term) a "Darwinian" attitude. If the would-be Feral couldn't hack it, then the road is better off without her. The weak must inevitably fall behind, after all. Older Ferals reserve special hatred for prominent apostates, who they believe have betrayed the Beast. This hatred is largely driven by the Feral's own Beast, who fears being caged by the rules of another road.

Embarking on a Path

The rule mechanics for embarking on a path are described in the *Dark Ages Storytellers Companion* (pp. 64). The thing to keep in mind is that, while taking up a path is not nearly as traumatic and unlife-changing as taking up a new road, it is nevertheless a very significant decision that involves the adoption or alteration of a number of values.

Again, the chief determinant and the best clue (both in and out of game) that your character might be ready to take up a path is her behavior. Is she always on the move, always searching for new vistas and new experiences? Perhaps the Path of the Nomad beckons. Is she a remorseless monster who hates mortal civilization and attacks its institutions whenever possible? The Path of the Savage may well be calling. Does she find the thrill of hunting mortals on their own territory to be the greatest of all? The Path of the Grey Hunter was founded by one such Feral.

Adopting a path that is more closely attuned to your behavior will actually make existence a little easier for your character, insofar as the hierarchy of sins is a guide to behavior and actions to avoid. She should be less in danger of slipping back along the path if its values match her actions.

Unsurprisingly, there are no formal procedures or declarations to make. One simply realizes that one's actions have taken on a particular bent and re-aligns one's values accordingly.

As Ferals are pragmatic and essentially amoral, you should note that they are more likely to adjust their values to fit their behavior, not the other way around (i.e., taking a moral position and adjusting their behavior to accommodate it). This is in accord with the Ferals' self-imposed mandate to be ruled by instinct. The player should be careful, though, not to use this kind of flexibility to justify her character doing whatever she wants. Changing even one tenet of a path's hierarchy of sins is a slow process, and the Storyteller should be kept abreast of any proposed changes to a character's moral code. If the character violates that code, she must pay the consequences, either by doing penance or falling ever closer to the jaws of the Beast.

Paths

Details and game systems on the four paths described in Chapter Two are presented here, including a brief recap of the path's overall beliefs and the information necessary to play them in your chronicle.

PATH OF THE HUNTER

VIA PRAEDATOR

Ferals who follow the Path of the Hunter dedicate themselves to exploring the Beast's predatory nature. They eschew reason and allow themselves to be guided by instinct. The world is divided into hunters and hunted, so they relate to others as fellow predators (worthy of respect) and prey (worthy of nothing but contempt).

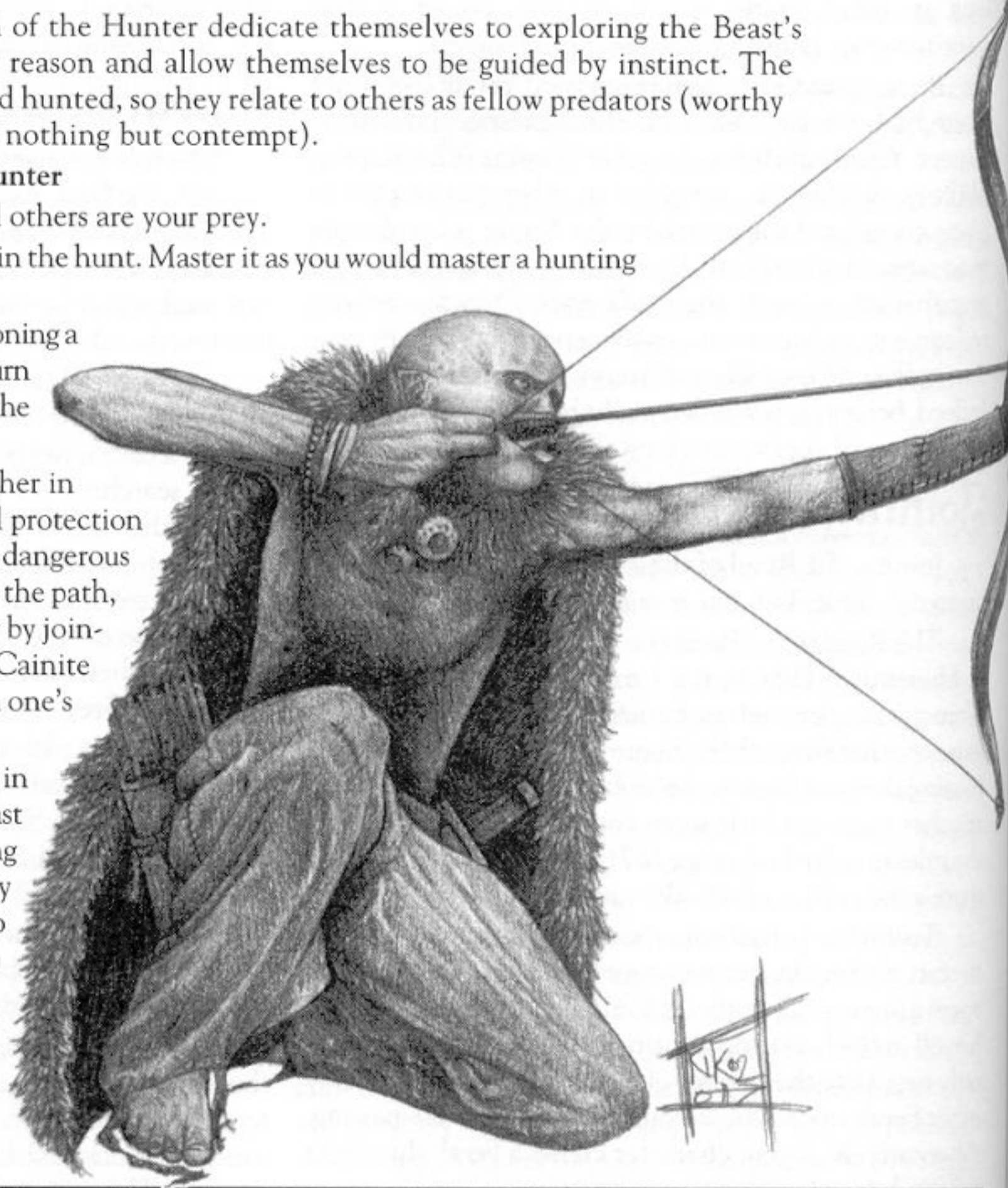
Additional Ethics of the Hunter

- You are a predator, and all others are your prey.
- The Beast exists to aid you in the hunt. Master it as you would master a hunting dog.
- There is no shame in abandoning a hopeless hunt — as long as you return with a pack. No prey is safe from the Hunters.

Practices: Hunters often gather in packs for companionship, mutual protection and greater strength to hunt more dangerous prey (such as Lupines). To follow the path, one simply starts hunting, usually by joining a pack or retreating from Cainite society for a time and focusing on one's predatory nature.

Hunters are usually involved in the activities of the Road of the Beast — attending gatherings, traveling to sacred sites and so on — but they regard with disdain any Feral who does not make his predatory nature the highest focus of his existence, regardless of whatever else he might do.

Virtues: Conviction, Instinct

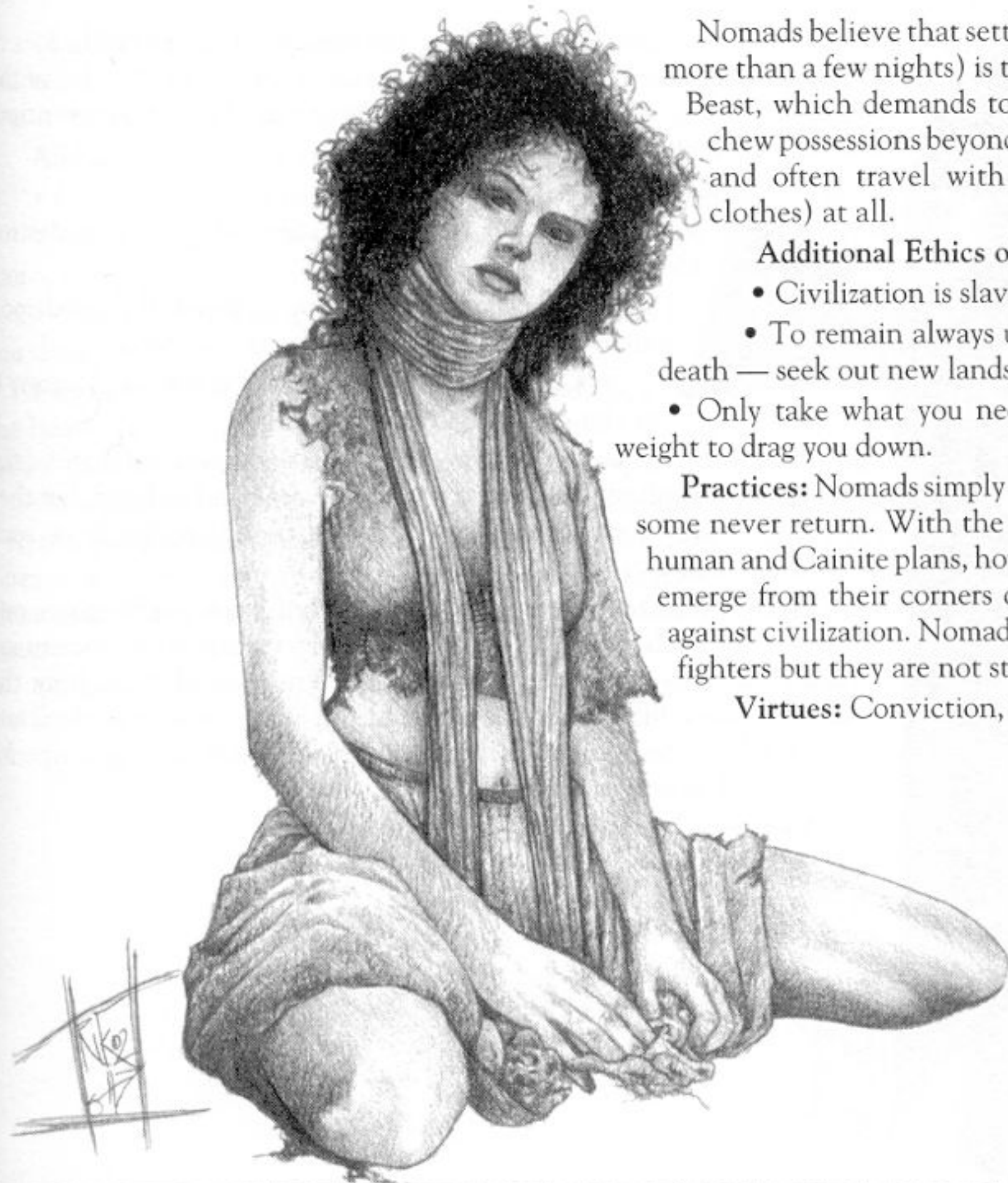


HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST THE HUNTER

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Failing to hunt for your own prey	Accepting blood as a gift from another is an affront to the Beast.
9	Interrupting the hunt of another	The Beast must be free to do as it will.
8	Failing to hunt whenever the opportunity presents itself	Hunting strengthens the Beast.
7	Avoiding contact with the wilds	In nature lies strength. Civilization is soft and weak.
6	Needless torture or cruelty	Only "civilized" folk engage in these things.
5	Making a sacrifice for a stranger	You owe others nothing.
4	Refusing to kill to ensure your safety	Nothing is more important than survival.
3	Failing to defend your hunting grounds	Those who do not defend their territory have it taken from them.
2	Showing mercy to an enemy	Mercy is for the weak.
1	Abstaining from feeding when hungry	The Beast must be satisfied.

PATH OF THE NOMAD

VIA ERRONIS (ALSO TARIQ EL-BEDOUIN)



Nomads believe that settling down in the one place (for more than a few nights) is the first step toward taming the Beast, which demands to roam where it will. They eschew possessions beyond those few required for survival and often travel with no gear (and sometimes no clothes) at all.

Additional Ethics of the Nomad

- Civilization is slavery, run wild and be free.
- To remain always under the same sky is a kind of death — seek out new lands always.
- Only take what you need. Needless possessions are a weight to drag you down.

Practices: Nomads simply withdraw from civilization, and some never return. With the encroachments being made by human and Cainite plans, however, many are being forced to emerge from their corners of the earth and join the fight against civilization. Nomads tend to be wily, undisciplined fighters but they are not strongly territorial.

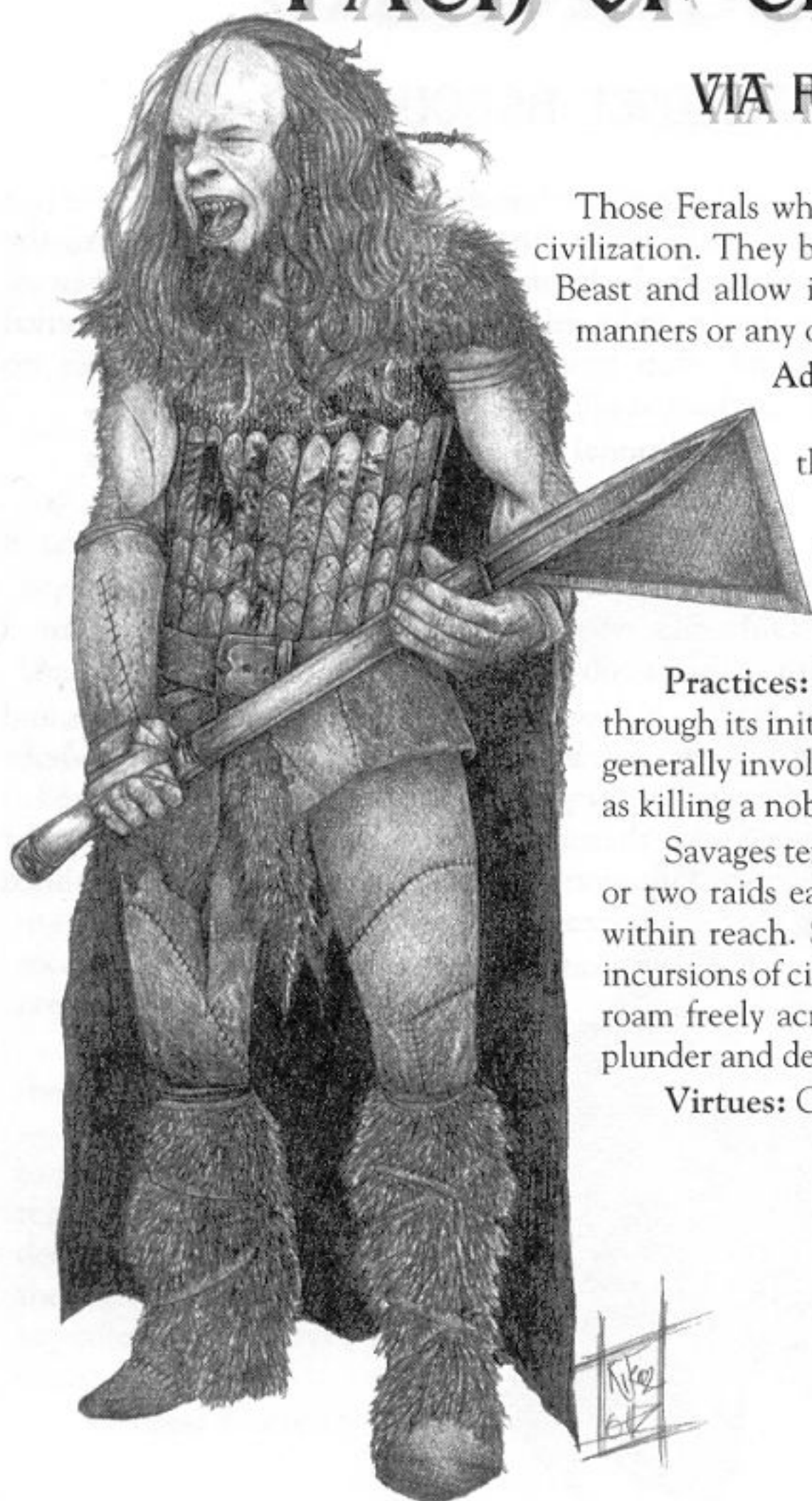
Virtues: Conviction, Instinct

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST THE NOMAD

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Spending more than three nights in the one place	To remain in one place is to cage the Beast.
9	Accumulating an excess of personal possessions	Wealth is a creation of society.
8	Allowing your path to be permanently blocked by another	Boundaries are restrictions.
7	Avoiding contact with the wilds	In nature lies strength. Civilization is soft and weak.
6	Needless torture or cruelty	Only "civilized" folk engage in these things.
5	Making a sacrifice for a stranger	You owe others nothing.
4	Refusing to kill when important to your survival	Nothing is more important than survival.
3	Claiming a permanent domain	Civilization is static. If you stop moving, you have become civilized and therefore trapped.
2	Showing mercy to an enemy	Mercy is for the weak.
1	Abstaining from feeding when hungry	The Beast must be satisfied.

PATH OF THE SAVAGE

VIA FERITAS



Those Ferals who follow the Path of the Savage are implacable foes of civilization. They believe that every Cainite should revel in the fury of the Beast and allow it to reign supreme, untrammelled by law, convention, manners or any other restraint.

Additional Ethics of the Savage

- Embrace your hatred and rage and use them to destroy the weak.
- The Beast is your salvation. It should be loosed upon your enemies whenever it calls out for blood.
- Civilization is a creation of the weak. Destroy it and let only the strong survive.

Practices: To become a Savage, one must join a war-band and suffer through its initiation rites. These rites vary from band to band, but they generally involve participating in a raid and striking a telling blow, such as killing a noble or firing a church.

Savages tend to lair in regions far from civilization and organize one or two raids each season to strike at whatever outposts of society are within reach. Some settle particular areas and defend them from the incursions of civilization, while others have a more nomadic outlook and roam freely across nations and continents in search of targets ripe for plunder and destruction.

Virtues: Conviction, Instinct

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST THE SAVAGE

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Allowing civilization's proponents to live	Without people dedicated to its spread, civilization cannot flourish.
9	Not striking at civilization whenever possible	Civilization makes slaves of us all.
8	Not challenging a weak leader	Only the strongest should lead.
7	Participating in a civilization without intent to destroy it	Civilization is a cage for the Beast.
6	Avoiding contact with the wilds	In nature lies strength. Civilization is soft and weak.
5	Making a sacrifice for a stranger	You owe others nothing.
4	Refusing to kill when important to your safety	Nothing is more important than survival.
3	Failing to defend your territory (or pack)	Those who do not defend their territory have it taken from them.
2	Showing mercy to an enemy	Mercy is for the weak.
1	Abstaining from feeding when hungry	The Beast must be satisfied.

PATH OF THE GREY HUNTER

VIA VENATOR UMBRA

The Grey Hunters are something of an anomaly among the Ferals. They do not hate civilization. Indeed, they believe that as the mortals flock to their cities and towns, so too must the Cainites. This is as it should be, for a hunter must move with its prey.

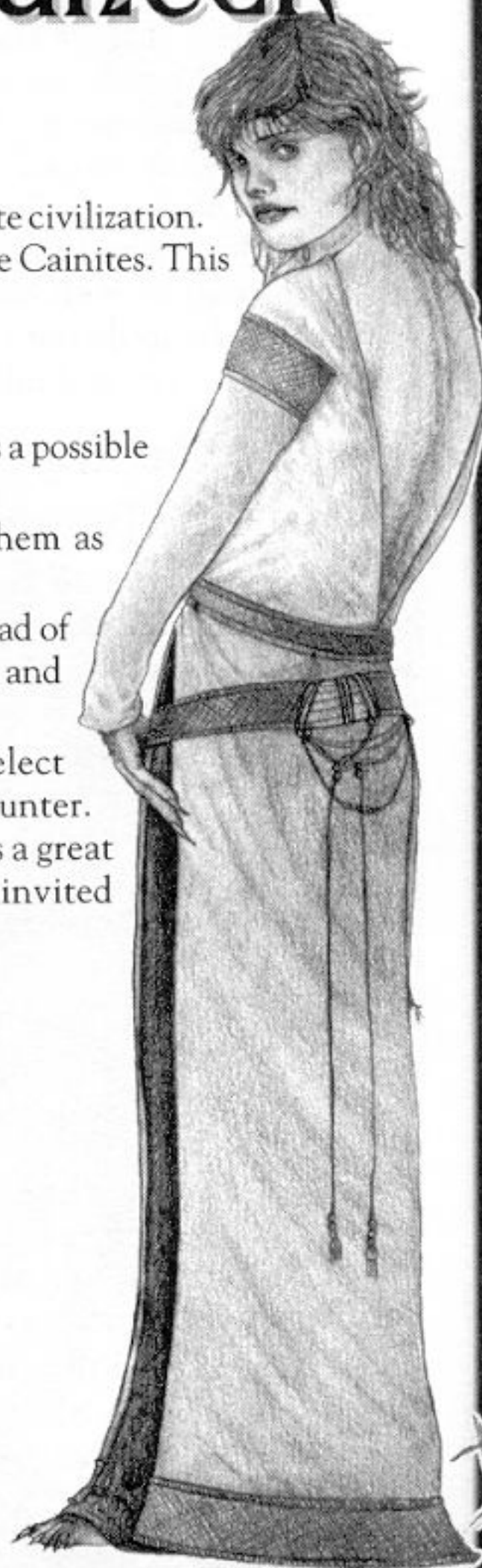
Additional Ethics of the Grey Hunter

- Civilization must become home to Cainites, as it is home to our prey.
- Alliances and agreements can be used to your advantage. Only a fool disregards a possible source of strength.
- The pleasures of civilization can delight the Beast. Take advantage of them as you desire.

Practices: The Grey Hunters are the scoundrels, scholars and seducers of the Road of the Beast. To be considered one, a Feral must stalk, seduce and feed upon a mortal and ensure that her (or his) disappearance brings no suspicion onto the hunter.

Grey Hunters enjoy gathering at feasts and other mortal revels. They usually select a victim as the evening's sport, who is to be seduced and killed by the successful hunter. They often correspond and enjoy traveling to each other's domains. Hospitality is a great pleasure to them, but they guard their domains ruthlessly and will not tolerate "uninvited guests."

Virtues: Conviction, Instinct



HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST THE GREY HUNT

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Failing to offer hospitality to an invited (or announced) visitor	Prey is plentiful. To hoard is needless.
9	Avoiding an opportunity to hunt in the wilds	The Beast can run free in the wilds.
8	Not hunting an easy target when the opportunity presents itself	One should not allow one's skills to weaken.
7	Shunning a gathering or celebration	The Grey Hunt depends on contact with others.
6	Avoiding contact with the civilization	The wilds are doomed. Civilization is the future.
5	Making a sacrifice for a stranger	You owe others nothing.
4	Refusing to kill when important to your safety	Nothing is more important than survival.
3	Failing to defend your territory	Those who do not defend their territory have it taken from them.
2	Showing mercy to an enemy	Mercy is for the weak.
1	Abstaining from feeding when hungry	The Beast must be satisfied.

Disciplines

Regardless of their clan, there are a number of Disciplines all Ferals consider to be highly valuable. What follow are some unique powers of the blood that the Ferals have developed. They are considered to be the domain of the Road of the Beast only, and any Cainite following another road would need to have a good explanation as to how she learned any of the techniques. Ferals do not take kindly to others sharing in their secrets and hunting techniques.

Ennoia's Mastery

Animalism 1, Protean 3

Supposedly, Ennoia could take the shape of any beast she desired. This power, while not so dramatic as that, allows the Cainite to borrow characteristics from various creatures to adapt her body to her environment. Claws grow long to assist tree-climbing, skin (or fur) changes color or texture to aid camouflage and so on. This power allows the Cainite to become, in effect, the perfect hunter in whatever environment she finds herself in.

This power is much favored by followers of the Path of the Hunter, for it allows them to stalk more varied types of prey.

System: The player spends a blood point and makes a Wits + Survival roll (difficulty 6). For each success, one feature can be changed. Generally speaking, each alteration reduces the difficulty of a roll associated with hunting or outdoor survival by two. Possible changes include:

- **Claws:** In addition to doing aggravated damage (as per normal), the Cainite's claws become curved to assist climbing. Subtract two from the difficulty of all climbing rolls.

- **Eyes:** The Cainite's eyes become attuned to movement as opposed to clarity of vision. Subtract two from the difficulty of vision rolls to spot a moving target, add one to the difficulty of vision rolls to spot a hidden or camouflaged target.

- **Feet/Hands:** The Cainite's feet (and, if desired, hands) flatten and spread, allowing for better purchase and unimpeded movement on ice and snow. This modification negates all penalties to movement rates for running through heavy snow (or marshes, sand and other soft surfaces) and reduces the difficulty of all rolls to keep one's footing on treacherous surfaces (such as ice) by two.

Note that these features can be combined with other powers. For example, a Cainite could use Form of the Beast (Protean 4) to assume the shape of a

hunting beast, and then use Ennoia's Mastery to further adapt it if desired.

Experience Cost: 21

MET: (Pre-requisites Basic Animalism, Intermediate Protean, experience cost 21)

Make a Mental Challenge (retest with Survival). Success allows one feature to be changed. Spending additional Mental Traits allows for extra changes on a one-for-one basis, with no more than four changes permitted on a single subject. Some suggested changes:

Claws: Inflict aggravated damage and curve to allow a two-Trait bonus on climbing challenges.

Eyes: Gain two bonus Traits on challenges to spot moving targets and suffer a one-Trait penalty on hidden or camouflaged targets that are remaining still.

Feet/ Hands: Flatten and spread to negate all penalties to movement in soft surfaces (snow, swamps, sand) and gain a two-Trait bonus to keep your footing on ice or other treacherous surfaces.

These features may be combined with other powers (which require the usual expenditures and challenges).

Test the Road

Animalism 3, Auspex 2

This power is chiefly used by Wardens to test the sincerity of pilgrims who wish to visit Feral holy sites. Some Lorekeepers also employ it to check the veracity of Cainites who approach them wishing to be taught the lore of the Road of the Beast.

The Feral begins asking the suspect Cainite a series of questions about the Beast or asks them to begin hunting. The nature of the test is not really important. The Feral is actually watching the way the other Cainite speaks and acts to see if the Beast is truly just below the surface, guiding her actions.

System: The player rolls the character's Road rating (difficulty 8). The Storyteller might want to make this roll in secret so the player doesn't know whether the information she gets is true or false. Each success indicates how clearly the Feral can determine the motives of the stranger. A botch indicates that the Feral perceives the stranger as a senior follower of the Road of the Beast immediately.

1 success: Can determine whether the stranger is hostile to the Road of the Beast.

2 successes: Can determine whether the stranger is interested in the Road of the Beast.

3 successes: Can determine whether the stranger is a Feral or not.

4 successes: Can determine whether the stranger is a Feral or not, and if so, what path (if any) he follows.

5 successes: As above, but can also place the stranger's Road rating in one of the following categories: low (1-4), medium (5-7) or high (8-10).

Note that if the target is not a follower of the Road of the Beast, the character cannot determine what road she actually walks.

Experience Cost: 21

MET: (Prerequisites Intermediate *Animalism* and Basic *Auspex*, experience cost 21)

This ability is used to seek out fellow Ferals and to gauge a Cainite's interest in the Road of the Beast. Begin by engaging the target in conversation or bringing them on a hunt. After a few minutes of observation, make a Mental Challenge. Success determines whether or not the target is indeed a fellow Feral. On a loss, make a second Simple Test. If the user loses this test, the target appears to be a senior follower of the Road of the Beast. Spend additional Mental Traits for the following: One Trait, to learn if the subject is hostile to the Road of the Beast; two Traits, to learn what path the subject follows; three Traits, to find out the subject's Road rating. This power does not allow you to learn what road the target actually follows if she is not a Feral.

Revoke the Gift of Adam *Animalism* 4, *Protean* 4

God created Adam in His own image and gave him dominion over animals, or so Genesis says. The Ferals, however, know how fickle God can be. This bizarre power is sometimes used by Ferals who have no interest in diablerie, but who wish for a hunt more challenging than chasing animals, and more satisfying than chasing a terrified mortal.

It allows the Feral to transform a mortal into an appropriate beast to be hunted. The mortal retains none of his conscious memories or personality, but he does keep his intellect. This allows a human who has been transformed into a stag, for example, to use his horns to shift a lever, push a cart and so on.

Ferals who make use of this power claim that it allows them to experience the greatest hunt of all. It remains controversial, though, even among followers of the Path of the Hunter, some of whom regard such manipulation of the natural order as the worst kind of blasphemy.

System: The Feral must capture and subdue a mortal. The mortal is then given a draught of the Cainite's blood (two blood points is usually sufficient) while the Cainite concentrates his will and begins touching the body parts to be transformed, drawing the weak Beast within the mortal to the surface and readying it to run.



The ritual takes about five minutes to complete, as the mortal is progressively transformed into a stag or other similar beast. Body mass does not change by more than 10% or so unless the Cainite uses more blood (one blood point per additional 10%). This blood can be pooled, and there are stories of packs who have transformed strong mortals into mighty creatures indeed. Only the leader of the pack needs to know this power. The other pack members simply contribute their vitae.

The transformed mortal will instinctively flee the Cainites who created it, but he will use whatever cunning and intelligence it had as a human to avoid its pursuers.

The effect wears off at the end of the night, whereupon the mortal will be rendered unconscious and naked, but with full and clear memories of what happened to him. Many victims of this power are driven mad by the memories. If they survive, though, the Ferals usually either kill them out of mercy or proclaim them worthy of the Embrace.

Experience cost: 28

MET: (Prerequisites *Animalism* through *Ride the Wild Mind* and *Protean* through *Form of the Beast*, experience cost 28)

This power changes a human target into a prey animal such as a stag. Once a mortal target is caught and subdued, he is fed at least two Traits of blood, and the power is enacted, starting with a touch on the parts to be transformed. (As the target is supposed to be subdued, this requires no challenge.) The ritual is complete in five minutes, during which time the mortal transforms as his Beast comes to the surface. If the target is fed more blood, he gains greater body mass (one Trait for 10% increase). Packs can pool their blood for this transformation, yet only the leader need know how to enact this ritual. The new animal has no human understanding or memories, but it still possesses the Mental Traits it had as a human and will use them to their fullest extent to avoid its pursuers. At the end of the night, the mortal reverts to his normal form, complete with his memories of the night's activities. Lupines and others who are intimately familiar with the behavior of prey animals will know there is something wrong with a deer or the like that can push a cart or work a lever.

Merits and Flaws

The following is a collection of new Merits and Flaws that are especially appropriate for followers of the Road of the Beast. Check with your Storyteller before purchasing any for your character, and pay heed to any limitations she may have placed on them.

Mind of the Prey 1-pt. Merit

You are able to think like a hunted beast, which enables you to second-guess your prey and anticipate the moves that it will make.

When hunting in the wilds, lower the difficulty of all hunting rolls by two. When hunting mortals, this gift is slightly less useful. The difficulty on hunting rolls drops by one. The Merit is ineffective when hunting other Cainites, for all Cainites, regardless of road, are predators.

MET: Gain two bonus Traits for challenges relating to hunting animal prey in the wild. Gain a single bonus Trait for hunting mortals. This Merit gives no benefit when hunting Cainites.

Good Mimic 2-pt. Merit

You have studied the behavior of wolves or are simply a naturally good mimic of their behavior. Whenever you assume the form of a wolf using *Protean*, you may subtract one from the difficulty of all *Animal Ken* rolls to fit in with a pack of wolves, as well as from any *Animalism* difficulties to communicate with or control them.

When associating with werewolves, the *Animal Ken* bonus still applies, but only when you are in wolf form. You will still need to cover your scent (or lack thereof) somehow.

MET: Gain a bonus Trait for *Animal Ken* or *Animalism* challenges relating to attempts to blend in with a pack of wolves. Most times, they will think you're one of the pack and give you little trouble. This Merit will work with werewolves only when you're in wolf form, and they will notice things that are wrong with you, like a lack of scent. Werewolf Gifts that can scry supernatural creatures will pick you out.

Leader of the Pack 3-pt. Merit

You have an aura of command about you, a raw, forceful presence that others find difficult to ignore. Others turn to you as a leader in times of conflict or whenever physical action is required. Mortals instinctively submit to your leadership in times of stress and physical threat.

Lower by two the difficulties of all *Intimidation*, *Leadership* and *Etiquette* rolls when dealing with such situations. Other Cainites are affected by this aura as well, but only if they are of a higher generation than your character.

MET: Gain two bonus Traits for challenges relating to leadership, intimidation or etiquette during stressful situations or conflicts when mortals turn to you for help. Cainites are affected by this aura if they are of a higher generation than your character.

Scent of the Beast 3-pt. Merit

Your body exudes the scent of a predator, and any Cainite who is able to follow a scent will identify you as a beast (such as a wolf or a bear, or perhaps a large hunting dog) rather than as a Cainite. Cainites using *Auspex* are able to accurately identify your true nature with a successful Perception + Survival roll (difficulty of your character's Road rating or 7, whichever is higher). Animals likewise fear you as they would a large predator, but they do not feel the same fear of the supernatural from you that most Cainites instill.

For some reason, werewolves can usually detect a Cainite with this Merit for what she is with very little effort (Storyteller's discretion).

MET: Your scent identifies as a bear, a wolf or other large predator animal should a Cainite attempt to track you by scent. With a successful use of *Auspex* (Mental Challenge, retest with *Survival*), your tracker can identify you as a Cainite. Animals treat you as they would a large predator, rather than as a Cainite. Werewolves can spot you with little difficulty on their part.

Obsessed with the Hunt 2-pt. Flaw

In conversation, you cannot help phrasing everything in terms of the hunt. You do not speak of rivals and enemies, you speak of prey. You do not speak of nations and coteries, you speak of territories and packs. This Flaw can be regarded as a quirk at first, but it quickly becomes annoying. This Flaw must be roleplayed, and your Storyteller will impose penalties on Social rolls (normally only a +1 to difficulties, but possibly more depending on the circumstances) as she sees fit.

Alternatively, you may speak little but always act as if you are hunting. You shift position, cock your head to listen and then suddenly jump on a table, stalk slowly across a room, bare your teeth when angered and so forth.

MET: You're obsessed with the hunt to the point that it interferes with your social interactions. You may phrase your conversations in terms of the hunt, or you may act like a hunting animal. Obviously this behavior will not endear you to more "civilized" company, and you suffer a one-Trait penalty on social interactions in a "polite" setting like an Elysium. At Storyteller discretion, you may suffer other penalties in some social situations.

Taste of the Kill 3-pt. Flaw

You refuse to consume blood that does not come from a kill that either you or your pack has made

directly. You cannot have food brought to you, and you cannot feed from the drugged, drunk, sleeping or helpless. You draw sustenance as much from the act of stalking and slaying your terrified prey as from the vitae itself. This Flaw makes social situations difficult and it also means that you need to hunt (and kill) your own prey every few nights.

If you are low on blood and are unable to hunt (for example, if you are being held hostage or are extremely weak), you may make frenzy rolls as per normal (see *Dark Ages: Vampire*, page 263). If you frenzy, you may feed from whatever source is available.

MET: You prefer to take your blood as a hunter — by stalking and killing suitable prey. You will not drink from incapacitated prey or allow yourself to be fed like a pet hound. If you become hungry enough due to blood lack or inability to hunt, make frenzy challenges and slake your thirst on whatever's handy.

Face of the Beast 5-pt. Flaw

Like the Gangrel, you gain animal features when you frenzy as the Beast leaves its mark on your body. Each time you frenzy, you gain an animal feature. Every five such features permanently reduce one of your Social Attributes (Charisma, Manipulation or Appearance) by one.

Gangrel cannot take this Flaw.

MET: As the Gangrel Clan Disadvantage.

Heart of the Beast 5-pt. Flaw

Like the Brujah, you have difficulty resisting frenzy. The Beast lies close to the surface in you, and frenzies are your usual reaction to stress, setbacks or other difficulties. Raise all frenzy difficulties by two.

Brujah cannot take this Flaw.

MET: As the Brujah Clan Disadvantage.

Artifacts Texts

The following is a selection of artifacts and texts of particular significance to the Ferals. They are intended to act as springboards and ideas for generating stories, not as a list of treasures to be acquired and collected by the characters of an ambitious group of players.

Artifacts

Ferals rarely place faith or value in "holy artifacts," as they generally prefer to place their faith in tooth and claw rather than relics. Nevertheless, there are a few items that followers of the road, as a whole, views as significant.

The Bone

This item, known to Ferals simply as "the Bone," is the jawbone that Caine used to murder Abel. It is rumored to have various mystical properties, ranging from curing vampirism to granting enlightenment to instantly destroying any Cainite who touches it.

It was kept in the valley of Abel's murder for some time, but it mysteriously vanished some 500 years ago. Wardens have searched for it ever since, but no trace of it has been found. Were it to surface in the hands of any other sect, road or clan, the Ferals would stop at nothing to reclaim it.

Horns of the Hunter

There are a number of these horns, each reputedly made from the horns of a beast killed by a mighty hunter, usually either Caine or Ennoia. As with the Bone, the powers attributed to the horns vary, and each one is unique.

Unlike the Bone, which no Feral has ever admitted to seeing, the horns are undeniably real. They can usually be found in the hands of pack leaders and other great warriors. The powers they grant vary but may include control over natural predators, the ability to flush prey from hiding places and the ability to cause all who hear the horn to frenzy.

Recently, one of these horns fell into the hands of an Italian Ventrue named Guiseppe Baggio. Guiseppe has been intermittently pursued by Ferals ever since, but he has eluded capture thus far.

The Flesh of the Hunted

The Flesh of the Hunted allows any Cainite who eats it to take the form of the animal from which the flesh has been prepared. Once a carcass has been obtained, any Feral with a Road rating of 8 or better may attempt change it into the Flesh of the Hunted. Doing so requires an Intelligence + Occult roll, difficulty 8. Each roll takes an entire night's work and requires part of the carcass to be ritually skinned and smoked. Each success creates one portion of the flesh, which must be consumed within two nights or it loses its power. Regardless of the number of successes generated, the procedure uses up the entire carcass.

To use the flesh, the Cainite simply eats it (the normal problems with consuming solid food do not apply, but the Cainite gains no blood points from the flesh either). Over the next five turns, the Cainite transforms into the animal the flesh was taken from. The form holds until the next sunrise, and the Cainite retains all of her mental faculties and Disciplines. (Some powers may not be usable in the new form,

though. See page 206 of *Dark Ages: Vampire*.) Yet, the Cainite also retains her weaknesses. Fire and sunlight still cause aggravated damage and still induce Röttschreck, and she still loses one blood point each night.

To resume her natural form, the Cainite simply concentrates for a moment (the player rolls Willpower, difficulty 7; one success is sufficient) and the magic is undone. If the roll fails, the Cainite must wait another night and try again. If it botches, the Cainite has forgotten her true nature and cannot resume her natural form for (10 - [Road rating]) weeks. A Cainite in this predicament avoids sunlight instinctively, but only feeds on blood if the animal whose form she wears is a predator.

Texts and Tales

Despite the general reluctance of Ferals to write anything of their beliefs and practices down, there are few exceptions. This section describes two of them, along with the road's central epic.

The Correspondence of Rodrigo

Rodrigo is an Iberian Brujah and a Grey Hunter. In recent decades, he has been engaged in the project of writing down as much as he can about the road. Rodrigo has been collecting his notes and thoughts into a great manuscript. He is a great believer that the Road of the Beast is the only road of salvation for the Children of Caine, and he is always willing to discuss its tenets and beliefs with others.

He also engages in regular correspondence with other Ferals and a few other scholarly Cainites. They send circular letters to each other and have far-ranging debates on the nature of Cainite existence, the myths attached to it and the lessons to be learned from mortal philosophers and churchmen.

As a result, letters and other documents from Rodrigo may be found almost anywhere there are Cainites. Most of them are not particularly insightful or damaging. (Rodrigo is no fool, and he is aware of the risks of correspondence.) There are a few that he cannot account for, though, and he would be glad to re-acquire them.

Several of the more reactionary followers of the Road of the Beast would be horrified if they were to learn of Rodrigo's activities. They would most likely see writing down information about the road as a betrayal of its great truths to the weak and civilized fools who pursue them. Were this to happen, it is likely that Rodrigo would be forced to fight for his unlife.

The Grey Book

Charisse de Grey wrote down many of the principles of courtly hunting before she vanished. The whereabouts of these writings — collectively called the "Grey Book," although no-one knows for certain if they have ever been collected into a single volume — are unknown. Fragments appear from time to time, and they are eagerly sought by the Grey Hunters, who are always keen to gain further insights and instruction from their namesake.

According to rumor, Charisse still exists and is manipulating this faction of the Cainite world by releasing new pages of the book with suggestions and instructions that slowly act to bend the will and behavior of those who read them to her. These rumors could quickly be resolved by handing over some pages to a Tremere for analysis, but no Feral would be so foolish as to do so.

The writings themselves vary, from primers on courtly intrigue to explicit instructions on how to stalk and kill one's prey. They all appear to be written in the same hand and by the same author.

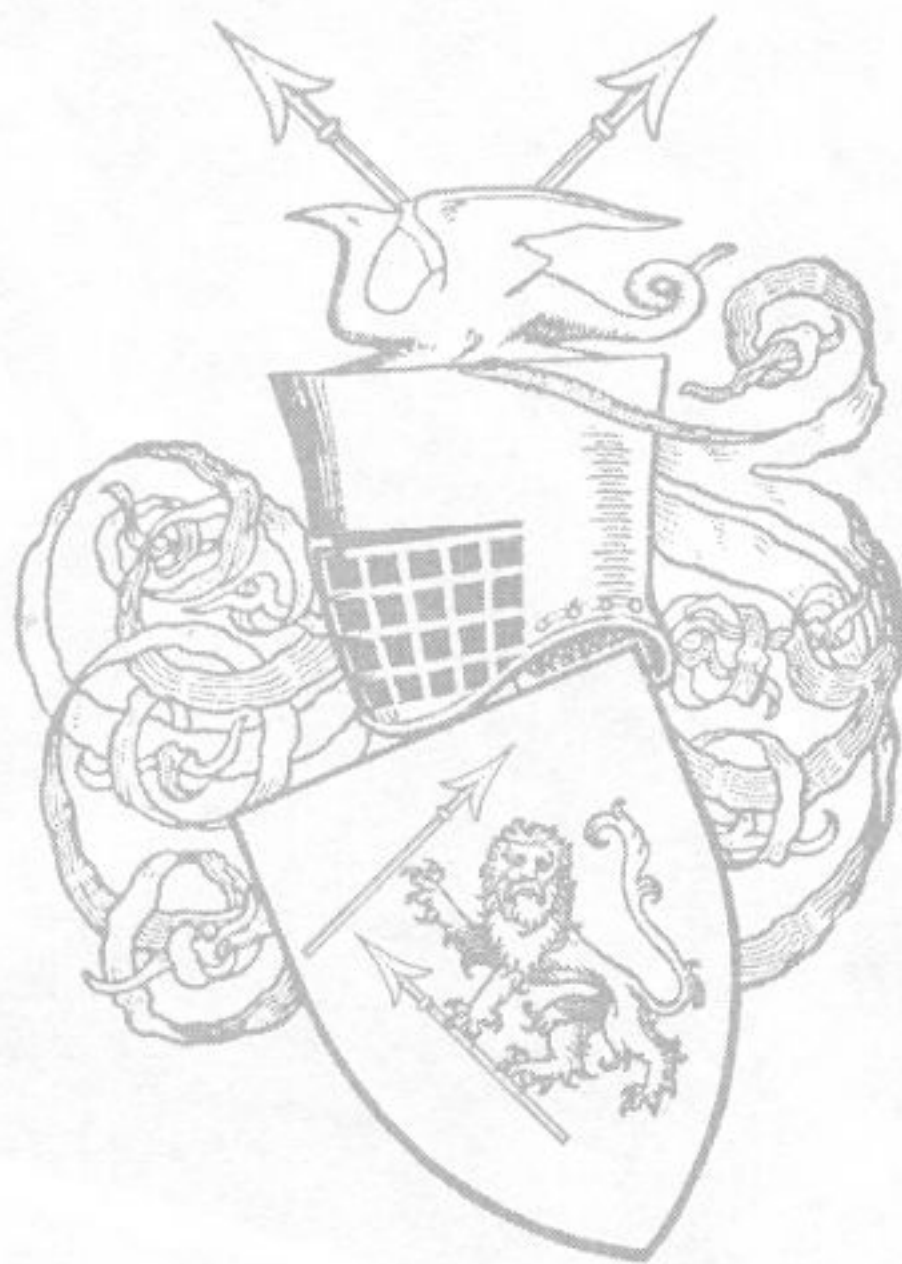
Ennoia's Tale

Ennoia's Tale is the central myth for the Ferals. The tale is an epic poem that, in its full form, takes several hours to recite and is usually performed by a small team of performers, who take turns voicing the different parts and narrating the events.

The tale tells of Ennoia's birth, her learning at the feet of Caine, her wandering and temptations in the wilderness and the insights that eventually led her to found what is tonight known as the Road of the Beast.

To perform the tale is an extended action, with a total of 10 successes needed (20 for the full version of the tale). More than one Feral may contribute to this roll, as per the cooperation rules in **Dark Ages: Vampire** (page 118).

Cainites who hear the full tale may, at the Storyteller's option, use it as a moment of truth and take the opportunity to advance on the Road of the Beast. An extended Willpower roll with five total successes is needed to keep one's attention sufficiently focused on the tale.







CHAPTER FOUR: SAVAGES

...for he is bettir shaped and strengier for to do
harme than eny other beest...

— Surtees, *Handley Cross*

The Road of the Beast is not for the weak. Not all Cainites are strong, honest and brutal enough to endure its rigors. In the end, even the weak end up reinforcing the tenets of the road, as they give of their blood to strengthen those hardy souls who revel in the Beast's kiss.

Six such souls are detailed here. These templates can be used as characters for players as written, or merely serve as inspiration. Likewise, the Storyteller can use them as supporting cast for the coterie: sources of inspiration, allies... or implacable foes.

After the templates are descriptions of some notable Ferals. Not all are famous or even widely known, but together they are a sample of the great diversity of belief and practice the Road of the Beast accommodates. The Storyteller should use them in her chronicle as she sees fit.

DIABLERIST

I'm hungry.

Prelude: The youngest daughter of a minor noble family, you seethed with quiet resentment at the preferential treatment handed out to your brothers and older sisters. You much preferred to spend your time alone exploring the woods.

Then your father arranged a marriage for you. You hated the idea, so you ran away, but you couldn't outrun your father's influence. His men found you and brought you home within a week. Enraged at your own powerlessness, you were not so much married as disposed of.

Life with your new master — you refused to call him "husband" — was dismal. All but imprisoned on his estates, you were not even allowed to journey to the nearby villages without an escort of bodyguards. Your entry into the ranks of the unliving was equally forced. Returning one evening from a rare trip to the market, a ravenous Cainite attacked your carriage and tore through your bodyguards. Left for dead, you awoke the next night with a howling thirst and a seemingly limitless fury. It has served you well. You tracked down your sire and slew her for damning you. Since that night, you have determined to do whatever is necessary to ensure your power and survival. You're tired of others imposing their will upon you, so you're going to make sure you have enough

power that you can do what you want, when you want. The Amaranth is simply a means to that end. You are sometimes troubled by the souls you have consumed, but never by the fact that your secret would make you an outcast and a fugitive if it were revealed.

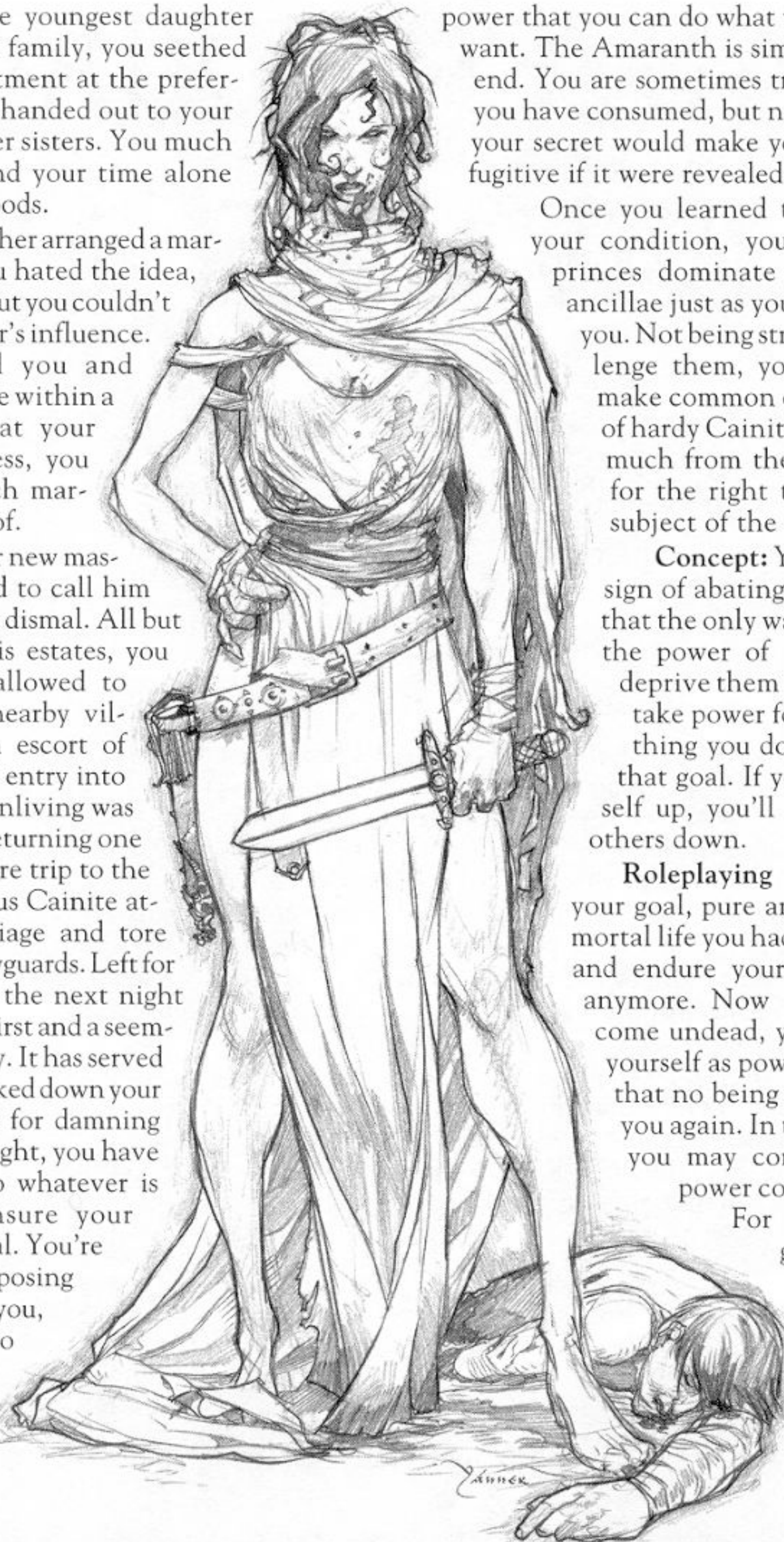
Once you learned to fully understand your condition, you realized that the princes dominate the neonates and ancillae just as your father dominated you. Not being strong enough to challenge them, you have decided to make common cause with a coterie of hardy Cainites. You are learning much from them and are waiting for the right time to broach the subject of the Amaranth.

Concept: Your fury shows little sign of abating. You have decided that the only way to free yourself of the power of others is either to deprive them of their power, or to take power for your own. Everything you do is directed toward that goal. If you can't raise yourself up, you'll settle for dragging others down.

Roleplaying Hints: Freedom is your goal, pure and simple. All your mortal life you had to bottle your rage and endure your helplessness. Not anymore. Now that you have become undead, you intend to make yourself as powerful as possible, so that no being can ever command you again. In time, if you survive, you may come to realize that power comes in many forms.

For now, though, your goals center on physical and supernatural might.

Equipment: traveling clothes, dagger, ghoulish horse.



Dark Ages VAMPIRE

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: Survivor
Demeanor: Monster
Clan: Gangrel

Generation: 10th
Concept: Diablerist
Haven:

ATTRIBUTES

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●●○○○○	Charisma	●●●○○○○○	Perception	●●●○○○○○
Dexterity	●●●●○○○○	Manipulation	●●●○○○○○	Intelligence	●●●○○○○○
Stamina	●●○○○○○○	Appearance	●●○○○○○○	Wits	●●●○○○○○

ABILITIES

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●○○○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○○○○	Academics	●●○○○○○○
Athletics	●●●○○○○○	Archery	○○○○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	○○○○○○○○
Brawl	●●○○○○○○	Commerce	○○○○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○○○○
Dodge	●●●○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○○○○	Law	○○○○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○○○○	Etiquette	●●○○○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○○○○
Leadership	○○○○○○○○	Ride	●●○○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○○○○
Legerdemain	○○○○○○○○	Stealth	●●●○○○○○	Seneschal	●●○○○○○○
Subterfuge	●●○○○○○○	Survival	●●○○○○○○	Theology	○○○○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
Fortitude	●○○○○○○○	Contacts	●●○○○○○○	Conscience/Conviction	●●●○○○
Protean	●●●○○○○○	Generation	●●○○○○○○	Self-Control/Instinct	●●●○○○
	○○○○○○○○	Resources	●○○○○○○○	Courage	●●●●○
	○○○○○○○○		○○○○○○○○		
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Other Traits

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Road

Beast (Hunter)

●●●●●○○○○

Aura: Menace (0)

Willpower

●●●●●○○○

○○○○○○○○

Blood Pool

○○○○○○○○

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Health

Bruised ☐

Hurt -1 ☐

Injured -1 ☐

Wounded -2 ☐

Mauled -2 ☐

Crippled -5 ☐

Incapacitated ☐

Weakness

Gain animal feature when frenzy

Experience

PHILOSOPHER

Fascinating. But wrong. The "higher" soul rules at the "lower" soul's pleasure.

Prelude: You were a bright child. So bright, in fact, that your local monastery saw your potential and made you a novice. Your parents were glad to be rid of you, and you discovered a new world of words and learning. You were fascinated by everything you read, but your particular interest in Greek and Egyptian philosophy caused some consternation, especially when your Biblical studies fell behind.

You didn't care. You were fascinated by Plato's theory of the soul, convinced that his insight should be incorporated more fully into the teachings of the Church. The fact that he was a pagan did not, in your opinion, reduce the quality of his ideas in any way. How could Plato have been expected to follow Christ before the Savior's birth?

The monks didn't like you, but their master, a Nosferatu who laired in a crypt near the monastery, was intrigued. Desperate for the companionship of a mind unshackled by the Church, she Embraced you on the very night you met.

Your first reaction was one of horror, but joy soon took its place. You reveled in your strength and in the power of the Beast. Here at last was an opportunity to test Plato's theories first-hand. Could the obedient white horse of reason and the wild black horse of passion be reconciled? Could they be harnessed together to draw the chariot of the soul? Every moment, every sensation was a test, a potential source of knowledge.

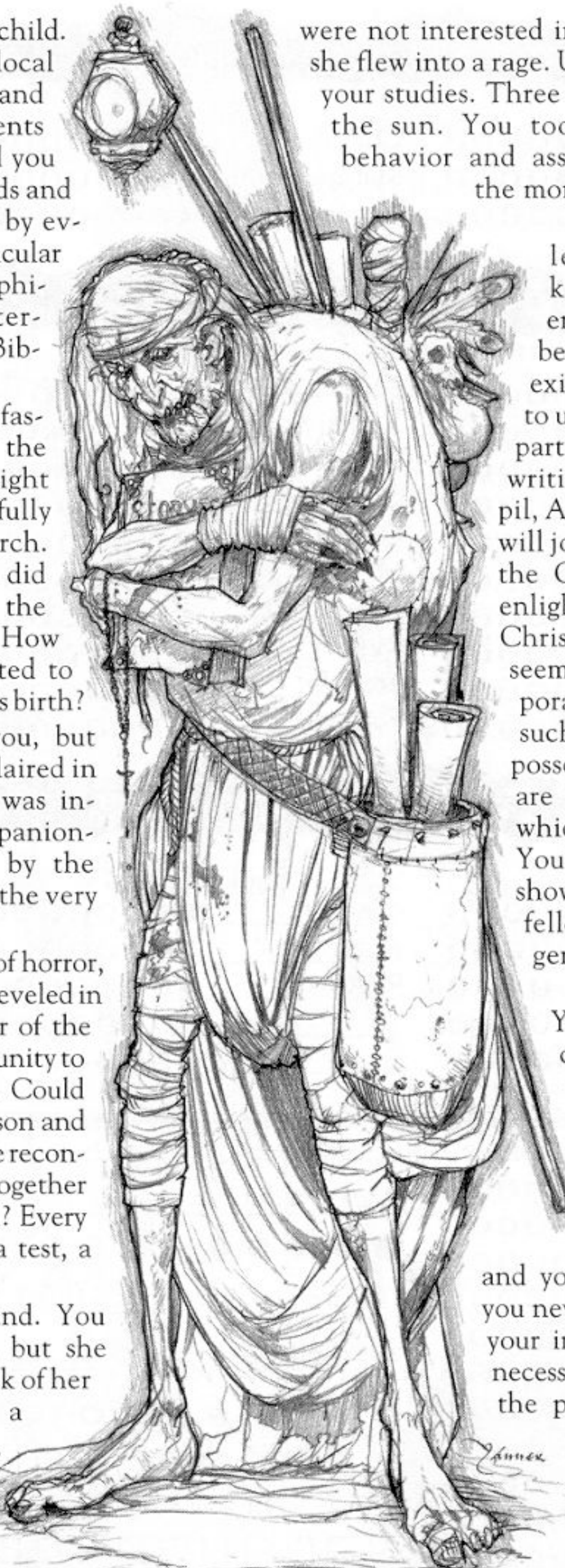
Your sire didn't understand. You relished your new existence, but she had never gotten over the shock of her transformation. She wanted a companion, a kindred soul to ease the loneliness of the long nights ahead. When it became clear you

were not interested in being this companion, she flew into a rage. Unmoved, you continued your studies. Three nights later, she greeted the sun. You took some notes on her behavior and assumed her influence at the monastery.

Concept: You are a restless seeker of both knowledge and experience. Now that you have been given an everlasting existence, you're determined to unlock its secrets. You are particularly interested in the writings of Plato and his pupil, Aristotle. Some night, you will journey to Greece. Surely, the Cainites there are more enlightened than these fearful Christian vampires. All they seem concerned with is temporal power. You sneer at such crass avarice. The only possessions that interest you are your books and scrolls, which you guard jealously. You'd be willing, however, to show them to a student or fellow scholar who seemed genuinely interested.

Roleplaying Hints: You find your condition fascinating and you're always delving into religious, philosophical and metaphysical texts in an attempt to understand it better. You are also fascinated by the Beast and your relationship to it, so you never shy away from letting your instincts guide you when necessary. Your goal is to achieve the perfect balance between reason and instinct.

Equipment: books, scrolls, ragged clothing



Dark Ages VAMPIRE

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: Innovator
Demeanor: Caretaker
Clan: Nosferatu

Generation: 12th
Concept: Philosopher
Haven:

ATTRIBUTES

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●●○○○○	Charisma	●●●○○○○○	Perception	●●●●○○○○
Dexterity	●●○○○○○○	Manipulation	●●●○○○○○	Intelligence	●●●●○○○○
Stamina	●●○○○○○○	Appearance	✗○○○○○○○	Wits	●●○○○○○○

ABILITIES

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	○○○○○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○○○○	Academics	●●●○○○○○
Athletics	●○○○○○○○	Archery	●●○○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	●○○○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○○○○	Commerce	○○○○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○○○○	Law	○○○○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○○○○	Etiquette	●○○○○○○○	Linguistics	●●○○○○○○
Expression	●●○○○○○○	Melee	●○○○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○○○○	Occult	●●○○○○○○
Leadership	○○○○○○○○	Ride	●●●○○○○○	Politics	●●○○○○○○
Legerdemain	●●○○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○○○○	Seneschal	○○○○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○○○○	Survival	○○○○○○○○	Theology	●●●○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
Animalism	●●○○○○○○	Contacts	●●○○○○○○	Conscience/Conviction	●●●●○
Obfuscate	●●○○○○○○	Herd	●●○○○○○○	Self-Control/Instinct	●●●●○
	○○○○○○○○	Influence	●○○○○○○○	Courage	●●○○○
	○○○○○○○○	Status	●●○○○○○○		
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Other Traits

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Road

Beast
●●●●●●●●○○
Aura: Menace (-1)
Willpower
●●●●●○○○○○
○○○○○○○○
Blood Pool
○○○○○○○○
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Health

Bruised ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Weakness

Appearance rating of 0

Experience

RAVAGER

Burn it down. Kill anyone who escapes.

Prelude: Your life was a struggle from the day you were born. Your family was poor, and you were a sickly child, unable to work the fields and fit only to beg for alms. When your village was razed in the course of yet another local brawl between minor nobles, you were separated from your family. You spent the remainder of your youth begging for scraps of food and being scorned by the "virtuous." You soon realized that society was simply a form of organized servitude.

As you grew older, you fell in with a band of brigands. You were happy enough making a living robbing from anyone too weak to defend themselves. The morality of your actions never troubled your mind. If society taught you anything, it was that the strong preyed on the weak.

One of the few pleasures in your hard, brutal life was walking alone in the woods. You always went armed, of course, but over a period of time, you became convinced that you were being watched. Eventually, the watcher showed himself. One night you awoke with a start (and an impossibly strong hand over your mouth) as a thick-hewed figure carried you silently out of your camp.

The stranger did not speak. He set you free

and told you to run. The chase was short and terrifying, and it ended with your Embrace. You then feasted on your brigand companions and left for the deep wilderness with your sire. He taught you to nurture the Beast and its murderous rage.

You treasure the wilderness, but something in you longs to take vengeance on those responsible for your suffering as a mortal. Only when the last king has fallen and the last house of God pulled down will you be content.

Cainite society holds little interest for you. It looks like the same thing as mortal society — the strong lording it over the weak. You have joined with a coterie of promising Cainites, for mutual protection and to lend strength to your cause. You are certain that in time, your companions will see the truth in your words and join you in your task of ruin.

Concept: You are the destroyer, the bane of civilization. If you'd lived 800 years ago, you would have helped sack Rome and destroy the empire. You see nothing of value in the works of man, only corruption and creeping weakness.

Roleplaying Hints: You do not hesitate to take what you want from civilization or to take advantage of the opportunities it creates, but you would never consider "settling down" or taking a place in society. You exist for your own interests and, perhaps, those of any companions you deem worthy of spending time with. You are not necessarily an acknowledged leader, but you are almost assuredly a warlord when the situation calls for one.

Equipment: short sword, leather jerkin



Dark Ages VAMPIRE

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: Barbarian
Demeanor: Barbarian
Clan: Brujah

Generation: 9th
Concept: Ravanger
Haven:

ATTRIBUTES

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●○○○○○	Charisma	●●○○○○○○	Perception	●●●○○○○○
Dexterity	●●●○○○○○	Manipulation	●●○○○○○○	Intelligence	●●●○○○○○
Stamina	●●●○○○○○	Appearance	●●○○○○○○	Wits	●●●○○○○○

ABILITIES

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●○○○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○○○○	Academics	○○○○○○○○
Athletics	●●○○○○○○	Archery	●●●○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	●●●○○○○○
Brawl	●●●○○○○○	Commerce	○○○○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○○○○	Law	○○○○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○○○○	Melee	●●●○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○○○○
Intimidation	●●●○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○○○○	Occult	●●○○○○○○
Leadership	●●○○○○○○	Ride	○○○○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○○○○
Legerdemain	○○○○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○○○○	Seneschal	○○○○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○○○○	Survival	●●○○○○○○	Theology	○○○○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
Celerity	●●○○○○○○	Herd	●●○○○○○○	Conscience/Conviction	●●●○○○
Potence	●●○○○○○○	Generation	●●●○○○○○	Self-Control/Instinct	●●●○○○
	○○○○○○○○		○○○○○○○○	Courage	●●●●●●
	○○○○○○○○		○○○○○○○○		
	○○○○○○○○		○○○○○○○○		

Other Traits

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Road

Beast (Savage)

●●●●●●●○○○

Aura: Menace (0)

Willpower

●●●●●○○○○○

○○○○○○○○

Blood Pool

○○○○○○○○

○○○○○○○○

○○○○○○○○

Health

Bruised ☐

Hurt -1 ☐

Injured -1 ☐

Wounded -2 ☐

Mauled -2 ☐

Crippled -5 ☐

Incapacitated ☐

Weakness

+2 difficulty to resist frenzy

Experience

LOREKEEPER

Hear now the tale of Shabaqo the Nubian, apostate and traitor to the Beast.

Prelude: You don't think much about your mortal life. Your upbringing was comfortable enough, but you felt stifled and constrained by the rules of "polite" society. You yearned to be able to freely express the great passions that lay in your breast.

You understand now that they were the stirrings of the Beast. Your death has set it free and provided you with constant inspiration. Your fellow Treaders sometimes look askance at you and say your works lack subtlety, but you notice that they never snigger when you're performing, and that their works are as dry as dust, devoid of real passion and feeling. You care little for their bloodless frivolities and petty intrigues. Your mighty passion is all that drives you and is all that matters to you.

You were a great disappointment to your sire. Embraced for your fine singing voice and your skill with poetry, song and scripture, you were expected to learn the polite words and gentle songs he so loved. But you soon discovered your true inspiration: the Beast. The romantic courts, your sire told you, had no interest in your tales of blood and slaughter, but you could see the jealousy in his eyes as he spoke. Your parting was not amicable.

It was easy for you to learn the great tales of the Beast taught by the road. In only a few years, you became an expert and were soon composing new tales. Doing so required you to travel, which you prefer to do in the company of others. Sometimes you stay in a town or

city for years, particularly if there are stories to tell and deeds to record.

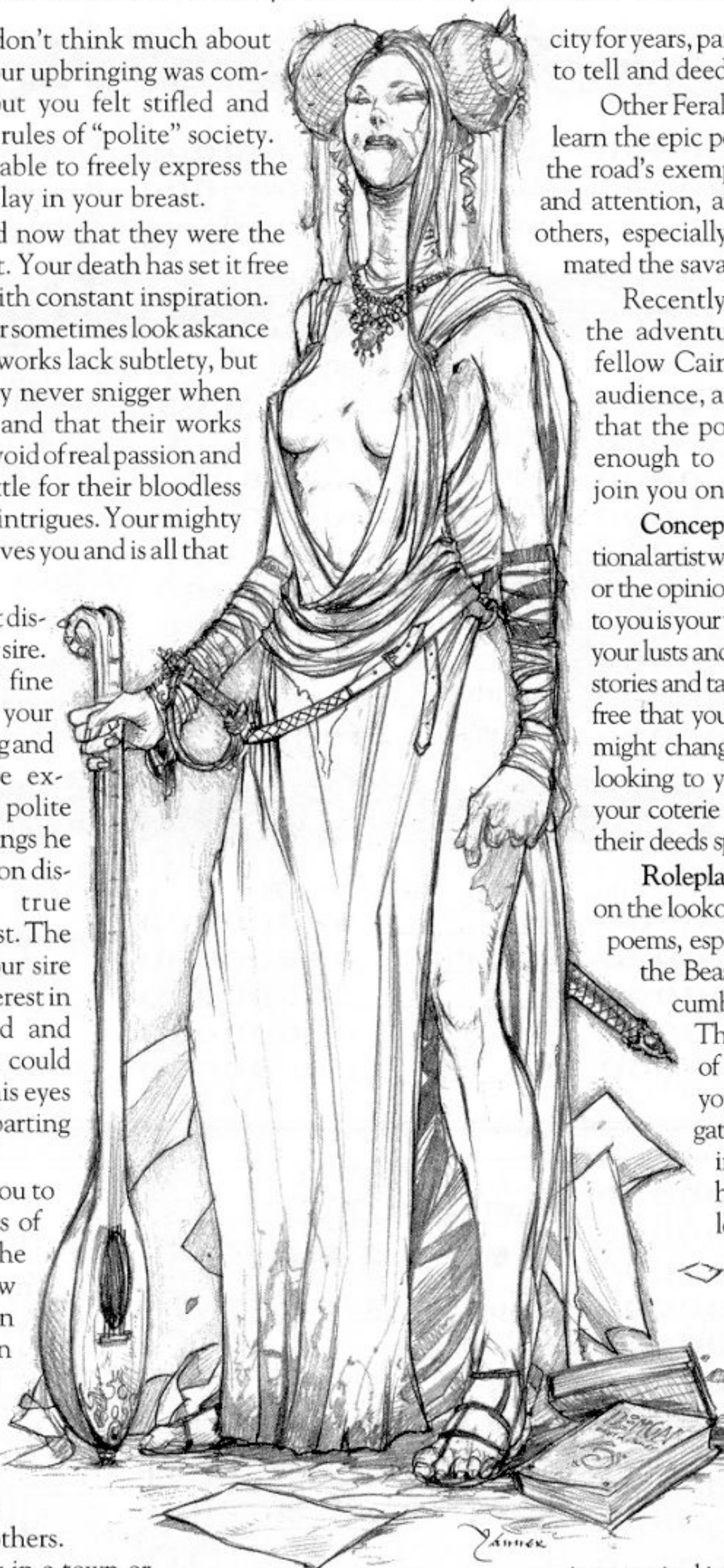
Other Ferals sometimes come to you to learn the epic poems that tell the stories of the road's exemplars. You love the flattery and attention, and you love hunting with others, especially when they've underestimated the savagery and lust of your Beast.

Recently, you decided to chronicle the adventures of a small coterie of fellow Cainites. You love having an audience, and you are secretly hoping that the power of your songs will be enough to convince your fellows to join you on the Road of the Beast.

Concept: You are the unconventional artist who cares not for her reputation or the opinions of others. All that matters to you is your work. You love being ruled by your lusts and whims, and you love telling stories and tales. Your existence is so care-free that you haven't considered how it might change when young Ferals come looking to you for instruction, nor how your coterie will react to having tales of their deeds spread across the land.

Roleplaying Hints: You're always on the lookout for new stories, songs and poems, especially those that chronicle the Beast and those who have succumbed to—or risen above—it. This has made you something of an expert on the road, and you are much in demand for gatherings and, occasionally, for instruction. You're always happy to oblige, sharing your love of song and poem. You also revel in the sensations of the Beast and often let it loose, reveling in the intense sensations it brings. It's great fodder for your own compositions.

Equipment: fine clothes for court appearances, filthy clothes for traveling, musical instrument (player's choice)



Dark Ages VAMPIRE

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: Celebrant
Demeanor: Gallant
Clan: Toreador

Generation: 12th
Concept: LoreKeeper
Haven:

ATTRIBUTES

Physical

Strength _____ ●●○○○○○○○
Dexterity _____ ●●○○○○○○○
Stamina _____ ●●○○○○○○○

Social

Charisma _____ ●●●●○○○○○
Manipulation _____ ●●●○○○○○
Appearance _____ ●●●○○○○○

Mental

Perception _____ ●●●○○○○○
Intelligence _____ ●●○○○○○○○
Wits _____ ●●●○○○○○

ABILITIES

Talents

Alertness _____ ●●○○○○○○○
Athletics _____ ●○○○○○○○
Brawl _____ ●○○○○○○○
Dodge _____ ●●○○○○○○○
Empathy _____ ●○○○○○○○
Expression _____ ●●●○○○○○
Intimidation _____ ●○○○○○○○
Leadership _____ ○○○○○○○○
Legerdemain _____ ○○○○○○○○
Subterfuge _____ ●●○○○○○○○

Skills

Animal Ken _____ ○○○○○○○○
Archery _____ ○○○○○○○○
Commerce _____ ○○○○○○○○
Crafts _____ ●○○○○○○○
Etiquette _____ ●●●○○○○○
Melee _____ ○○○○○○○○
Performance _____ ●●●●○○○○○
Ride _____ ○○○○○○○○
Stealth _____ ●●○○○○○○○
Survival _____ ○○○○○○○○

Knowledges

Academics _____ ●○○○○○○○
Hearth Wisdom _____ ●○○○○○○○
Investigation _____ ○○○○○○○○
Law _____ ○○○○○○○○
Linguistics _____ ●●○○○○○○○
Medicine _____ ○○○○○○○○
Occult _____ ○○○○○○○○
Politics _____ ●●○○○○○○○
Seneschal _____ ○○○○○○○○
Theology _____ ○○○○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

Disciplines

Auspex _____ ●●○○○○○○○
Celerity _____ ●○○○○○○○
Presence _____ ●●○○○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○○○○

Backgrounds

Contacts _____ ●○○○○○○○
Resources _____ ●○○○○○○○
Status _____ ●●●○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○○○○

Virtues

Conscience/Conviction _____ ●●●○○○
Self-Control/Instinct _____ ●●●●○○
Courage _____ ●●●○○○

Other Traits _____
_____ ○○○○○○○○
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Road _____
Beast _____
●●●●●●●○○○
Aura: _____ Menace (0)
Willpower _____
●●●●●●●○○○
□□□□□□□□
Blood Pool _____
□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□

Health _____
Bruised ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐
Weakness _____
Enraptured by beauty _____
Experience _____

SEDUCER

My dear Countess, you look positively ravishing. Why, it's enough to bring out the Beast in me....

Prelude: Luxury. Privilege. These things were your birthright. As a young nobleman, you enjoyed the pleasures of your rank, and none more so than the hunt. Nothing excited you more than chasing down your prey with a well-trained pack of dogs and bringing it to ground. Except, perhaps, for chasing down the local ladies and bringing them to bed. The hunt was what you lived for, be it for sport or sex.

You do not know why you were Embraced, but you suspect it was meant as some kind of joke, that you were not meant to survive. You'd noticed signs that something was moving about your hunting grounds, but you couldn't determine what it was. You camped in the wilds one night with some retainers and your dogs. You awoke to find them all dead and a hairy, man-like figure sitting on your chest. It explained to you what it was, and welcomed you to its world.

You ran all the way to your estate, pursued by your sire. You must have triumphed over him, for he never caught you and you never saw him again. As your chamberlain came to your aid, you tore out his throat with your bare teeth. Eventually, this was explained away as temporary madness, caused by an over-exposure to the moon. For a time, the local priest was wary of you, but he suffered an unfortunate accident one night. It's taken some time and some replacement of your staff, but the household has begun to function nicely on your schedule.

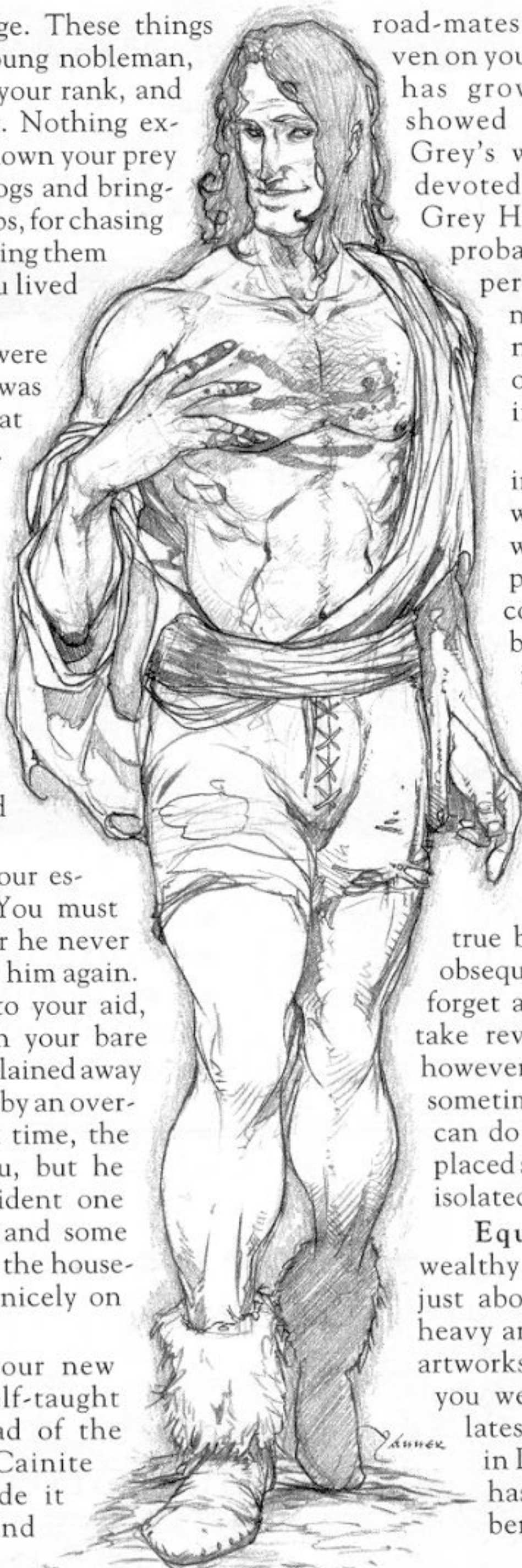
You adapted well to your new existence. You are largely self-taught when it comes to the Road of the Beast, but on your entry to Cainite society, you discretely made it known that both clan- and

road-mates would find a welcome haven on your estates and your reputation has grown. A visiting Toreador showed you some of Charisse de Grey's writings, and you promptly devoted yourself to the Path of the Grey Hunter. In a few years you'll probably fake your own death and perhaps leave your lands. For now the story of your madness, and your odd behavior, only make you more intriguing to the ladies you pursue.

Concept: You are the snake in the grass, the spider lying in wait for prey to wander into its web, the hawk that seeks out its prey from afar. You are an accomplished hunter in the wilds, but since mortals are the most intriguing prey of all, you have decided to test your skills against them and take your pleasures in their very halls and palaces.

Roleplaying Hints: Underneath the smiling, charming exterior, you are a true brute. Always be polite, even obsequious if necessary, but never forget a slight, and never neglect to take revenge. You well understand, however, (as many Ferals do not) that sometimes a well-placed word or two can do just as much harm as a well-placed sword thrust. Once your prey is isolated, strike swiftly and finally.

Equipment: You are quite wealthy, so you can get your hands on just about anything you need, from heavy armor to the finest weapons to artworks and manuscripts. Typically, you wear expensive clothes of the latest cut and carry a blade forged in Damascus (an indulgence that has proved its worth on a number of occasions).



Dark Ages VAMPIRE

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: Monster
Demeanor: Gallant
Clan: Gangrel

Generation: 12th
Concept: Seducer
Haven:

ATTRIBUTES

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●○○○○○	Charisma	●●●○○○○○	Perception	●●○○○○○○○
Dexterity	●●○○○○○○○	Manipulation	●●●○○○○○	Intelligence	●●○○○○○○○
Stamina	●●●○○○○○	Appearance	●●●○○○○○	Wits	●●○○○○○○○

ABILITIES

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●○○○○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○○○○○	Academics	●○○○○○○○○○
Athletics	●○○○○○○○○○	Archery	●●●○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	○○○○○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○○○○○	Commerce	○○○○○○○○○	Investigation	●●○○○○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○○○○○	Law	○○○○○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○○○○○	Etiquette	●●●○○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○○○○○○
Expression	●●○○○○○○○	Melee	●●●○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○○○○○
Leadership	●●○○○○○○○	Ride	●●○○○○○○○	Politics	●●○○○○○○○
Legerdemain	○○○○○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○○○○○	Seneschal	○○○○○○○○○
Subterfuge	●●●○○○○○	Survival	○○○○○○○○○	Theology	○○○○○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
Animalism	●○○○○○○○○○	Domain	●●○○○○○○○	Conscience/Conviction	●●●●○○
Fortitude	●○○○○○○○○○	Herd	●●○○○○○○○	Self-Control/Instinct	●●●○○○
Protean	●●○○○○○○○	Influence	●●○○○○○○○	Courage	●●●○○○
	○○○○○○○○○	Resources	●●●○○○○○		
	○○○○○○○○○		○○○○○○○○○		

Other Traits

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Road

Beast (Grey Hunter)

●●●●●●●○○○

Aura: Menace (0)

Willpower

●●●●●●●○○○

○○○○○○○○○

Blood Pool

○○○○○○○○○

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Health

Bruised ☐

Hurt -1 ☐

Injured -1 ☐

Wounded -2 ☐

Mauled -2 ☐

Crippled -5 ☐

Incapacitated ☐

Weakness

Gain animal feature when frenzy

Experience

WARDEN

You are not welcome here. Leave.

Prelude: You were always happiest when wandering. You ran away from home several times as a child, but you were always brought back. You couldn't help yourself. The unknown lands that lay over the next hill always seemed far more interesting than the lands that lay at your back. You entered the service of your local lord as a messenger and out-rider, and your destiny seemed settled.

What you did not know was that your lord served a greater master than his king. He was a vassal of House Tremere, and your stalwart service soon came to the attention of his masters. As the war with the Tzimisce began in earnest, the Usurpers needed agents capable of moving about the countryside with confidence (and discretion). You soon became a trusted scout and messenger. After proving your trustworthiness and courage, you were given the Embrace — and the most dangerous missions and errands.

On your travels, you met Cainites of Clan Gangrel and learned from them about the Road of the Beast and (more specifically) the Path of the Nomad. You made no secret of your clan and were forced to defend yourself more than once. You adopted the road with no initiation or fanfare, and earned the respect of other Ferals by refusing to turn any Cainites over to the Gargoyle pens.

Gradually, you gained some knowledge of the mystic arts, and your restless feet perhaps made it inevitable that you would become

a Warden. Now you wander Europe, running errands for House Tremere and watching over the road's sacred sites. You never mention these to your clanmates. You don't like the deception, but you are loyal to your fellow Ferals and you know that if you did pass the information on, you'd probably be ordered to quarantine the sites so that the Tremere could use them for their own arcane purposes.

Concept: You are something of an outcast from your clan, but your affinity for the sacred sites you guard runs deep. Your fellow Usurpers find you odd, and many of them distrust you, despite the (quite legitimate) research project you're embarked upon. This research involves measuring the mystic emanations from various cities and sites around Europe in the hope of mapping the ebb and flow of magic.

Roleplaying Hints: Not many people understand you, and you like it that way. There's too much of the world to see and learn about to stay in just one place for more than a year or two, although as eternity begins to weigh upon you, the speed of your travel will most likely slow. You enjoy watching over the road's sacred sites, and you're careful never to say too much about them in your reports. So far, you've been able to manage your divided loyalties, but you fear the night you'll be forced to choose.

Equipment: travel gear, sword, journal.



Dark Ages VAMPIRE

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: Fantastic
Demeanor: Loner
Clan: Tremere

Generation: 11th
Concept: Warden
Haven:

ATTRIBUTES

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●○○○○○	Charisma	●●○○○○○○	Perception	●●●○○○○○
Dexterity	●●●○○○○○	Manipulation	●●○○○○○○	Intelligence	●●○○○○○○
Stamina	●●●○○○○○	Appearance	●●○○○○○○	Wits	●●●○○○○○

ABILITIES

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●●○○○○○	Animal Ken	●●○○○○○○	Academics	●●●○○○○○
Athletics	●●○○○○○○	Archery	●●●○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	○○○○○○○○
Brawl	●●○○○○○○	Commerce	○○○○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○○○○	Crafts	●●○○○○○○	Law	○○○○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○○○○	Melee	●●●○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○○○○	Occult	●●○○○○○○
Leadership	○○○○○○○○	Ride	○○○○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○○○○
Legerdemain	○○○○○○○○	Stealth	●●●○○○○○	Seneschal	○○○○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○○○○	Survival	●●●○○○○○	Theology	○○○○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
Auspex	●●○○○○○○	Generation	●○○○○○○○	Conscience/Conviction	●●●○○○
Dominate	●○○○○○○○	Herd	●●○○○○○○	Self-Control/Instinct	●●●○○○
Thaumaturgy	●○○○○○○○	Mentor	●●○○○○○○	Courage	●●●●○
Fortitude	●○○○○○○○		○○○○○○○○		
	○○○○○○○○		○○○○○○○○		

Other Traits

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Road

Beast (Nomad)

●●●●●○○○○

Aura: Menace (0)

Willpower

●●●●●○○○○

○○○○○○○○

Blood Pool

○○○○○○○○

○○○○○○○○

Health

Bruised ☐

Hurt -1 ☐

Injured -1 ☐

Wounded -2 ☐

Mauled -2 ☐

Crippled -5 ☐

Incapacitated ☐

Weakness

Partial blood oath

Experience

Ferals of Note

Liolya the Eagle

Liolya always fancied herself a poet or storyteller. The eldest daughter of a peasant family on the steppes of Kievan Rus, she lived for the times when the caravans and minstrels would pass through her village.

Life was hard and there seemed no end to her work. Yet something in her soul cried out for more than it seemed life had in store for her. She took to walking in the woods at twilight, listening to the birdsong and composing rhymes and ditties to occupy herself. One summer, a band of traders unlike any other passed through. The other villagers whispered among themselves and shut up the town, hoping that they would pass through quickly.

Liolya couldn't help herself. She snuck out that very night and crept through the woods to the spot where the caravan had set up camp. What she saw would change her life forever.

Some kind of ritual was being prepared, that much was clear. When strong hands lifted her from her hiding place and carried her forward, terror overtook her. A pale figure sat at the edge of the camp, eyeing her coldly. After she was securely trussed, the figure approached her. Baring its fangs, it caressed her neck... and was tackled by a figure that seemed to have leaped down from a tree. The camp erupted into a chaotic brawl.

Liolya took no chances. She rolled under one of the wagons and tried to escape her bonds, but it was no use. Eventually, the fighting stopped. All she could see from her vantage was bodies strewn about in various poses of death.

Finally, a friendly face appeared. The woman introduced herself as Irene, and explained that she had been

hunting this particular band of traders for several weeks. Its leader was a monster, she claimed.

Liolya was too stunned to speak. Irene told her to return to the campsite in a week's time if she wanted to learn more. It was the longest week of her life.

Irene explained that she was a wanderer, free to roam the Earth and answering to no one. She asked Liolya if she wanted to join her. Liolya did not hesitate to agree.

For the next decade, they wandered together as Liolya learned the ways of her kind. She took great pride in learning the poems and myths of her road and travels now as a Lorekeeper, meeting other Ferals and collecting (and retelling) their stories.

Profile

9th-generation Gangrel, childe of Irene

Embrace: AD 1210

Apparent Age: mid 20s

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Intelligence 2, Perception 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Animal Ken 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Expression 3, Hearth Wisdom 2, Lore (Road of the Beast) 3, Occult 1, Performance 3, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 2, Survival 3

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Fortitude 2, Protean 2

Backgrounds: Mentor 2, Status 3

Road: Beast (Path of the Nomad) 6

Instinct: 4, **Conviction:** 3, **Courage:** 3, **Willpower:** 6

Alessandro, the Hound of Iberia

Alessandro de Garcia always liked a good fight. As a boy in Madrid, he was a brawler, and as a man in Iberia, he was a mercenary. He loved a cause, especially one that paid well. But mostly, he loved battle, and Iberia had no shortage of opportunities for mercenary companies.

As he grew older, however, he realized that he wouldn't be able to fight forever. Soldiering was a young man's profession, and he became interested in the broader currents in society. What wars were being fought, and why? Who benefited, who suffered, and was there any pattern to it all? These questions fascinated him, and as he made the transition from soldier to administrator, they took up more and more of his time.

Eventually, he became convinced that there was some pattern to events, but he couldn't quite grasp it. He began to seek out scholars and historians and eventually came into the circle of a monk named Silvio Gonzales. Gonzales was an eccentric, only emerging from his monastery at night, but as he expounded his theories, Alessandro could feel the pieces slowly falling into place.





Then Gonzales disappeared. Alessandro began searching for his friend, but concern quickly turned to horror when he received a visit from a dwarf who brought with him an extraordinary tale of monsters and corruption, of subjugation of humanity. Alessandro's suspicions about a pattern were well and truly confirmed—and it was a pattern of evil, very likely the work of Satan. The dwarf, who identified himself only as Roy, Embraced Alessandro that very night and made him one of the Lions of Rodrigo, an order of Cainites dedicated to completing the Christian re-conquest of Iberia and the destruction of Infidels and heretics.

Alessandro soon soured on the Lions and their fanatical ways. Instead, he turned his mind to understanding the Cainite (and, he reasoned, human) predisposition to violence. Horrified by the quick and easy justifications for murder and theft offered by religious fanatics of all faiths, he has set his mind to understanding the Beast. He spent several years traveling throughout Iberia, conversing with Arabs, Muslims and Berbers about their philosophies. These times were perilous, as word of his involvement with the Lions of Rodrigo slowly followed him.

Alessandro is tireless in his evangelism for the Road of the Beast, which does not always endear him to other Ferals. Nevertheless, he is perpetually searching for potential converts and for texts, myths and legends that might assist his intellectual endeavors.

He has recently been active in the dangerous lands of Eastern Europe, and has been spending time among the various pagan communities of Lithuania and the Ukraine. He has found a number of their insights particularly useful and is likely to remain in the area for some time.

Profile

10th-generation Brujah, childe of Roy, Burner of Mosques

Embrace: AD 1113

Apparent Age: mid 30s

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Intelligence 3, Perception 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 1, Alertness 3, Archery 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Etiquette 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Melee 4, Occult 2, Politics 2, Ride 3, Survival 2

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Fortitude 2, Potence 3, Presence 3, Protean 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Resources 3, Status 2

Road: Beast 7

Instinct: 2, **Conviction:** 4, **Courage:** 3, **Willpower:** 7

Laura di Salerno

11th-generation Cappadocian, childe of Gianni

Embrace: AD 1097

Apparent Ages: Early 20s

Death had always fascinated Laura. Born during the last months of a plague, scarcely a week went by during her childhood when she did not attend a funeral. She knew the Mass for the dead by heart by age nine, and she used her time in confession to ask questions about the soul and death. Luckily, she was born into a wealthy merchant family in Milan, so she was able to pursue her intellectual interests relatively unhindered. She wanted to study medicine but, as a woman, she could not gain admittance to the classes. Undeterred, she masqueraded as a male student at the newly founded University of Salerno and gained entry into a world of learning.

Her idealistic notions of the "ivory towers" of learning were cruelly shattered one evening, when one of her teachers saw through her masquerade and threatened to expose her secret unless she submitted to his advances. Unfortunately for him, Laura always carried a dagger. In her panic, she stabbed the surprised teacher in the throat.

Overcome by fascination, she kept him quiet and observed him carefully as he died. Realizing the consequences of her actions, she prepared to cut her wrists and bleed to death beside him.

Unbeknownst to her, Gianni, a local Cappadocian, had been observing Laura's progress with some interest. He rescued her from her planned demise, and as she lay dying in his arms, he decided to give her the chance to study death first-hand.

Laura found her new existence very hard going. She was eager to continue her studies and was easily able to keep up with her research, but she had a great deal of trouble containing her bestial urges. She surmised that it was simply a case of her sanguine and choleric humors (since her new diet undoubtedly tipped the balance toward blood) seeking



to balance themselves against her admitted preponderance toward melancholy and phlegmatism.

Deciding to take matters into her own hands, she began to study her Beast. She experimented with starving herself and recording her reactions to various types of prey. She added different herbs and chemicals to the blood she drank. She tried adhering to a number of strict moral codes, and sought out teachers to explain the basics of the other roads. But it was not until she decided to spend some time in the wilds as a beast that she finally found some peace. She learned to accommodate the Beast by letting it satisfy its desires, and she initiated herself onto the Road of the Beast.

Since taking up the road, she has left the company of her clan, who now regard her as something of an outcast due to her strange beliefs and practices. It doesn't matter to her. She finds the lessons of the Beast most instructive and is investigating the lessons it has to teach about death.

Constantine the Wise

8th-generation Malkavian, childe of Stavros

Embrace: AD 983

Apparent Age: early 30s

Constantine lived by the Mediterranean. Even in death, he remains by his beloved sea. A devout child, he entered the priesthood and was eventually ordained in Constantinople, where he looked forward to spending the rest of his life serving God. But he did not find the peace or rewards he had hoped for. Outraged by the corruption he saw in the Church, he became something of a radical, and his outbursts against his superiors eventually saw him ejected.

He wandered the slums of the great city, preaching to the desperate and destitute and taking pride in his piteous state.

His health collapsed, and he spent his last months of life in a state of near-frenzy, attempting to tend to the sick even as fevers and chills wracked his body.

One winter's night, he lay down in a gutter. As cold gave way to warmth and as his breath grew shallow, he heard a voice whispering in his ear. His suffering was on the verge of being rewarded with a great blessing, the voice said. His ceaseless labors to help the dregs of society had shown his piety. But before he could be blessed, he had one final lesson to learn. It would be hard, and the road long, but if he was bold enough and faithful enough, he would surely serve God forever.

With his dying breath, he begged the voice to take him. When he rose, he felt a terrible hunger within. Somehow, he found himself amidst the very beggars and outcasts he had ministered to. Then the Beast took over and he slew them all, hungrily feasting on their blood.

Stavros, the "angel" who blessed him, explained that the Beast inside was all his sins. His sacred task was to take the sins of others into his soul by draining them of their blood. When his soul was full and he could take no more, God would open his arms and all the sins he carried — his own and those of his victims — would be washed clean by the blood he had spilled.

Constantine accepted his mission eagerly. He has, over the centuries, gained a measure of control over the Beast and now chooses his victims with some care. He typically lives in a city for several decades, selectively murdering the wicked and the wealthy, often seducing them, sometimes hounding them in a terrified flight through the wilderness.

Constantine is one of the foremost scholars of the Road of the Beast, and he welcomes students. They must hunt with him, however, and he puts them to harsh physical, mental and moral tests.



Arnulf

Once a simple soldier traveling in a Goth army, Arnulf has only a dim recollection of his mortal days. He does not know why he was Embraced, but he is grateful to his sire, a Methuselah who has since had little to do with his childe. Arnulf wanted nothing from life beyond war, women and loot. In the centuries of his existence as a Cainite, his agenda has changed little. If anything, his existence became simpler still, hunting by night and sleeping by day. He spent many centuries roaming Eastern Europe, and his personal might grew even as the lands declined. Dedicating his unlife to the simplicity of a true predator, he watched in horror as the encroachments of civilization began to erode the wilderness he loved.

His extensive knowledge of the lands and cultures of Eastern Europe allow him to slip easily into any city or group he encounters. His reputation for savagery and destruction is legendary, but he is also capable of considerable subtlety and cunning.

In recent nights, Arnulf has become angry and confused. His considerable physical power—he realizes that he is one of the most dangerous creatures actively stalking the nights of Europe — has been of little avail in halting the spread of civilization and the slow destruction of his beloved wilderness. He has decided on a course of action that he believes will rid his lands of civilization's scourge.

He has allied himself with the Mongols massing on Europe's eastern borders. Leaving his beloved lands for a while, he intends to return and bring with him a whirlwind of blood, death and destruction. The fact that thousands will die as a result means nothing to him.

He has been learning the language and strange customs of his new hosts and has come to appreciate many aspects of their culture. This appreciation will not sway him from his course, though. He wants his lands freed of the scourge of civilization, and if that means letting foreigners conquer it, then so be it.

He has also mobilized his many childer, instructing his fractious brood to do what they can to halt the spread of cities and civilization. Some have taken this mobilization as a license to destroy and pillage, but others are more circumspect. Morrow the Sage — in many ways his most capable childe — is especially uncertain about this instruction. She does not see cities as something to be feared. Rather, she sees them as a source of prey and new challenges for a predator.

If Arnulf were to learn of this attitude, it is likely that he would personally hunt Morrow down and destroy her. In the meantime, he lurks on the periphery of Europe, dreaming of the nights when he can once more roam unfettered through a trackless wilderness, hunting and siring at his leisure.

Those nights will never come again, and Arnulf is beginning to suspect that his mission is futile. He is



determined, nonetheless, to destroy as much as he can. His Beast will be satisfied with nothing less.

Morrow the Sage

Morrow is one of the leading figures on the Road of the Beast, and she embodies its ideals in many ways. She defends her home territory in Eastern Europe against any aggressor but is willing and able to make alliances with an eye to her long-term survival.

When she was a child, Morrow's mortal family died in a barbarian invasion. She was taken and raised by her sire, Arnulf, to be the perfect killer. After 20 years of instruction, he put her to a final test, which resulted in her Embrace and abandonment.

She quickly found her place in Feral society, becoming known as "Morrow the Sage" for her wisdom and her ability to use the faculty of reason as well as her Beast. She encouraged Gangrel in the Balkans and Hungary to form packs and resist the spread of civilization, and she came to a truce with the Tzimisce Voivode Rustovich.

In recent years, she has turned her attention more specifically onto two things: the encroachments of the Tremere into her territory and the aftermath of the fall of Constantinople. Arnulf is concerned by the spread of civilization into "his" lands and wishes his childe to bring a halt to it if possible. The balance of power in her region is shifting, and she is concerned about the instability that might result.

The Tremere have been capturing Gangrel for transformation into Gargoyles, and Morrow has led a number of attacks on chantries holding Animals captive. The Tremere know of her existence but have been unable to track her down. They are now doing their best to lay traps for her, but they have been unsuccessful so far.



Morrow believes that the Tremere must be stopped, and she is considering an attack on one or more chantries. She is concerned that the Usurpers might be studying the Road of the Beast and fears what they might make of, or do to, it.

She is also vigilant against foolish idealists from Constantinople attempting to import their beliefs onto her soil. She is aware of a number of Obertus monks who are trying to establish a presence in her territory. These are being watched carefully, and she is trying to find out what Cainites are behind these moves. As a result, she has isolated a number of Tzimisce and is stalking them carefully, waiting for the best moment to strike.

Between these two concerns, Morrow also takes time to instruct her fellow Ferals in the ways of the Beast. She is a largely silent teacher, who believes that actions define character, not words or poems or thoughts. Perhaps surprisingly, she does not share her sire's instinctive abhorrence of cities and civilization. She realizes better than he that the mortals will continue to spread and that it is the Children of Caine who must adapt to new ways, for the spread of the Children of Seth cannot be stopped.

Qarakh

In life, Qarakh was a Mongol warrior who rode forth with Batu Khan. His blood brother, Aajav, was of even greater repute. Aajav was Embraced by Oderic, a wandering Gangrel who had been impressed by his ferocity.

Aajav's Mongol Cainite elders were all of the Anda bloodline (an offshoot of the Western Gangrel), not Gangrel like Oderic and Aajav. When Aajav petitioned them to be allowed to Embrace Qarakh, there was deliberation as to who should bestow death upon him. Aajav was, after all, not Anda.

Under Oderic's encouragement, he Embraced Qarakh, but the blood brothers were forced to flee their homelands.

The Anda do not take kindly to the unauthorized Embrace of Mongols into a foreign clan, and they have been hunting the pair ever since.

As a result of this determined pursuit, Aajav has been forced into torpor and Qarakh has retreated to lick his wounds and gather his strength. He has settled in Lithuania and come to a peaceable understanding with the Telyavelic Tremere, a branch of the Usurpers who still feel a strong connection to their land's pagan traditions and magics. This understanding does not extend to the Tremere in general, however. Indeed, he is well aware of the threat they represent, and he does not hesitate to destroy their emissaries and messengers when necessary.

Qarakh is a restless soul and although currently residing in Lithuania, he roams far and wide across Europe, spreading terror wherever he goes. His fierce appearance and the reputation of his mortal (and undead) kin precede him. Fortunately for him, he has the capacity for pitiless violence for which those kin are renowned.

Qarakh's wanderings have recently taken him into the southeastern reaches of Europe. He has traveled the length of the Carpathians, observing rather than participating in the war between the Tzimisce and the Tremere. He is essentially unconcerned with their struggle, but he has slain a number of Cainites from both sides of the struggle when they came too close to discovering his presence.

He has met once, briefly, with Morrow, whom he respects. He is uninterested in teaching the Road of the Beast to others, but he respects those (such as Morrow) who do. He attends gatherings in his travels, doing his best to avoid drawing attention to himself, saying little and avoiding fights wherever possible. He greatly enjoys the storytellers and their poems and songs of violence and bloodshed.



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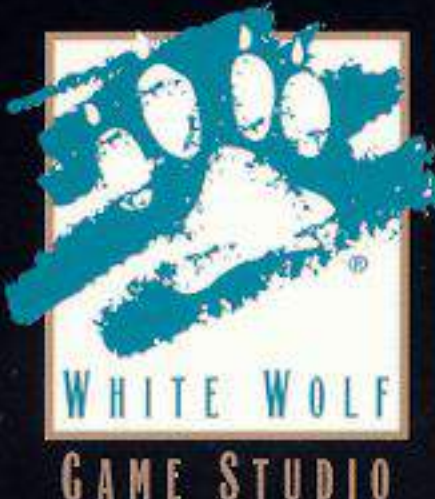
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