

MEXICO CITY

by Night™



A CITY SOURCEBOOK FOR VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE®

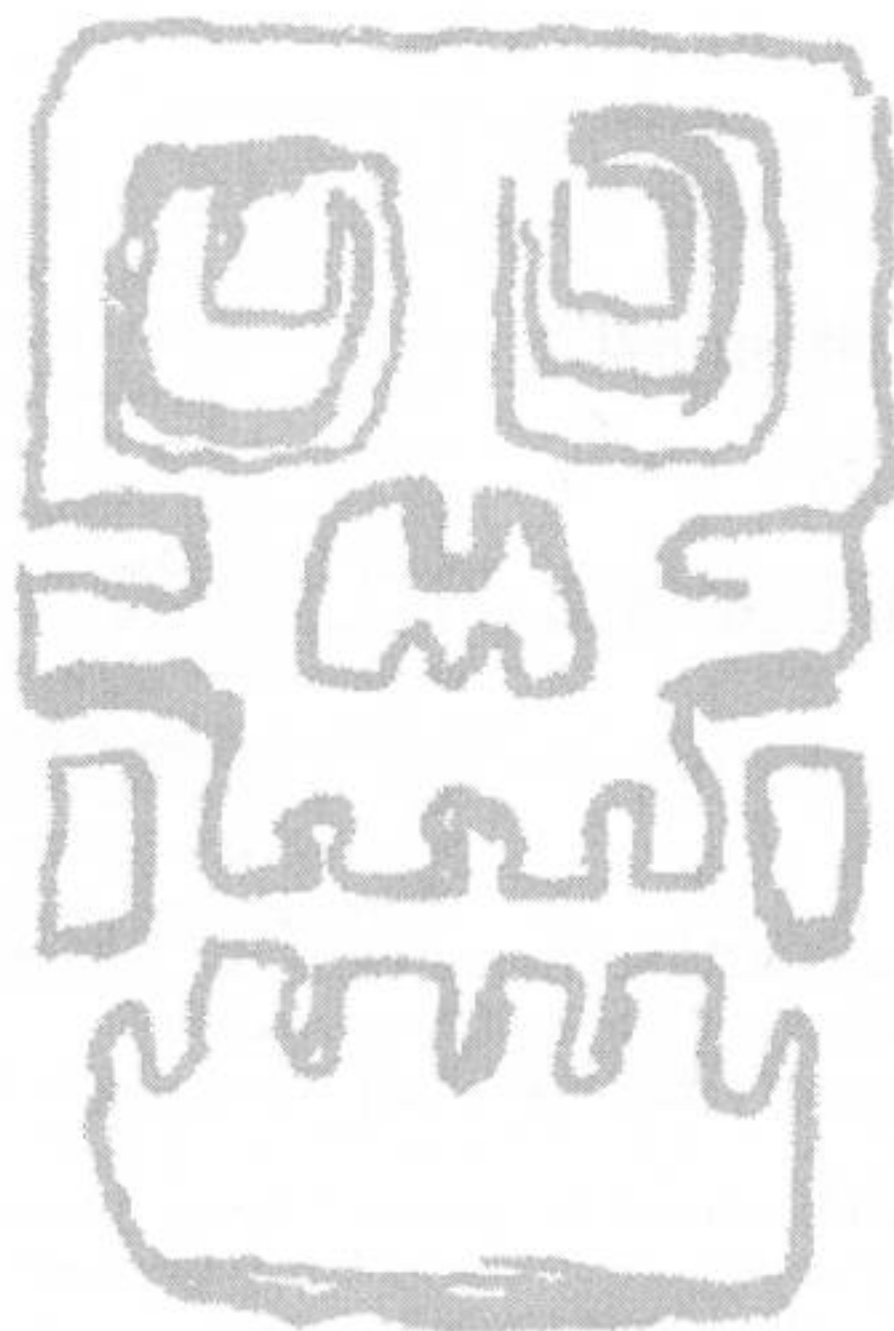
MEXICO CITY

by Night

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You reek of booze.

— Chris McDonough

There's nothing bad about cute.

— Nicole Dale

Alright, fuckos, give me your fucking watches.

— Justin Achilli

His feet are shoes.

— Mike Tinney



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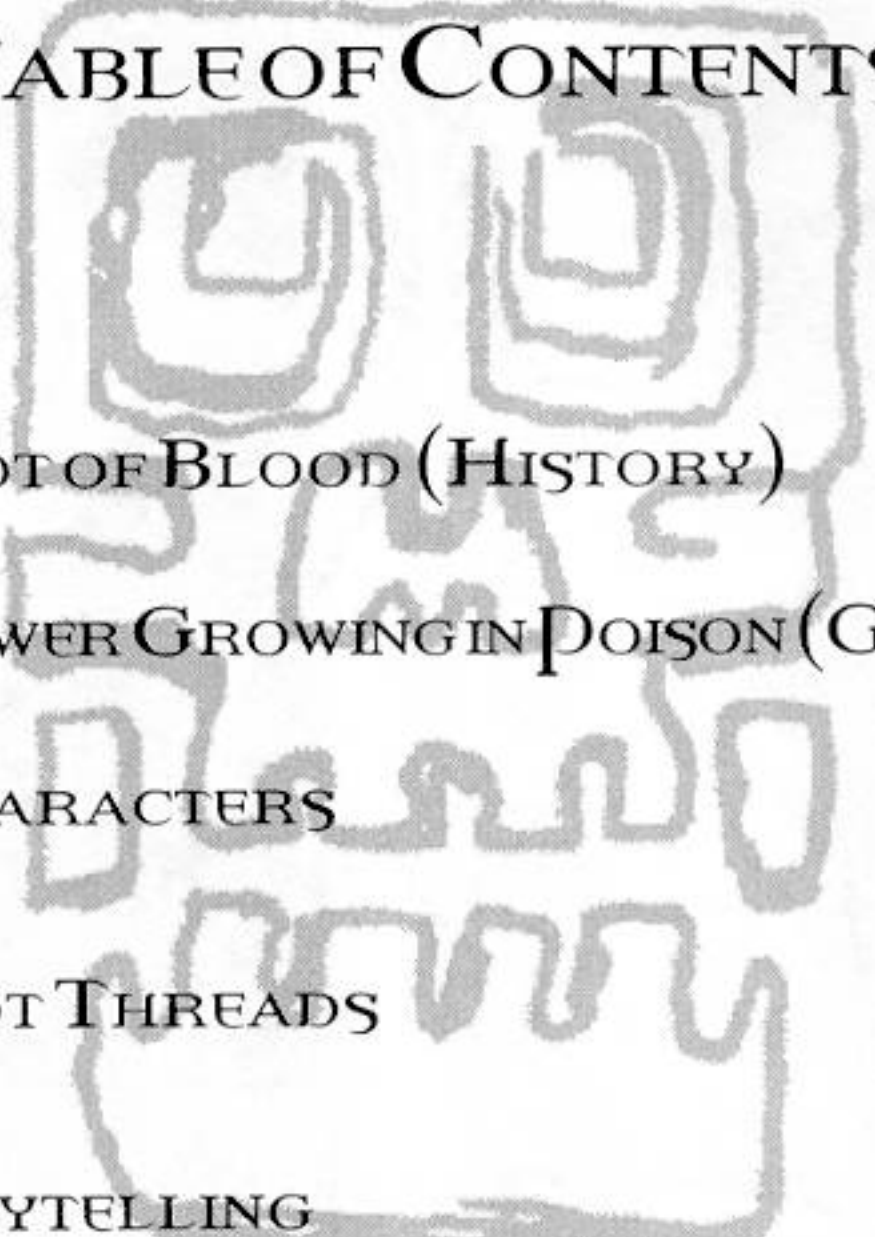


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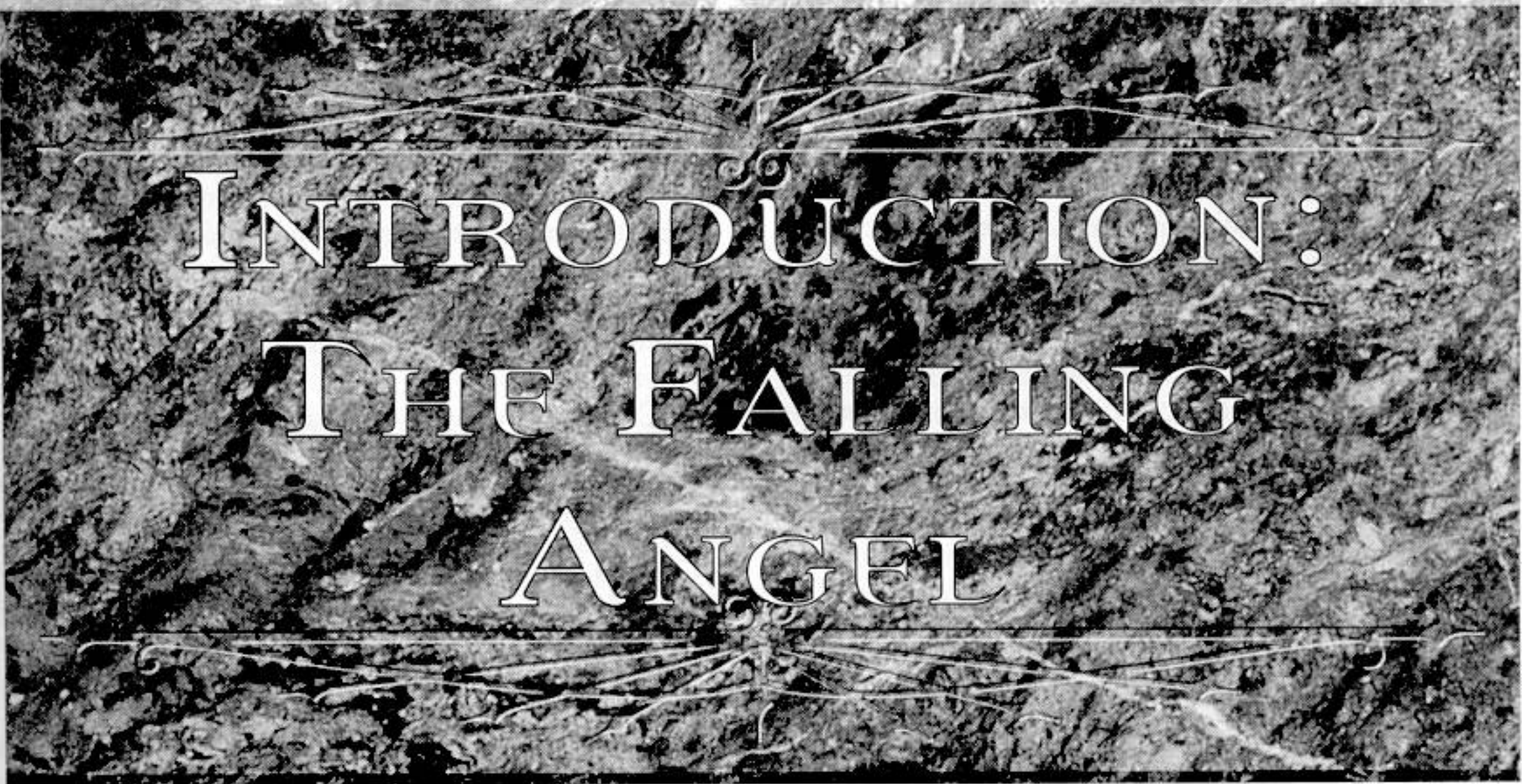
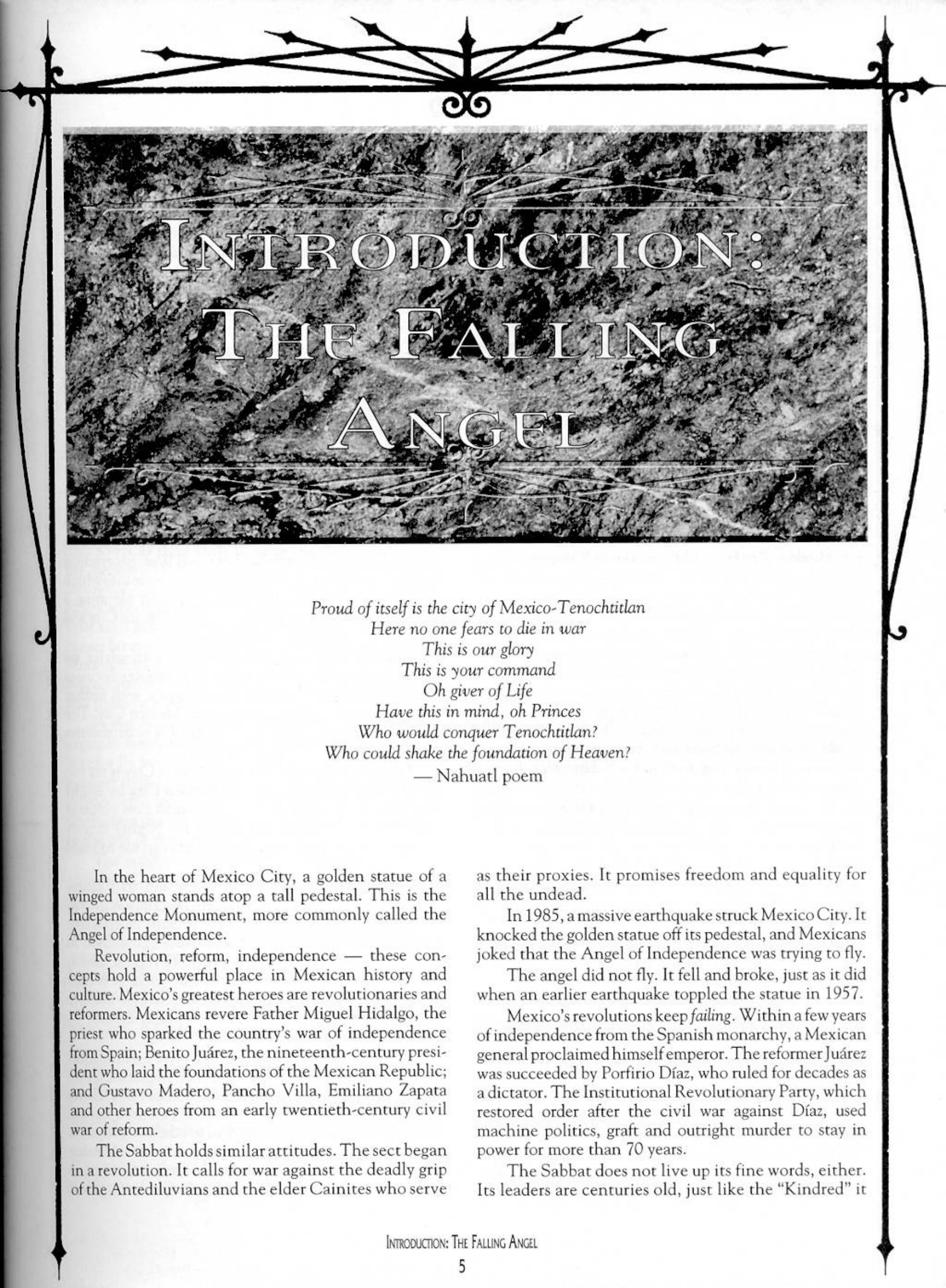
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INTRODUCTION: THE FALLING ANGEL

*Proud of itself is the city of Mexico-Tenochtitlan
Here no one fears to die in war
This is our glory
This is your command
Oh giver of Life
Have this in mind, oh Princes
Who would conquer Tenochtitlan?
Who could shake the foundation of Heaven?
— Nahuatl poem*

In the heart of Mexico City, a golden statue of a winged woman stands atop a tall pedestal. This is the Independence Monument, more commonly called the Angel of Independence.

Revolution, reform, independence — these concepts hold a powerful place in Mexican history and culture. Mexico's greatest heroes are revolutionaries and reformers. Mexicans revere Father Miguel Hidalgo, the priest who sparked the country's war of independence from Spain; Benito Juárez, the nineteenth-century president who laid the foundations of the Mexican Republic; and Gustavo Madero, Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata and other heroes from an early twentieth-century civil war of reform.

The Sabbath holds similar attitudes. The sect began in a revolution. It calls for war against the deadly grip of the Antediluvians and the elder Cainites who serve

as their proxies. It promises freedom and equality for all the undead.

In 1985, a massive earthquake struck Mexico City. It knocked the golden statue off its pedestal, and Mexicans joked that the Angel of Independence was trying to fly.

The angel did not fly. It fell and broke, just as it did when an earlier earthquake toppled the statue in 1957.

Mexico's revolutions keep *failing*. Within a few years of independence from the Spanish monarchy, a Mexican general proclaimed himself emperor. The reformer Juárez was succeeded by Porfirio Díaz, who ruled for decades as a dictator. The Institutional Revolutionary Party, which restored order after the civil war against Díaz, used machine politics, graft and outright murder to stay in power for more than 70 years.

The Sabbath does not live up its fine words, either. Its leaders are centuries old, just like the "Kindred" it

claims to oppose. In a sect based on loyalty and freedom, these elders betray and exploit their juniors for the sake of power. The Sabbat has suffered three civil wars since its inception.

After the third civil war, a cabal of powerful elders seized power and restored order. The cabal's leader, Melinda Galbraith, became the Regent of the Sabbat. Her political machine dominated the Sabbat consistory for decades. No one could assemble a coalition strong enough to break its grip; no Cainite survived an open conflict with Galbraith.

Now Galbraith is dead. *Something* destroyed her more than a year ago, and an impostor took her place. The exposure of that impostor threatens Galbraith's coalition. Leadership of the Sabbat is up for grabs. The sect has a genuine chance to reform itself — or it could slide into a fourth civil war, or fall into naked dictatorship.

Once more the angel tries to fly....

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Mexico City by Night introduces Vampire players to the premier city of the Sabbat — the sect's black Babylon. The Sabbat's consistory of leaders meets in Mexico City. An estimated 500 Cainites stalk its streets. Many more Sabbat visit every year to strike deals, pursue vendettas, plead for favors and celebrate sect festivals. Some of the Sabbat's mightiest elders call Mexico City their home. Here the Sabbat rules the night unchallenged. The Camarilla holds no power here, and even Cainites from independent clans walk softly. Only a fool would challenge the Sword of Caine in the very heart of its power. Mexico City isn't just a Sabbat city: It's the *ultimate* Sabbat city.

Mexico City contains something for every style of play. Sabbat chronicles can become intensely political, and every faction in the Sword of Caine keeps a presence in Mexico City. If the storytelling challenge of the Paths of Enlightenment fascinates your players, their characters can find teachers in the city, as well as plenty of challenges to their humanity and inhumanity. Ambitious characters can see the top of the Sabbat's ladder of power in Mexico City: Mere neonates cannot hope to win seats in the consistory, but the prisci, seraphs and cardinals need aides-de-camp, just like mortal politicians. In a chronicle about elders, the players' characters can aim for consistory membership. Those who play up the Sabbat's notorious violence can rampage through the world's largest punk dystopia.

Storytellers who do not run Mexico City chronicles can still find use from this book if the characters travel. Sabbat from other cities can easily find reasons to visit their sect's "capital." Coming up with reasons for independent vampires to visit the city takes a little more work. Camarilla characters would need extraordinary

motivation to visit Mexico City, and they would need extraordinary skill and discretion to avoid destruction. But don't look at that as a deterrent, look at it as a storytelling challenge.

Mexico City by Night is divided into five chapters.

Chapter One explains the history of Mexico City — both the mundane city and its Cainite population. Mexico City is seven centuries old, and the Sabbat are not the first Cainites to dwell in it. This chapter follows the city from its origin as the capital of the Aztec Empire to the modern nights.

Chapter Two provides an overview of the city's geography, from the Historic Center's colonial palaces to the periphery's teeming shantytowns. Each division of the city holds its own special interests for the Sabbat.

Chapter Three supplies numerous characters from every level of the Sabbat, from potent elders in the consistory to childer newly dragged into the darkness. A few Cainites from outside the sect make their appearance as well.

Chapter Four suggests several plots that Storytellers can use in a Mexico City chronicle, with special emphasis on the threat of a Fourth Sabbat Civil War. Storytellers receive suggestions about which characters tie into which plot threads. This is a good place to start planning a chronicle, by deciding which aspects of Mexico City and the Sabbat you want to emphasize.

Chapter Five concludes the book with advice on running a Mexico City chronicle. The chapter discusses themes, mood and storytelling techniques, with further notes on how the Sabbat operates in Mexico City. The chapter concludes with a selection of special abilities possessed by some of the characters.

Like any major metropolis, Mexico City is far too large to describe in detail, and *Mexico City by Night* does not try. Instead, it (like its companion volumes *New York by Night* and *Cairo by Night*) merely supplies a framework that Storytellers can use to build their own chronicles.

The sheer size of Mexico City and its Cainite population would make a complete description impossible in any case. No one knows how many mortals live in Mexico City, but its population passed 20 million in 1990 — and it still grows quickly. Beyond a doubt, Mexico City is the largest city in the world. It is only fitting that Mexico City carries the largest Cainite population too, but we cannot — simply cannot — publish a book of 500 characters!

In truth, we don't want to. We have no intention of dictating how you play your games. *Mexico City by Night* is a resource you can add to your storytelling toolbox. It's a collection of basic information, sample characters and storylines for you to adapt to your own use. You can read this book once and start a Mexico City story right away. We hope, however, that just as Mexico City has grown far beyond what its founders

could imagine, your chronicle grows far beyond the foundation of this book, with your own characters and stories.

THEME AND MOOD

Any Sabbat theme and mood can work in a Mexico City chronicle. Certain themes and moods become especially appropriate, though, in the Sabbat's center of power. A Mexico City chronicle gives Storytellers an opportunity to examine the sect's inmost nature.

THEME

Themes of hypocrisy and disintegration run through *Mexico City by Night*. The Sabbat's internal conflicts rage all the more fiercely in its greatest center of power. The sect's elders retain their power through lies, propaganda and sheer brutality. For all the sect's talk of equality, its leaders crush any junior who dares to challenge or displease them. Even the faintest pretense of equality vanishes where the sect's cadre of ghoul and revenant slaves is concerned. The elders prate of loyalty and solidarity, but they stand together only so far as they must to keep themselves safe from the neonate rabble. They whip the younger Sabbat into revolutionary fervor, then throw them at Camarilla elders who slaughter them more often than not. At least such dupes can be called martyrs to the Sabbat's cause; far more Sabbat meet Final Death in senseless Monomacies and brawls between packs. Mortals Embraced into the Sabbat receive only the freedom to kill and freedom to die.

In the midst of this brutal hypocrisy, a single lie's exposure sends the Sabbat into a tailspin. Ironically, this is not a lie from a mighty elder — merely a frightened neonate trying to save his own unlife by concealing the murder of the sect's regent. The revelation of the regent's destruction pits elder against elder, and the conflict drags in the rest of the Sabbat.

The infighting could not come at a worse time. A resurgent Camarilla just handed the Sword of Caine a crushing defeat in New York City. Most of the sect's bloodsorcerers, the Tremere *antitribu*, apparently burned themselves to ash. Perhaps that strange disaster has some connection to a mysterious foe who sends severed but still undead Sabbat heads to the sect's leaders. The Ravnos *antitribu* suffered a wave of fratricidal madness. Self-proclaimed prophets declare that Gehenna has begun. The sect's Antediluvian and Methuselah enemies are waking up — and in this time of ultimate crisis, the Sabbat's elders turn on each other.

Uncertainty about an emerging future also works well in a Mexico City chronicle. Whatever happens to the Sabbat in Mexico City holds great importance for the sect as a whole. Chaos or revolution among the city's Cainites may herald sweeping changes for the entire Sabbat — perhaps even the sect's dissolution.

MOOD

Pump up the volume! Mexico City's Sabbat don't have to hold back, so they don't. They are as uninhibited and crazy as they wanna be. In the city's slums, a Sabbat pack can knock down a shack, slaughter the family, and play street soccer with the severed heads — and the authorities won't hear a thing. Under conditions like this, vampires can truly be vampires.

Don't be afraid to populate your Mexico City with complete maniacs. Whatever the scene, from a splatterpunk rumble between packs to high Mass in a colonial church, try to push the situation a step further into hysterical excess. Don't just say that some old women pray in an ornate old church. Describe how tears stream down their cheeks as they beg the Virgin Mary for aid, and how you can barely see the church's walls for all the gilded cherubs and vines and draperies. When two *capitalino* Cainites duel, they don't just fight with fangs and claws — they fight with chainsaws! On a giant statue of Benito Juárez's head! With a ring of fire around it, and dozens of their fellow monsters cheering them on!

Restraint? Good taste? Basic common sense? Leave 'em to those Camarilla wimps. For a *Mexico City by Night* chronicle, show all the restraint of a Roman debauch, the good taste of a dead baby joke, and the common sense of a spree killer. Every night feels like the end of the world, so intensely do the city's Cainites pursue their pleasures and pains and vendettas.

RESOURCES

You can begin a Mexico City chronicle immediately after reading this book, but a long-running chronicle demands further research. Books, movies and other sources can provide far more background material and story ideas than one slim game supplement ever could. As you learn more about Mexico City, your chronicle will grow richer and more uniquely your own.

BOOKS

Any book about Mexico probably discusses Mexico City: The city dominates the country to that degree. Children's books provide a good place to start your reading. They provide basic information about Mexico's history, government, food, festivals and culture, with a wealth of pictures. It's so much easier to set a scene if you can show players a picture of a building, park or street and say, "Here you are, only it's night."

Fodor's Mexico. If you want maps, lists of hotels and restaurants, taxi fares and other details about Mexico City life, *Fodor's* gives more than you can ever use. It concentrates upon areas that appeal to tourists, of course: Expect lots of information about churches, palaces, museums and art galleries, and little about shantytowns and industrial zones. *Fodor's* updates its guides annually, so

you can find authentic and current information about Mexico City locales. The guidebook also describes regions throughout Mexico.

See also Lonely Planet's *Mexico City*, by John Noble, John Fisher's *Mexico: The Rough Guide*, and *Mexico City: World's Largest Metropolis*, by Andrew Coe. The last especially shines for its discussions about more oblique topics such as *pulque* (a uniquely Mexican alcoholic drink), Aztec mythology, Mexico's greatest movie star, and masked wrestlers.

Mexico City: A Cultural and Literary Companion, by Nick Caistor. Instead of a straightforward guide, this book presents a series of vignettes from the city's past and present. Storytellers who want to tie their characters and plots to events in the city's history can find plenty of inspiration here.

The World's Most Dangerous Places by Robert Young Pelton includes a chapter about Mexico. Pelton gives information about drug cartels, organized crime, renegade military leaders and the corrupt powers that be. Any Storyteller who sends her chronicle into the Third World can find something useful in this book.

La Capital: The Biography of Mexico City by Jonathan Kandell. This is an almost exhaustive look at Mexico City's past with interesting anecdotes that brings personalities to life through their foibles and machinations. Although it ends in the mid-1980s, you can raid it for character concepts (perhaps not the actual, historical people, but Cainites who resemble them).

A New Time for Mexico by Carlos Fuentes. A dry and perhaps overwrought political and sociological view of Mexico, its past and future. Fuentes offers some interesting insights that deserve a place in the library of Mexicophiles, however.

Sliced Iguana: Travels in Unknown Mexico by Isabella Tree. Travels in Mexico through the eyes of a visitor with some ties and contacts in the region. Tree provides anecdotes of the sort that history books never disclose, including great vignettes of life in Mexico's Federal District.

Mexico: A Higher Vision, by Michael Calderwood and Gabriel Breña. This is a book of aerial photos of Mexico, with a section about Mexico City. As a photo book, it tends to skimp on background information. What it provides, however, is interesting and useful to someone seeking information about pictured locations' history and significance.

Picture Mexico City: Landmarks of a New Generation, from the J. Paul Getty Trust. The trust paired photographers with young people from a range of neighborhoods and asked them to take pictures of people and places they considered "landmarks" of their city. The young people provide their own commentary. The result is a street-level view of Mexico City, from conventional parks and monuments to cafés, living rooms and squatter shacks.

Even the touristy landmarks take on a new light through the commentary of the teenagers.

Mexico also boasts a strong tradition of poets and novelists who examine their society with a critical eye. Octavio Paz, Elena Poniatowsky and the aforementioned Carlos Fuentes enjoy particularly high reputations. A few of their novels have been turned into movies.

MUSIC

Storytellers who like to create "soundtracks" for their play sessions can find no shortage of music from or about Mexico, or at least with a Latin sound. Mariachi music instantly sets a scene as "Mexico." Classical music on Spanish themes, such as Bizet's *Carmen*, de Falla's *El Amor Brujo* or Rodrigo's *Fantasy for a Gentleman* can serve a similar purpose, especially to introduce the sect's elders.

Labels such as Fonovisa and Cintas Acuario have released CDs of *narcocorridos*. Songs about crime, shootouts and running the border work well for the Sabbath — but the lyrics are all set to cheerful waltz or polka beats. Bubbly music with gangsta lyrics can provide a surreal accompaniment to a scene of carnage. Some of the big names in *narcocorridos* include Los Tigres del Norte, Luís and Julián, Chalino Sanchez and Los Pajaritos del Sur.

FILM, VIDEO AND TELEVISION

Your best source is probably Mexican movies themselves. Look in the foreign section of your friendly local video rental outlet, and pray. Mexico has a large movie industry, but too few of its films achieve wide distribution north of the border.

El Mariachi is one of those few. This movie tells the story of a young musician who is mistaken for a notorious killer. Its raw, bloody portrayal of gangland violence can serve as inspiration for Sabbath vendettas. The film also includes a memorable portrayal of Mexican police corruption. Its semi-sequel *Desperado*, also from director Robert Rodriguez, is slicker, American-made and less useful as a guide to Mexican daily life. Rodriguez also directed *From Dusk 'Til Dawn*, which may provide inspiration for the Sabbath and its hunters at their seediest and most violent, though its vampires have little in common with those of **Vampire: The Masquerade**.

You may have more trouble finding "serious" Mexican cinema. *Los Olvidados* and *El Bruto*, from Luis Bunuel, show that the famed Surrealist director could also make gritty, realistic movies about the lives of poor people in Mexico City. These movies were made in the 1950s, but much remains relevant. *Midaq Alley*, directed by Jorge Fons, can't be beat for its portrayal of the lives of working-class and middle-class *capitalinos*. *The Worst Boy in Town* (dir. Enrique Gomez Vadillo) shows Mexico City street life at its seamiest through a story about a young tough who has a double life as a gay

hustler. *Deep Crimson* (dir. Arturo Ripstein), a crazed love story about serial killers, could be about the Sabbath at its most demented.

Mexico also produces a large quantity of low-budget horror movies about sorcerers, vampires, Aztec mummies and such ilk. A few were dubbed into English. For instance, *Invasion of the Vampires* pits a young occultist against a vampire count and his legion of undead minions. Most of these are frankly awful, but they provide a view into Mexican fantasy life.

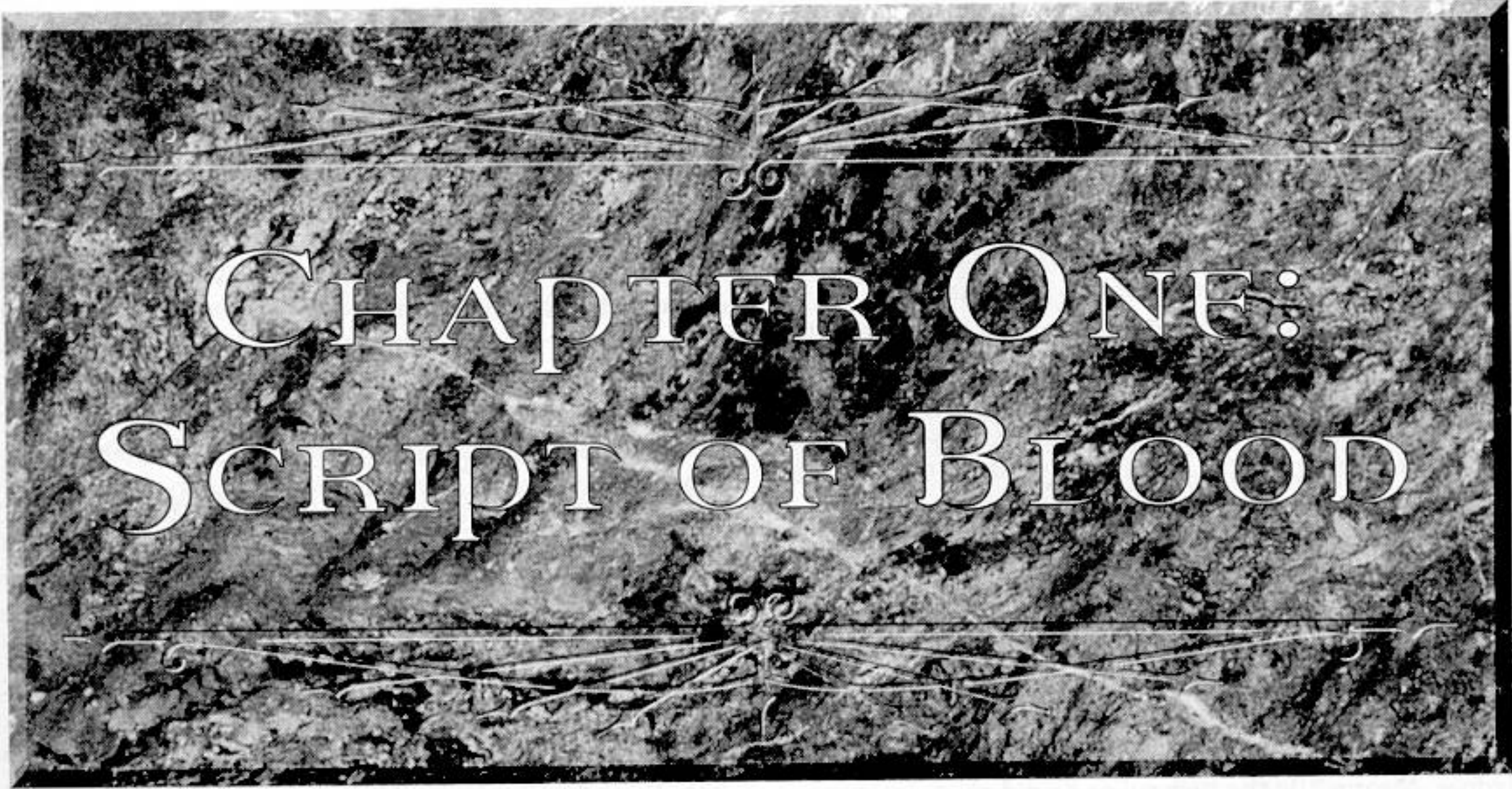
For the lowest and looniest, check out the serials about masked wrestler superheroes. Typical titles include *El Santo versus the Vampire Women* and *Neutron versus the Death Robots*. These could inspire some Sabbath games of instinct for a chronicle that emphasizes the absurd and bizarre.

ONLINE RESOURCES

The World Wide Web contains far too much material about Mexico City to be useful in any direct way. General guides to Mexico City seldom present more information than you can find in *Fodor's* or other print sources. On the other hand, a search engine such as Google or Yahoo! can turn up all sorts of odd snippets of data: UFO sightings, business listings, protest marches, reports on missionary work, and more. The best strategy seems to be to search on the names of specific neighborhoods. Keep in mind that patterns sometimes tell more than the web pages themselves. For instance, a search on "Satellite City" chiefly turned up business listings, with many international companies. That tells you something about what Satellite City is like.







CHAPTER ONE: SCRIPT OF BLOOD

It is given to men, sir, to attack the rights of others, to take their property, to attempt the lives of those who defend their liberty, and to make of their virtues a crime and of their own vices a virtue. But there is one thing which is beyond the reach of perversity, and that is the tremendous verdict of history. History will judge us.

—President-in-exile Benito Juárez to his successor, Archduke Maximilian.

Welcome to *el Distrito Federal*, better known as Mexico City to us natives (call us *chilangos*) or Tenochtitlán to my Tzimisce allies enamored with Aztec practices. Mexico City is a collision of eras. Her history unfolds in the Templo Mayor that predates many European cities, in the unique murals of Diego Rivera, and in the surviving *haciendas* of the Porfiriato era's Golden Age. More importantly, Mexico City paints her history in blood, a fact for which she remains unapologetic; it is the source of her passion and allure.

The Camarilla's dandies—and even our own shovelheads—believe we are responsible for the city's often murderous state of affairs. Truthfully, though, *el D.F.* affects us more than we do it. You won't find too many Sons and Daughters of Caine who'll admit that, but it's true. We boast we're 500 strong in a city of seventeen million cattle, but are we actually impacting anything when the authorities arrest 443 criminals a day in Mexico City? Or when they respond to 700 crimes each day, of which 182 are violent? Or 15,000 murders each year? Or 70,000 car thefts? Or the one million muggings? Do you really think Cainites are the source of all these ills? Guess what... we're a drop in the bucket compared to what mortals are doing to themselves. We're just the jackals following in their bloody wake, because we have neither the scope nor the imagination to measure up to mortal ingenuity.

I said the region's history is awash in blood, but few people realize such violence stemmed from necessity. Young thwacks speak of the Aztecs like junior-league occultists and groupies. They admire the inherent cannibalism and sacrifices without recognizing that the Aztecs indulged such practices out of need. Perhaps some relished violence for its own sake, but the majority followed standards important to their existence... much like the early Sabbat.

Again, like the Sabbat, Mexico City suffered revolutions and civil wars, not for the sake of disorder but because of real social concerns and dissatisfaction. Now, however, crime is rampant among mortals, and our younger sect members follow suit because they forget *why* we fight. Instead, car theft jumps 100 percent and we take to the streets to contribute to that extra one percent. Instead, a pizza vendor endures 23 robberies in one year, and we Embrace the fool to see the surprise on the robbers' faces when he fights back.

But what happens after he fights back? What do we offer him then? His existence is no longer something that strengthens the sect. It was all one big joke—and we wonder why New York fell!

We forgot why it is we fight, as has Mexico City. It is time to remember again.

—Alissandro Motolinía

QUETZALCOATL'S FIRST FLIGHT

As told by Juancho, Ductus of the Knotted Rose

One thing that impressed me about the Aztecs was their fatalism. Every 52 years, they prepared for their Empire's sudden destruction; it was *Ce Acatl*, the Year of the Reed. According to the Aztecs, four worlds existed before this one, and each had perished beneath torrential winds or volcanic fire or devastating floods. The Aztecs knew their reign would eventually end. It was only natural since history was cyclical: The Aztecs replaced the Toltecs, who in turn had usurped the Teotihuacanos.

On the final night of every 52-year cycle (there were several), Huitzilopochtli's priests extinguished all fires throughout the kingdom and beseeched their god to bring dawn once again. Even as they did so, however, they knew their end still meant a continuation of life. One set of gods would usurp theirs, as they had done to the Toltecs, but people would continue their business more or less as before. Meanwhile the new rulers would claim lineage to their conquered predecessors, thus legitimizing their rule.

How surprised were the Aztecs, then, when another 52 years ended and locusts called the Spaniards devoured their civilization and way of being?

BEFORE THE CANNIBAL KINGS

The Valley of Mexico saw several civilizations rise and fall, some with cultures to humble the Europeans. Before that, though, the first tribes settling the valley had one profound effect on the area. They hunted much of the local wildlife, especially those they could have domesticated, into extinction. Thus, there were no domesticated animals that could till the fields and pull heavy loads. The Indians accomplished that themselves, later using the lake

HUSK

When the Aztecs served the Culhuacán tribe (whom they hated) as mercenaries and slaves, they offered to marry the chief's daughter to cement their alliance. The Culhuacán chief agreed and arrived at their temple to witness his daughter's marriage. The priest greeting him, however, wore a dress of flayed human skin... his daughter's skin and face, to be precise. The Aztecs had sacrificed the chief's daughter to announce their split from the Culhuacán.

There is one Sabbat who practices this ancient ritual devoutly by using Vicissitude to slip his victim's skin over his own, but nobody remembers his name or original face. He is large because, my *vatos* say, he wears at least one hundred skins and never removes the flesh of his previous victims. Instead the layers stretch and crack, covering him with crevasses inches deep. We call him Husk.

for transport and for harvests (like scooping up the mosquito eggs covering the lake's surface and mashing them into a high protein paste). This lack of animals also meant most people couldn't hunt for meat when droughts or floods destroyed crops. This led to infanticide during the lean years, and more importantly, to cannibalism, both of which were accepted practices.

Despite the lack of domesticated animals, however, various tribes thrived and grew, like the Teotihuacanos. Few records survive from these times, but the suspected existence of a torpid Methuselah beneath the Pedregal lava flow in Cuicuilco is just one tantalizing mystery of the undead who stalked the Toltecs and Teotihuacanos. Another legend was that of Quetzalcoatl, a plumed serpent also described as "white hero of the break of dawn." He was a bearded white man who was ugly but skilled in smelting and metallurgy. This god-figure also opposed sacrifices, lusting after gold and silver. It was this legend saved the Spaniard Conqueror Cortés from destruction at the hands of the normally fierce Aztecs (he was bearded, white, ugly and "skilled" in metallurgy as evidenced by his armor and lust for gold).

Whoever Quetzalcoatl was remains unknown save for the myriad theories surrounding his existence. Some believe him Cainite like ourselves, though little evidence supports our presence in the Valley of Mexico so early in history. A more popular theory is that Quetzalcoatl was a terrible vision of the future, an augury of things to come that the Toltecs later anthropomorphized into a personality. Certainly, this is in keeping with the many omens and portents surrounding the Spaniards' arrival.

As with all mortal empires, the rule of the Teotihuacanos eventually fell for reasons that would continue to resurface throughout Mexico's history: agricultural and territorial concerns. Simply put, land is power. In the case of the Teotihuacanos, they aggressively slashed and burned the mountainside forests in order to gather wood and create farmlands. This deforestation prevented the soil from absorbing water, which in turn led to droughts. By this time, Mexico Valley's main city was Teotihuacán, a city that was larger than Imperial Rome and possessed a population of 100,000.

When the droughts became severe, the Teotihuacanos forced vassalage tribes to contribute greater shares of crops for Teotihuacán. Many of the tribes could not, and the resulting famines and wars spelled the end of the empire. The Teotihuacanos lost power because the people and military believed the gods no longer heeded their rulers. The city itself fell to barbarian hordes that swept up supporters among the starving tribes and eventually pillaged and burned the once-great city.

Strangely enough, the fall of Teotihuacán also coincided with the collapse of the Mayan and Oaxacan Empires, all due to drought or jungle soil erosion. Conspiracy theorists among the Sabbat (I'm looking in your direction, Noddists) claim the Lupines caused the widespread ecological failure across the peninsula to hem in increased mortal populations. Certainly, the mortal populace in the

valley dropped significantly, by 100,000 according to archeological estimates. This lends some credence to this theory... but not much.

The next three centuries saw waves of barbarians drift into the Valley of Mexico, eventually bringing in the Toltecs. The Toltecs built magnificent cities, but ruled for only two centuries before severe droughts and agricultural problems crippled them as well. Barbarians swept through the region, destroying the Toltecs and leaving the valley rife with competing tribes.

CANNIBAL KINGS AND CANNIBAL GODS

When the fall of the last Aztec Emperor Moctezuma neared, a great stone outside the city spoke of his impending ruin. A Sabbat Cainite named Hector de Velasco uncovered the monolith a century later and convinced his pack to transport it into their underground haven. Hector's pack communed with the stone for decades, until its secrets thinned their blood, and their skin blackened and cracked like meat over an open flame. They perished and their superstitious allies buried the chamber, never telling anyone of its exact location. Now, on certain nights in the Plaza Garibaldi, after the bars close and the mariachi bands go home, you'll find a dozen homeless people with their ears to the ground, listening to the faint murmurs of the great stone somewhere beneath them.

During the years that Hector listened to the stone, he transcribed some of his conversations, which means we gained quite a bit of insight into some supernatural events of the Aztec era. The Aztecs themselves claimed their origins in a mystical realm of plenty called Aztlán before being driven out into the harsh wilderness. Who cast them from this paradise or why remains a mystery to historians and archeologists alike, but their centuries-long exodus eventually brought them into the Valley of Mexico.

Whether the valley protected any Cainites or not when the Aztecs arrived remains strictly conjecture, but at least two of the Damned may have existed in the region. Their presence, however, crosses from myth to possibility only following the Aztec era. The Aztecs themselves worshiped a beast of the night named Huitzilopochtli, the "Hummingbird-of-the-left" or "Hummingbird Wizard."

During their journey, the Aztecs encountered Huitzilopochtli's temple among the Tarascans in Michoacán. Apparently, the Tarascans had already adopted Huitzilopochtli

into their pantheon, but the deity/Cainite's origin still remains a mystery. Hector de Velasco's great stone called Huitzilopochtli "barren" and claimed he could not breed.

If Aztec legends hold any truth, we know that Huitzilopochtli exploded from his mother Coatlicue, the Mother Goddess, and dismembered his sister Coyolxauhqui, Goddess of the Moon. Sabbat scholars believe this speaks of diablerie, but even after tracing various clan lineages, they have little clue as to how a Cainite settled in Latin America. What theories do exist remain dubious under the best circumstances.

Most Noddists believe Huitzilopochtli accompanied the Aztecs into the Valley of Mexico, having foretold of their promised land, where they would find an eagle sitting upon a cactus, devouring a snake (something that he may even have engineered through the Gifts of the Blood like Protean or Chimestry). Another theory, however, is that the Cainite "Huitzilopochtli" replaced the Aztecs' god after they settled in the region. Huitzilopochtli was initially a largely peaceful deity before the Aztecs transformed him to match their own bloodthirsty temperament. This personality shift could have coincided with a Cainite's or other supernatural being's appearance; someone who posed as the Aztecs' god soon after their arrival.

Regardless, when the Aztecs first entered Mexico Valley, they were pitiful refugees who survived by selling their skills as mercenaries to the Tepanecs. A rival tribe called the Culhuacán eventually conquered the Aztecs and forced them to live in harsh lands of volcanic rock and poisonous serpents. The Aztecs survived and eventually earned their freedom, which they repaid by skinning the Culhuacán chief's daughter and fleeing to a tiny island for protection. It was there they found the eagle upon the cactus devouring the snake, and there that they settled.

The Aztecs renamed the island Tenochtitlán in 1325 — marking the official founding of Mexico City — though the Aztecs took longer to quell the neighboring tribes and rule the valley. Behind the scenes, a war of shadows emerged. Tenochtitlán's growth created the area's first city-state since the fall of Teotihuacán. Tenochtitlán became a commercial center — the heart of the expanding Aztec empire.

But while the city grew in prominence and eclipsed its neighbors, Huitzilopochtli discovered rivals to his divinity. The first of these was in the form of Tlaloc, a local water deity. Like Huitzilopochtli, Tlaloc's nature remains a mystery. He dwelled in the lake as an elemental spirit of sorts, demanding sacrificial tributes for his continued beneficence. Some Sabbat believed Tlaloc was a ghost who drowned in the lake centuries earlier, but he may have been a spirit trapped in the Valley of Mexico after the Teotihuacanos deforested the mountainside and turned the valley into a reservoir of sorts. Regardless, the Aztecs needed the local waters to survive, forcing Huitzilopochtli into an alliance with Tlaloc.

Tlaloc became Huitzilopochtli's strongest ally, helping him force alliances upon other "Cainites" like the

PARTY FAVORITE

I once went to the stadium before a bullfight and feed a bit of my vitae to one of the bulls. It was hilarious. You should have seen the look on the crowd's faces when the bull gored the matador so hard he lost an arm. It then jumped into the stands with one graceful leap and gutted six people before they finally killed it. It was great.

Great Goddess Toci, as well as Tezcatlipoca or "Smoking Mirror," the Toltec God of Night. According to the great stone, Tezcatlipoca had existed the longest of any within the Valley of Mexico. He had countered many incursions into his own territory, including one waged by his rival Quetzalcoatl, but he couldn't overcome the alliance between Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc. With their unequalled strength, the two beings cemented alliances with those entities they could not destroy, such as Toci and Tezcatlipoca, thus drawing in a handful of Toltec deities into the Aztec Pantheon and guaranteeing their worship.

Interestingly, the Lasombra claim Tezcatlipoca as theirs, though they're uncertain how a potential Methuselah arrived in Latin America so early. The Cainite Hector de Velasco transcribed something of potential interest, however, regarding Tezcatlipoca. The great stone claimed this being was "a reflection of what the mirror would not show others," and "the cast-off countenance of a Blooded being so

powerful that even its reflection refused to fade." Velasco took this to mean Tezcatlipoca was the reflection of a powerful Lasombra, one that had taken form elsewhere.

THE FLOWER WARS

The Aztecs' rule was awash in blood. They consecrated their temples with thousands of sacrifices, devastating conquered tribes. Professional skinners and cooks then collected the bodies thrown down the temple stairs and served them to the city's elite in massive cannibal feasts. In some instances, the sacrifices were so great (one numbered 5,000 victims) that even beggars wore skinned flesh. Eventually the Aztecs realized they could not continue conducting sacrifices of this magnitude without fostering rebellion among vassalage states (which bore the brunt of supplying victims).

To that end, the Aztecs created the Flower Wars.

The Flower Wars were entirely pretense, whereupon the Aztecs would challenge a vassal tribe to "war" for some

EXPLANATIONS AND ALLEGATIONS

As requested, I investigated the potential for a supernatural presence in the ancient Mexico Valley. Most theories of Cainite collusion with the local Indians before the 1500s are either too Euro-centric or too improbable. Still, I included two of the more interesting possibilities just in case, ignoring the Viking connection since you have already investigated that avenue. Here are some others to consider.

Theory One: The Setite Drift

Archeologists believe Egyptian sailors and merchants from pharaonic times were already trading tin in England, and had managed to circumnavigate Africa's southern tip to reach Africa's west coast. Now legends have spread of Egyptian sailors who followed the northern-bound Benguela Current along Africa's coastline, then inadvertently caught the fast-moving South Equatorial Current bridging the Atlantic stranglepoint between Africa and South America. The South Equatorial Current hugs the South American coastline and funnels straight through the Yucatan Channel and into the Gulf of Mexico.

Admittedly, the chance that a Setite happened to be aboard a trading vessel that found its way to South America is slim (unless it was a deliberate attempt). Compound that with the odds of a Setite who would have drained the handful of crew before they ever spotted land, much less one who could have honed in on Mexico Valley had he even entered the Gulf of Mexico, and it's impossible on the surface. I propose, however, that if a Setite landed in South America (most likely in the Amazon basin or at Veracruz), it probably searched for mortals by venturing north and sustaining itself on animal vitae. It could have eventually settled in the lush Mexico Valley, which possessed the densest population of the continent and was a terminus for wandering tribes. If this Setite was the legendary serpent Quetzalcoatl,

then the legend claiming he eventually sailed east upon a "raft of snakes" possesses an ominous ring.

Theory Two: The Kuei-jin Drift

You may not like this, but any undead presence in Mexico Valley before the 1500s was likelier Kuei-jin than Cainite. *Shan Hai King*, a classic book of ancient China compiled circa 2250 BC, tells of a voyage across the Great Eastern Sea and a 2,000-mile journey down the length of the land beyond. Although experts initially regarded it as a fable, they recently realized that the landmark descriptions are too similar to North America to be coincidental, including that of the "Great Luminous Canyon," which bears remarkable similarities to the Grand Canyon.

A later classic, *Kuen 327*, describes a similar journey of a Buddhist priest through Fu-sang (in the fifth century AD), or what experts now believe matches descriptions of Mexico and the Yucatan. There are reputedly more crossings, with some experts theorizing that one journey in 323 BC created the Quetzalcoatl (or Kukulcán) myth of the bearded strangers with white skin (Chinese sailors) who promise to return. This, of course, doesn't count the postulated massive influx of Mongolians, possibly across the Bering Straits, between 668 and 1175 AD. Some experts believe they came from the Kingdom of Tollan in Mongolia near Tula River and Baikal Lake. In fact, they called it *Anahuac* or "near the water." The Mongolians drifted south into the paradise of Mexico Valley and settled there, renaming places to match those from home like Mexico's Tula Basin. Mexico Valley was eventually called *Anahuac*. If this theory is true, the Mongolian migrations may have brought Kuei-jin with them, which explains why the Sabbat had such a difficult time ousting these creatures when they first arrived.



imagined slight (or vice-versa). The two armies then met upon the battlefield, but the generals opposing the Aztecs specifically led their forces to ruin and capture. This way, the Aztecs had a constant supply of victims and the vassal leaders looked like they opposed the Aztec's thirst for sacrifices. They were called the Flower Wars because the Aztecs invited the vassal leaders from the losing tribe to watch the sacrifices and indulge in the cannibal feasts while protecting their anonymity behind screens made from flowers.

Unbeknownst to most mortals, however, the Flower Wars also deepened Tlaloc's, Huitzilopochtli's, Toci's and Tezcatlipoca's thirsts, turning them into gluttons for blood and death. Tezcatlipoca watched the sacrifices from behind flower screens that hid orgies and flesh banquets, while the waters in Tlaloc's temple became a thick viscera of innards and decomposing bodies. Huitzilopochtli's chamber rested at the center of the Great Pyramid with blood sluices connected to the four sacrificial altars. Huitzilopochtli himself grew immense on the steady flow of blood that practically dripped into his giant maw (which the stone says was large enough to gorge upon a mortal with one bite).

The tithe of humiliation and vitae carried a steep cost. The Aztecs grew complacent, and rival tribes challenged to a Flower War soon did their utmost to win. The Aztecs won their successive battles, but only barely. Underground cults dedicated to Quetzalcoatl swelled with mortals tired of the endless barbarity. Aztec king Motecuhzoma II, already pious and fearful, interpreted every misfortune as a premonition of doom. It did not help when the allied ruler of Texcoco, the necromancer Nezahualpilli, told Motecuhzoma II that only death and destruction awaited the Aztec Empire. Nezahualpilli's auguries coincided with the appearance of a fiery comet in the night sky. Huitzilopochtli's temple inexplicably caught fire; then lightning struck Toci's temple; then mysterious whirlpools appeared around Tenochtitlán and partially flooded the city. Motecuhzoma II panicked, but maintained his rule over the rebelling vassals through bloodthirsty will. Then he received word that coastal settlements had seen great ships manned by bearded white men off the eastern coast.

Quetzalcoatl had returned, and the Aztecs fast approached Ce Acatl, the Year of the Reed and the end of another 52-year cycle....

IN THE LAND OF BEARDED GODS

As told by Francisca Aguilar, Pack Priest of the Los Olvidados

For mortals and Cainites alike, Spain was the center of European events at the end of the medieval period. The country had recently vanquished the invading Moors and the heirs of two major feudal powers, Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, were wed. The rest of Europe was busy trying to recover from the Black Death, leaving

Spain as the leading power of the time. The Spaniards, not content to sit on their laurels, also competed with Portugal to find new routes to the Far East because the current overland routes were too expensive. Most of the gold panned in North Africa and the silver mined in Europe went to Asia to pay for commodities.

On the Cainite side of events, the Sabbat had fared poorly against the newly formed Camarilla, which used commerce as its principle weapon. What made Spain in particular so appealing to the struggling Cainites was that the Camarilla's tricks to seize power elsewhere were not as effective here. For example, the Spaniards disdained agriculture and crafts because the alien Moors excelled at them (and because manual labor was punishment to those in servitude). They distrusted finance because it was "a Jewish practice." In short, the economic tactics used to hold much of Europe under the Camarilla's sway had little effect in Spanish culture, much to the delight of the Cainites.

Then, in 1493, a Papal Bull granted Spain sovereignty over most of the New World. In 1496, the Portuguese ceded most of the rights to the New World over to the Spaniards in the Treaty of Tordesillas, in exchange for uncontested rights to sail around Africa. The Portuguese did not believe the New World would prove as valuable as shorter trade routes to Asia. Thus, without even trying, the Sabbat had seemingly undisputed mastery over the New World domains.

Unfortunately, Spain's almost unprecedented power in the New World also meant that the Lasombra considered these domains almost entirely theirs. Spanish ships bound across the Atlantic landed in Cuba or Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic), while settlers had to complete a five-year residency on these islands before they could venture anywhere. This stable population base attracted the Lasombra first; a handful of Lasombra had made havens in Hispaniola as early as 1503, when 2,500 settlers joined the already existing 1,200 settlers and their fast dwindling Tainos slaves. In a fit of territorial pique, they destroyed any non-Lasombra found trying to sneak into the New World, even putting fellow Sabbat to Final Death in some instances.

The Tzimisce were furious with the Lasombra, who claimed first right to explore New Spain and establish their domains. The Tzimisce and *antitribu* clans did not set foot in Mexico until 1519 because of this, a situation that nearly precipitated a civil war. The Lasombra eventually acquiesced and allowed other Cainites into the New World. This decision was largely forced upon them, however, because of unforeseen circumstances in the form of the Aztecs' "Methuselahs."

QUETZALCOATL'S RETURN

You will find no street in Mexico City named after Hernán Cortés. He was a butcher and a liar who destroyed the mortal empire so dear to the Mexican identity. He even disobeyed Cuba's Governor, mounting a secret expedition to Mexico for personal fortune and glory. It was only felling the Aztec Empire that turned him from traitor to hero.

Good fortune was Hernán Cortés's mistress. His conquest of the Aztecs came about only because he allied himself with their enemies and convinced the punitive fleet of 19 ships sent to capture him to join his cause. More so, however, Cortés succeeded because he and his men unknowingly wielded a catastrophic weapon: smallpox. It ran rampant through the Aztec and Indian populations, devastating them from within.

The leader of the Aztecs, Motecuhzoma II, also failed to handle the situation properly, another example of Cortés's luck. It didn't take him long to realize that Cortés was not Quetzalcoatl, but regardless of that realization, he failed to unite his people and properly to repel the Spaniards. Instead, Cortés remained an Aztec guest for an extended period of time before they finally rose against him. When he later returned, he came with reinforcements and besieged the city for over two months before it finally fell to him.

Cortés's expedition included two Lasombra: a thaumaturge by the name of Beatrice Alverdo and a chronicler named Juan Guzman. Cuba's Lasombra were intensely interested in Mexico following reports from the first Spaniards that encountered Motecuhzoma II's envoys, so they sent the scholars with Cortés's ships. While the *conquistadors* met with the Totonac Indians (enemies of the Aztecs), Alverdo and Guzman received a delegation from the local cult of Quetzalcoatl. It included a shaman who, sensing the Cainities, believed Alverdo and Guzman to be the expedition's true masters. He told them of Tenochtitlán's blood gods, including Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca.

Alverdo recognized the similarities between Tezcatlipoca and the Lasombra. She used a ritual to send a message back to her sire in Cuba, telling of "the Aztecs' Methuselahs." Because of this, Alverdo and Guzman refused to venture into Tenochtitlán and waited at Cortés's garrison in Veracruz for reinforcements.

Back in Cuba, the Lasombra knew they could not handle this problem alone. If Tezcatlipoca was Lasombra, he was of the old clan before the Anarch Revolt. The descriptions of Huitzilopochtli also cast him as Tzimisce or Nosferatu, meaning the Lasombra were outmatched. The clan needed allies in the New World, if only to help conquer it, so they sent messages to the other Sabbat clans asking for aid.

While the Lasombra communicated their wishes to Spain almost immediately, thanks to the thaumaturges among them, it took four months before the first mixed pack of Tzimisce and both Nosferatu and Brujah *antitribu* landed in Cuba, with another two months to reach Veracruz. When they finally arrived at Tenochtitlán with Alverdo and Guzman in tow, Cortés had already besieged the city.

HUITZILOPOCHTLI VERSUS QUETZALCOATL

The pack, now calling itself *Nigrum Triste* or Black Sorrow, snuck into Tenochtitlán weeks before its fall. The *conquistadors* had cut off fresh water to the city, turning the local reservoirs stagnant and fetid. This in turn weakened Tlaloc, who chose to conserve his strength for the final assault.



Huitzilopochtli was still immense, but substantially weakened from hunger. His herd was starving or dying of smallpox, thinning the potency of their vitae. Toci had apparently fled, but by far the deadliest opponent remained Tezcatlipoca who thrived on the suffering.

Still, despite their information-gathering attempts, the pack could not determine the nature of their opposition. Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca were certainly undead, but of a sort the pack had never encountered. Tezcatlipoca seemed Lasombra, but his command of shadows was unprecedented. His temple consisted of solid shadow artifacts and doors, and his victims hung from pulsating shadow arteries that siphoned their blood directly to the would-be god. A captured priest even said the interior was so dark that Tezcatlipoca could “resist the sun’s hold over him,” apparently remaining awake throughout the day.

Nigrum Triste decided the best option was to attack these beings when the *conquistadors* and their allies entered the city. The pack needed the confusion to weaken and distract their opposition.

It didn’t take Cortés long to force Tenochtitlán into submission. In the following week, the Spaniards and their allies ransacked the city, slaughtering two-thirds of its 200,000 inhabitants. Likewise, the pack used ghouls to set Huitzilopochtli’s temple ablaze during the day; Tlaloc, now reconnected with fresh water supplies after Cortés reopened several aqueducts, summoned a rain shower to

douse the blaze and flood the city, thus allowing him to escape into the lake, where he vanished. The fire hurt Huitzilopochtli enough to send him into torpor, however, leaving the leviathan Cainite at the mercy of *Nigrum Triste*. The pack claims it took them four whole nights just to stake and diablerize the so-called hummingbird god. Despite this, they never uncovered his nature.

Tezcatlipoca was not as easy to destroy. When the stench from the rotting corpses proved too great, the Spaniards and the Indians withdrew from Tenochtitlán while they planned their next step. *Nigrum Triste* remained behind to hunt Tezcatlipoca in the city’s abandoned streets and homes, but the creature proved too cunning for even their combined skills. One by one they perished, finally leaving Alverdo to report to her sire, “The game is done... send better help next time.”

Following the message, Alverdo vanished and has never been found.

MEXICO CITY

As told by Lady Cortanos, Fiend of the Hollow Bone

The Lasombra, haughty bastards as ever, committed a fatal and almost unforgivable error in the years following Tenochtitlán’s fall and the building of Mexico City (named after the Mexicas, one of several names pertaining to the Aztecs) over its ruins. They refused to sacrifice any Cainites from Cuba and Hispaniola for fear of weakening their

precious position there. Instead, they waited for reinforcements to trickle in from Spain, a prospect often eight months or more in the making.

The Lasombra had the arrogance to claim they were sharing their resources. The truth is that Tezcatlipoca frightened them, and they needed help destroying him. While the Lasombra waited for new packs, the *conquistadors* built Mexico City free from our influence. When Cainites finally arrived at Veracruz and made the two-week journey inland, it was that much harder to insinuate themselves and dig Tezcatlipoca out from his hole. This situation continued for decades, with Tezcatlipoca claiming our numbers slowly. He flitted in and out from the shadows with ease, dragging victims back into the darkness.

It was a difficult time and one of much anger and dissatisfaction. We Tzimisce were impressed by what we'd heard of the Aztecs, and were curious as to their customs and magics. By delaying our arrival, however, the Lasombra ensured we could not possess a strong power base from which to draw allies. Smallpox, the pollution of vital waterways and the harsh *repartimiento* (forced labor system imposed on "infidels") devastated the Indians, culling their population by 90 percent in over a century. They lost their lands to cattle and their customs to the missionaries.

The Lasombra refused to Embrace Indians, and instead strengthened their ties to the New World through the Church and the steady influx of Spanish émigrés. It was we Tzimisce, the Gangrel and Nosferatu *antitribu* who fostered alliances with the Aztecs and other tribes. It was we who Embraced Aztec priests and taught them of our blood and flesh ways. In turn, Aztec Fiends refined the Sabbat's existing blood rites into the *Vaulderie*; it was they who initiated the Blood Feasts in honor of Flower War banquets, and they who created such rituals as the Blood Rush, Eyes of the Night Hawk and Mirror of Second Sight.

Naturally, the Lasombra were resentful of our growing influence in the New World, and instead convinced mortals within the Church to move Indians to *congregaciones* or Church-run communities and neighborhoods to "protect them from tyrannical conquistador land owners." Ironically, both Indians and hacienda owners ingratiated themselves to the Church by bequeathing their lands upon death to local clergy. The Church became the largest landholder in this so-called New Spain, which in turn benefited the Lasombra, who took some prize properties for themselves.

By hampering the Indians, the Lasombra could also restrict our access to them and thus our power base. The Church educated Indian children, who then betrayed their parents by leading Catholic priests to hidden shrines dedicated to the ancient gods. We tried keeping Aztec practices vital if only to establish our own cults among the Indians, but the Lasombra brokered no threats to their Catholic institution. This struggle continued over the decades. Fortunately for us, the Lasombra had greater concerns that required their attention.

GOLD & SILVER

The first of the Lasombra's tribulations came in 1540 with the discovery of silver north of Mexico City. With most of Europe's precious metals bound for Asia, New Spain became the world's foremost supplier of silver, doubling Europe's stores. One-fifth of the newfound wealth was set aside for the Spanish crown, greatly increasing the wealth and power of the Spanish throne. This newfound opportunity also had the effect of significantly increasing traffic to the New World, as men and women searched for new chances to gain wealth and power.

Ships arrived from many different ports in Spain. With the huge influx of people, immigrants were no longer required to stay in Cuba and Hispaniola for five years. Suddenly the Lasombra couldn't monitor the majority of Spanish traffic bound for New Spain, except at the terminus point in Veracruz. Even then, it was chaos. The annual fleet from the Seville, for example, numbered 100 ships with several galleons protecting the shipments from pirates. Naturally, the Sabbat managed to send more of its members into the New World aboard these massive fleets, as did the Camarilla.

With the huge silver trade, the Spanish crown sent auditors and men of finance and law into New Spain. The Camarilla took advantage of the situation and cemented a small presence in Mexico City through these *litrados* (lawyers) and members of the powerful *Mesta* (the cattlemen's association who owned land). This foothold would haunt the Sabbat in the centuries to come.

THE OLD GODS

Although subjugated by Catholicism, many Indians worshiped their ancient gods secretly. The Church tried disrupting the practice by converting children to play their eager spies, but we Tzimisce and several Nosferatu *antitribu* kept the old cults alive by assuming the visages of their deities. Only the worship of Tlaloc and Tezcatlipoca remained free of our intervention, primarily because these two beings still made their presence felt throughout the valley.

Tlaloc eventually vanished, presumably destroyed during the Great Flood of 1629. Before then, he appeared on occasion, using his sorcery to capture Cainites who ventured into the water. Although drowning was never a threat we feared, Tlaloc kept his captives trapped underwater until sunrise before forcing them to the surface.

We knew Tlaloc was growing stronger and tried repeatedly to destroy him, without success. The valley was a basin with no natural drainage system: Deforestation eroded the soil and built a layer of silt on the lake bed, causing it to rise and worsening the floods. Tlaloc thrived in this situation, for all Mexico Valley was becoming his pool. Finally, a wet summer in 1629 saturated the valley floor, followed by a torrential shower in September that lasted 36 hours. The mountains funneled the rain into the valley, flooding Mexico City beneath six feet of water. It remained submerged for five years, killing 30,000 Indians and driving out the Spaniards.

Those Cainites without ghouls or revenants lay buried beneath the water, unaware of the danger until too late.

Many, unable to budge the thick layer of mountain silt and water blocking their crypts and havens, fell into murky torpor (we could not find most of our lost, including the archbishop). We were ready to abandon the city as the mortals had done. The thaumaturges and sorcerers among us, however, sensed powerful magic at work, and believed the storm was Tlaloc's doing. Although we were scattered and diminished, a Torea-dor *antitribu* by the name of Melinda Galbraith — a name well know to our Brothers and Sisters — organized the stragglers and forced us to remain behind and contend with Tlaloc. The threat he posed was too powerful to ignore.

Fortunately, with the city mostly abandoned, we hunted openly across rooftops. Our *koldun* brethren led the charge, wielding their control over water and earth. For a year we hunted Tlaloc, before finally trapping him behind an earthen dam and mixing his essence with earth. We coagulated his muddy residue into a hardened clay and shattered it to bits before committing the remains to the flame. That was the last we saw of Tlaloc.

Tezcatlipoca proved more difficult, especially for the Lasombra who discovered that this would-be deity could sometimes manifest through Obtenebration and turn their Discipline against them. Finally, on August 23, 1691, following massive flooding, crop ruin and near starvation, an eclipse blotted out the sun. The Lasombra all awoke for that brief moment to face a cacophony of laughter from the shadows. Before they could act, shadow tendrils shot out from the darkness, impaling many Lasombra in their scattered crypts; when the eclipse waned, everyone fell back into troubled slumber. In the end, three perished from the assault. The ones who survived bled a black humor from their wounds for the next few nights. The Tremere *antitribu* believed the ichor was somehow tied to Tezcatlipoca and collected several samples.

Afterward, Goriatrix and the Tremere *antitribu* claimed they had destroyed Tezcatlipoca using the ichor as a link in a ritual reminiscent of Cauldron of Blood. There were many doubts, as they had no evidence to show for their efforts. Despite this troubling lack of evidence, Tezcatlipoca never reappeared after the eclipse.

Unfortunately, following the recent disappearance of the Tremere *antitribu*, several Cainites of dubious wisdom raided their missing brothers' and sisters' havens. One grave robber claims to possess a sealed urn etched with protective rituals. Reputedly the urn bears the name "Tezcatlipoca." I loathe to think of this as anything but a prank in the poorest taste.

CASTE FRICTION

The Spaniards believed it their right to make slaves of infidels, but their introduction of new diseases thinned their potential Indian labor force significantly. Then in 1540, the Spanish crown abolished Indian slavery, though the practice continued as a form of criminal punishment. Instead, New Spain relied on African slaves, who numbered 60,000 by the end of the fifteenth century and 150,000 blacks and mulattos by 1650.

The Lasombra refused to Embrace slaves and "common laborers," and fully supported the notion of *limpieza de sangre*, or purity of blood. Among mortals, this doctrine demanded that any Spaniard applying for secular or clerical offices provide documents proving themselves free of Jewish or Moorish blood. The Lasombra took that practice a step further and only Embraced (in private Creation Rites) or fed from *gachupines* (recent arrivals from Spain who could prove their lineages more easily). They all but ignored the *creoles*, those of Spanish extraction born in Mexico.

The *gachupines* grew in strength and prestige because they supposedly remained untainted by exposure to the inferior Indian culture and climate, and were thus more "white" than *creoles*. The drawback was that the children of *gachupines* born in New Spain were now "tainted," becoming themselves *creole*, and less likely to secure important positions than a newly arrived Spaniard with few contacts. The Lasombra were equally guilty of this practice, preferring to draw their blood and childer from purer European stock like the *gachupines*.

In doing so, the Lasombra limited their feeding base, while we strengthened ours by cementing ties with the so-called inferior castes and *creoles*. This included the mestizo (children of white and Indian unions), mulattos (white and black), zambo (Indian and black), morisco (white and mulatto), and castizo (mestizo and white unions). This was not to say we didn't have to fight for these mortal "resources," though.

When Spain annexed Portugal in the 17th century, they inherited her massive slave trade and her accompanying Setite and Giovanni slave merchants. With the decrease in Indian workers, colonists willingly paid for the more expensive African slaves, thus providing the Setites and Giovanni with both steady income and eyes and ears into most haciendas. Then, when Indians realized Africans were more resistant to the European diseases and bred with them to protect their future offspring, the Giovanni Setites gained valuable inroads with these mortal communities as well. One Setite even owned several *pulquerias*, or taverns that catered to Indians and blacks mostly.

Already beleaguered by the Lasombra's attempt to impede our power in New Spain, we did not tolerate the interference of outsiders. We fought the Setites' blighted influences over several decades, trying to destroy them. You can imagine our surprise when the Snakes suggested a temporary alliance. They knew tensions between the Lasombra and Tzimisce were rising, but they believed the Lasombra would eventually lose their hold in mortal affairs. The *gachupines* may have been in power, but the *creoles* were slowly gaining supporters and positions of strength in the Church and government. Already by 1624, the *creoles* had helped oust Mexico City's viceroy through a show of force, and the new viceroy, Juan de Palafox, opened many bureaucratic and military posts formally available only to *gachupines*. Eventually, the Setites argued, even the slaves would rise up against *gachupines*, for no people ever remained subjugated forever. Already one slave riot in 1611 and another in 1691 proved that these

"inferior" people would win their freedom or die in the struggle. Our support of the *creoles*, Indians, blacks and all their varied children would eventually see us equal to the Lasombra, whose powers waned even now.

In exchange for ignoring the Setites, the snakes offered us an annual tribute of 100 choice slaves for our Creation Rites and Blood Feasts. In a city fast swelling with Cainites, where disease and disaster was already driving the indigenous populations into extinction through attrition (and thus affecting our ability to feed), the opportunity was unparalleled. We agreed, unknowingly cementing the initial ties that would later encourage a branch of Setites called the Serpents of the Light to break from their clan.

CAMARILLA ASCENDANT

As told by Calderón Diego, Ductus of Peppenadores Scavengers

The fact the Camarilla once seized power in Mexico City is to our great shame. They fought their war on multiple battlefields, several of which we never saw until too late. And they maneuvered their pieces over the span of a century like patient little spiders.

The Camarilla initially established footholds in Mexico City through ghouls in the silver trade and auditors partitioning the profit yields. The Spanish still distrusted finance at this time, leaving only a handful of experts whom the Camarilla could approach and manipulate. Kindred then offered patronage to or made ghouls of many *litrados* or lawyers emerging in the colonies. We were blind to their cunning, and they played their assets masterfully.

When Indian slavery was abolished, many Indians tried reclaiming their ancestral lands from the Church and landowners. In fact, the Indians outpaced the Spaniards for litigations. Those who already possessed some property paid the lawyers with their estates in the hopes of greater returns through the courts. More often than not, the Indians lost property to the lawyers, who in turn sold the land to their "Kindred" masters.

The Camarilla used these properties to earn steady incomes (through agriculture and leasing) and support the rise of several merchant dynasties. You see, Spain feared Mexico, if only because of its massive silver operations and the huge profits filling the coffers of locals. To ensure that they would keep their cash cow docile, Spain maintained a stranglehold over the colony by preventing the creation of any industries within New Spain that competed with luxury items arriving from the mother country. Most of Mexico's wealth went into high taxes and buying these luxury goods, thus supporting Spain's industries. The Camarilla realized this and used their properties to sponsor *creole* merchant families in Mexico City. After a couple of generations of patronage, these merchant dynasties became filthy rich on trade.

By this time, most of the surface silver mining operations were tapped out, causing silver yields to drop substantially. Only the truly rich families could afford investing the re-

quired capital in deeper mining ventures. Being *creole* was no deterrent either; these families allowed their daughters to marry recently arrived and wealthy *gachupines*, who in turn cut through the red tape prohibiting *creoles* from gaining too much power and influence at the time.

After these families made fortunes in silver, they bought more real estate and grew richer through agriculture (certainly not as lucrative as silver mining, but it was a smaller risk venture with guaranteed steady profit). With their assets, they then lent money to farmers against future harvests, but at a fixed price, thus dictating market values for crops. The lesson in all this? Control the market forces instead of falling to their mercy.

Outside the colony, the Camarilla attacked the Lasombra's power structure in Spain through equally insidious techniques. Put simply, the Spanish monarchy relied on Mexico's silver to finance campaigns and purchase goods. Unfortunately Spain squandered her riches foolishly and lost several major battles against rival nations, including her vaunted Spanish Armada to the English. Even worse at home, the influx of silver raised inflation by 400 percent, because silver drove consumer costs up.

Additionally, the Seville fleet sailed only once a year; Spain had to borrow merchandise from Britain and France, and money from banking states like Genoa, all against their projected shipments. The Camarilla used this to its advantage by encouraging its allies to lend Spain as much money and merchandise as possible, so when the silver shipment finally arrived, little to none of it remained in Spain's coffers — it was all bound for the moneylenders. The Camarilla then sent its agents to collect any outstanding debts with offers of trade. If someone important could not pay a debt in cash, they could repay it in services, favors and even deeds to seaworthy vessels. With little warning, the Camarilla accrued enough boons to maintain strong influence in both sides of the silver trade. Spain was merely a channel for European interests.

The final blow came with the death of Spain's Habsburg dynasty. The ineffectual Charles II failed to sire any heirs, so he named Philip of Anjou, grandson to French Bourbon King Louis XIV, his successor. England was determined to prevent France from acquiring Spain's holdings and so declared war, instigating the War of Spanish Succession that lasted for 13 years. Behind the scenes, the English Ventrue were determined to prevent the "Toreador fops" from gaining more power in the New World. Unfortunately, we were in no position to take advantage of the situation. The First Sabbat Civil War had yet to manifest, but for all intents and purposes, we were already bickering.

SABBAT SUNDERED

Following the War of Spanish Succession with France retaining Spain and its holdings, the Camarilla slipped into power in Mexico City on the coattails of the Bourbon ruler Charles III. The Sabbat recognized the Camarilla threat in Mexico City and elsewhere, but we could rarely agree on a

PULQUE

In pre-Colombian times, the Indians learned to ferment cactus sap into a green alcoholic drink called *pulque*, which has the viscosity of spittle and a shot of every vitamin and mineral imaginable. The drink was so potent that the Aztec priests gave it their victims to prepare them for sacrifice. Many *chilango* Sabbat still partake of *pulque*, but only after inebriating mortals to toxic levels with the liquor and draining them. One pack of mestizos skilled in Thaumaturgy actually impales victims on the cactus's long needle. They then gather a mixture of the bloody sap and use thaumaturgy to ferment the concoction into something palatable for Cainites. The mixture doesn't offer any "nutritional" value and the Cainites eventually vomit it up, but it still produces euphoric effects.

common goal. We collided with increasing frequency for North American resources. In Mexico City, that meant the Tzimisce and Lasombra struggled over many issues.

The first was position in the Church. *Creole* priests were rising to the fore, though only *gachupine* priests attained the upper echelons. The Lasombra tried keeping the *creoles* "in their place" while the Tzimisce and other *antitribu* clans attempted to force the Lasombra out of their monopoly by toppling the *gachupines* in power. The struggle for "racial purity" eventually divided the Church between the regular clergy who belonged to the monastic orders and the "secular clergy" who served the bishops.

The ruling crown played upon this schism, hoping to divide the Church and prevent it from gaining more power. Meanwhile, we aggravated the situation by nipping away at the Lasombra's mortal infrastructures. Truthfully, though, we acted like children, corrupting priests by encouraging vice or inspiring *creole* *padres* to seize control of parishes. The Lasombra in turn sent *gachupine* clerics into a frenzy and turned them against the "upstart *creoles*." Several battles between armed priests occurred throughout the 1700s, forcing the intervention of the Royal Army. Unfortunately, when the war of pawns finally degenerated into skirmishes between the packs, the Sabbat could no longer contend with the Camarilla vultures circling over our heads.

The final blow came in 1767.

Charles III used the secular priests to spy on their monastic brethren, and received reports of widespread debauchery and immoral behavior. Finally, Charles III expelled the Jesuit order from Spain and all overseas territories, setting off riots among Mexico City's poor. While he claimed the Jesuits were plotting against him, it was likelier the crown sought the order's impressive holdings and assets for themselves.

The move stunned the Sabbat, but the Lasombra mortal infrastructure in Mexico City nearly collapsed with the loss of its preeminent order. All the land and riches accrued

through the once-largest landowners in New Spain suddenly evaporated. The Lasombra blamed the Tzimisce for this state of affairs, even suggesting collusion with the Camarilla. The Tzimisce responding by attacking Lasombra and openly calling for all fiends to take that which the Lasombra had "denied them." Already stretched to the breaking point by thinning resources and frustrated by their lack of success against the Camarilla, the various packs directed their anger against their own brothers and sisters. It was war.

EBB AND RISE

That the Camarilla could not hold power in New Spain was more a testament to mortal ineptitude and circumstance than our cunning. The Sabbat, however, is never one to ignore opportunity. By 1785, matters were at their worst for our sect. The fighting claimed many Cainite unlives needlessly and invalidated what little progress we had made in the New World. Then an early frost in August destroyed most crops in the Valley of Mexico, precipitating a famine that claimed 300,000 mortals. Our fight for resources became a desperate struggle for survival, and the Civil War degenerated into packs protecting what little blood remained.

Fortunately, the Camarilla suffered more than we did. Their vaunted landowners were losing prestige to a new military elite, and the cycle of frost followed by various calamities ruined several estates. The soft "Kindred" could affect market forces, but they could not control the weather. The Camarilla also fought for vitae, with few willing to feed off the common Indian and minority rabble. Those who did, like the Nosferatu and Gangrel, found us waiting in the shadows. Initially we destroyed these Kindred, but more came, this time hoping to join us. This lot had tired of the petty Jyhads that netted them nothing but misfortune. We accepted the strongest among them and feasted upon the weak.

The Camarilla's power over New Spain and the improvement in our fortune coincided with Charles III's death in 1788. His successor, Charles IV, foolishly declared war against France for executing Louis XVI, but Spain lost and fell under Napoleonic rule. The demand for tribute from Mexico rose to such ridiculous levels that the crown then decreed the Consolidation of Ecclesiastic Funds. The Church had to turn over all properties and outstanding loans owed by colonists to the Royal Treasury. Suddenly, where the Church was willing to forego loan payments from the colonists, the crown demanded sudden restitution. With the exception of the very rich, this bankrupted many.

The local Camarilla watched their investments and richness siphoned away by mortal institutions in France. Slowly, they pulled out of the colonies following Spain's declaration of war in 1793, leaving behind neonate scapegoats and lackeys. They knew little good would come of the following decades and left behind Kindred whom they could blame for the failure. At the same time, our Civil War was ending, one pack at a time. When we realized the Camarilla was losing strength in New Spain, we also realized they had cemented their position in the remainder of North America. Their

success was our shame, but we had the opportunity to seize the largest settlement in the New World, Mexico City.

SABBAT ASCENDANT

As told by ex-Templar Letradis, Pack Priest of Guadalupe Roja

Emerging from our first Civil War, we were resolute in our goals and settled our differences through the Purchase Pact of 1803. Regent Gorchist of Europe journeyed to Mexico City, where notables Cardinal Bistri, Priscus Czernzy, Archbishop Marquez and Bishop Montaigne gathered. We recognized the implications: While once Europe was our home and benchmark of the Sabbat's success and failure, our goals now rested on our ventures in North America. Already the infant United States had thrown off British rule, and we believed Spain would follow suit if Charles IV continued alienating New Spain. The crown's annual levy against the colony was seven times that of a century ago, and it hungered for more. The colonies would endure it no longer.

More than just a declaration of our intention to take the New World, the Purchase Pact signified that as the largest settlement in North America, when Mexico City fell to the Sabbat it would become our capital and black heart. The regent even discussed moving his haven here, and honored Archbishop Galbraith by bringing her into his consistory. The promise of victory was heady indeed. If it was victory we wanted, however, we had to move swiftly. The Consolidation of Ecclesiastic Funds had already enraged the colonists, and we quickly searched for those currents of dissatisfaction among mortal society. We found it easily enough... it was everywhere.

The kine bristled over the consolidation decree, and were further incensed when they discovered that Spain's first minister, Godoy, had surrendered their wealth to Napoleon. Swift upon that insult's heels was France's invasion of Spain. A junta government formed in Seville, and the white colonists debated their next course of action. The *gachupines* still retained most of the political power and demanded the colony join with the Seville resistance until France withdrew from Spain. Naturally, the *creoles* opposed this view and convinced Mexico City's viceroy, Iturrigaray, to support neither the French puppet rulers in Spain nor the junta in Seville. Iturrigaray then rescinded the consolidation decree, but the *gachupines*, fearing the formation of a new *creole*-controlled government, captured the viceroy in a quiet coup. They named army officer Pedro de Garibay acting viceroy. Garibay in turn announced New Spain's support of the junta forces.

Working together for perhaps the first time since hunting the Aztecs' last gods, we used our mortal contacts for the

ELEVATOR PARTY

Ever hear of an elevator party? It's simple. We invade the basement of a building and hotwire the elevator. So whenever the elevator picks up a passenger, it brings them right down to our basement party no matter what button they pushed. *Voila*, free delivery.



benefit of the Sabbath rather than for our own glory. The Lasombra warned us the *gachupines* would probably seize power themselves, and instead advocated supporting the revolutionaries in the countryside. The Tzimisce and Brujah, Gangrel and Nosferatu *antitribu* agreed as well. The countryside was a haven for *creoles* and Indians, many with little love for the *gachupines* or the crown. They were starving, they were poor and they were angry. We also knew that the consolidation decree alienated the lesser clergy from Spain, and that most of the country clergy were *creoles*. We didn't expect that the first cry for freedom, however, would come from a priest... Father Miguel Hidalgo, to be exact.

LA REVOLUCIÓN

Father Hidalgo was a *creole* with some Indian blood, and he admired the Indian culture. His grievances with Spain are too many to discuss here, but they included centuries of abuse against the Indians and blacks, *gachupine* domination and the Spanish crown's treatment of the Church. Truthfully, we didn't care, so long as Hidalgo lit the fuse. He did, uttering his famous cry for revolt or *grito* in Dolores and claiming he was fighting against the *gachupine's* coup in Mexico City. Hidalgo hoped to gain *creole* support, but the revolution swiftly snowballed beyond his control when his Indian and caste mob slaughtered *gachupine* and *creole* alike. The two factions briefly united against this threat, and Hidalgo eventually died at the hands of royalist troops.

Again, we didn't care. Hidalgo was a dreamer who proved ineffective at controlling his unruly mob, but he inspired others to revolt. When Father José María Morelos revolted as well, Cainites numbered among his flock, helping in the campaign of guerilla warfare. Morelos later died as well, but more men and women took his place; the seeds of revolution were blooming.

The *creoles* had supported the *gachupines* during Hidalgo's and Morelos' campaigns because they feared the Indians and castes as well. When Spain finally achieved its freedom in 1813 and Ferdinand returned to the throne, however, he ordered the arrest of any *creole* who spoke of independence too strongly. He also rescinded many of the *creoles'* aristocratic rights through reforms — those same *creoles* who supported his junta government. The *gachupines* were naturally delighted, but the *creoles* were infuriated. From the ranks of these disgruntled mortals rose Agustín de Iturbide, a military officer and supporter of the Church.

Iturbide recruited soldiers who were unhappy with the royal crown, eventually amassing a well-disciplined army larger than Mexico City's garrison. The viceroy and Spanish emissary had little choice but to recognize Mexico's independence in the face of such adversity. The revolution to free Mexico from Spanish control took 11 years, from Hidalgo's *grito* to Iturbide's coronation as Agustín I, Mexico's first emperor.

LAST STAND

The Camarilla Cainites who remained in Mexico City were the young scapegoats left behind by their elders over a

decade ago. The Ivory Tower had all but abandoned hope for the remaining enclave, leaving them to the capricious fates. If they survived this tumultuous time, their elders would return and reclaim the city as though they themselves had won the battle. If their childer lost, however, it was their fault.

Toreador Prince Parian knew we were preparing to launch our own coup and instead preempted us masterfully. She hired a retinue of Assamites and Nosferatu to infiltrate Mexico City and eliminate as many Sabbath as they could find. She then let slip rumors that she and the nascent primogen were fleeing the city, knowing we would ambush their escape. While Iturbide and his army marched on Mexico City, five packs descended on a convoy that we believed carried the cowardly Kindred. Instead the assassins swept through our ranks like a scythe through wheat, striking down our generals in a silent ballet of Assamite fury.

We were fortunate, however, for our plan to retake the city had already drawn notables into our ranks like Jalan-Aajav of the Black Hand and the paladin Vincent Day. We were far from defenseless, but what we believed was going to be a riotous massacre turned into a protracted battle through the night streets. Many of the Gifts of Caine were our safeguards against the silent Assamites and Nosferatu. The mortal herd suspected little of the nightly battles save for the odd shift of shadows, the momentary silence on certain streets, the sudden rush of mist that vanished as soon as it appeared and the packs of wandering mongrels who bore a discomfiting resemblance to wolves.

The battle for Mexico City endured for two months before Prince Parian exhausted her resources fighting us and we caught up with her, draining her corpse. Her lackeys followed suit shortly thereafter, but their deaths were far less noble than their prince's quiet destruction. The Tzimisce took Parian's skin and preserved it in honor of the Kindred who faced destruction bravely. Her skin is one of many displayed at our Blood Feasts.

THE MARCH OF TEARS

Mexico City was finally ours, and as Regent Gorchist had promised, it was now our capital and rallying point. Montreal would soon follow, and afterward, we believed, the rest of the continent. Meanwhile, the next 50 years saw the country decay socially, spiritually and economically, and each slip entrenched us further. Military coup precipitated military coup following 10 months of Agustín I's rule, and Mexico City experienced 42 changes in government as one general replaced the next. The disparity between rich and poor increased greatly, creating a new underclass called the *leperos*. The Nosferatu *antitribu* drew their numbers from these sore infested, black-toothed beggars with the audacity to steal into aristocratic compounds just to beg at their windows. In hovels called *vecindades*, entire families slept on the concrete floor of one room, turning these poorly ventilated dens into deathtraps during epidemics.

The Camarilla mistakenly believes we reveled in these conditions for the sake of mortal misery, but truthfully, they

THE CHURCH'S POWER

The reason Mexico City's Church remained so popular for so long was because it was the largest landowner for centuries. To their credit, they allowed the poor to live on their properties for dirt cheap, which is why the poor almost always supported the Church in conflicts and why Catholicism remained strong.

simply served our purpose. People overlooked unexplained deaths, and the poor rarely trusted the police enough to notify them of crimes. In fact, the capital maintained only 25 policemen and several dozen market guards. Three hundred and fifty men also served as a paramilitary security force, but they refused to patrol. We had free reign to act as we pleased. The night belonged to the Cainites.

The one mortal event of interest in those years stemmed from Antonio López de Santa Anna. Santa Anna earned notoriety for several incidents, including launching the first military coup following Mexico's independence and serving as Mexico's corrupt president 11 different times. The Americans also know him best for the Alamo massacre, which Santa Anna led in order to prevent Texas's succession from Mexico. An American force later captured Santa Anna, forcing him to sign a treaty that would eventually earn Texas independence. That's also when the rumblings of the Second Sabbat Civil War began.

THE HERALDS OF RENEWED DESTRUCTION

The Mexican government refused to acknowledge Texas's independence because Santa Anna had signed the accord under duress. When the United States brought Texas into its union, Mexico declared the action illegal and declared war against its northern neighbor. Santa Anna, in political exile after surrendering Texas, returned to lead an army against the Americans. He stalemated them in northern Mexico, then retreated to Mexico City to cement its defenses. After a dispute with another general over garrison command, however, Santa Anna withdrew his army, allowing the Americans to occupy Mexico City with ease.

Naturally, the Sabbat expected Camarilla scoundrels and Assamite lapdogs to follow the American army. The Camarilla, however, played at a different game. It had little interest in Mexico City, given its battered infrastructure and the extent of corruption. Instead, when the American settlement for the war sliced off and annexed Mexico's northern half (the Southwest and California) for a miserly \$15 million, the Camarilla swept through those territories and "pacified" them. They whittled at our domains slowly, and as was typical, we reacted by accusing each other of failure. The Lasombra and Tzimisce once again drew their lines in the sand.

With the Camarilla gaining more ground throughout the U.S., the conflict galvanized packs to one camp or the other (Tzimisce or Lasombra). Regent Gorchist enforced

peace in Mexico City and outlying areas through the Black Hand, but when mortal violence rocked the capital or regions, the packs used the bloodshed to disguise their own battles. The war nearly escalated out of control when mortal President-General Miguel Miramón's army fought ex-President Juárez's forces for three bloody and brutal years in the capital and territories. Many packs and Cainites simply vanished in a puff of ash, but Gorchist maintained an admittedly tenuous sense of order through force of will. When the conflict repeatedly threatened to erupt into wholesale violence, he pulled the Sabbat back from the brink. Unfortunately, it wouldn't last.

THE MODERN SABBAT

As told by Lady Sonora, self-proclaimed Bride of Caine

Regent Gorchist's assassination came as a shock to us all. He stood at the bridge's center, holding the Tzimisce and Lasombra away from each other. When he fell, the bridge collapsed with him and we fought each other on the way down.

The catalyst for all this began after deposed mortal President Juárez reclaimed his office through revolution. Mexico's economy was such that even after the sale of ecclesiastic lands to cover its crushing debt load, President Juárez still declared a two-year moratorium on repaying Mexico's creditors. The response from France, Britain and Spain — the creditor nations — was immediate: invasion. The Mexican clergy and conservatives moved to save their assets by suggesting a monarchy, one under the rule of Maximilian, Archduke of Austria. In a series of political ploys to spare Mexico another war, the monarchists approached Napoleon III, since France was most in favor of invading Mexico. The plan called for Napoleon's support of Archduke Maximilian to represent France's interests in Mexico. Napoleon agreed, if only to recapture France's foothold in North America.

The initial invasion consisted of Spanish, British and French troops with the understanding that they would fight only to reclaim their debts. When it became clear France intended to conquer Mexico, Spain and Britain withdrew their support. Undeterred, Napoleon's army marched on Mexico City, and despite yellow fever, guerilla snipers and a route at Puebla, the French took *el D.F.*. Emperor Maximilian followed shortly thereafter. This mortal snapshot is important because the Sabbat and Regent Gorchist heard rumors that Camarilla Cainites from the Old World had accompanied the French forces to reclaim Mexico City.

The United States was embroiled in a massive Civil War, and both the Sabbat and the continental Camarilla were too involved in that conflict to intercede. In the year it took French forces to reach us, however, we entrenched our positions in Mexico City, our local feud temporarily forgotten. Then, on the eve of invasion, a Ravnos assassin felled Regent Gorchist in a suicidal gambit. Chaos swept through the city with several bishops trying to rally the Sabbat behind them.

HOT TAMALES

I fucking love the *tragafuegos*. These guys are fire-eaters who perform their act at intersections for waiting drivers. They take a swig of alcohol and use a torch to spray out a fireball, or they jam a kerosene-lit stick down their throat. I like to mind-fuck the occasional *tragafuego* into walking up to waiting autos with open windows so he can blow a fire plume into the car. Fucking hilarious.

Afterward, the truth surfaced. The rumors of Camarilla scourges among the French were only that — rumors. The Ravnos responsible for Gorchist's destruction turned out to be *antitribu*. It seemed the Camarilla was far more interested in the American Civil War that netted them new territory. Accusations flew between the factions and with loyalties torn asunder once more, the local Sabbat fell into chaos; the Second Sabbat Civil War was now underway in bloody earnest.

THE DARK AGES

The Mexicans drove the invading French out after only five years. Mexico City saw the rule of the great Porfirio Díaz between 1876 and 1911. Despite the recovery of the mortal Mexico, the Sabbat Civil War raged unabated, sparing few in its violence. Several regents appeared across the world, each claiming stewardship over the Sabbat. Europe's Sabbat founders said its New World brothers and sisters had failed the cause, so the Lasombra suggested Archbishop Monçada for the role. Vladimir Rustovitch reluctantly bore the Tzimisce's support. In Detroit, Archbishop Pierson claimed regency for eight nights before a pack drained him of his ambitions.

In Mexico City, Melinda Galbraith had risen to pre-eminence in Gorchist's consistory. They, in turn, supported her grab for the regency. Fortunately for her, Mexico City was also enjoying Porfirio Díaz's rule, creating a period of relative stability that helped cement her position.

Porfirio Díaz was an advocate of order and progress, two ideals he pursued with an iron fist and a skillfully hidden brutality against his country's poor. He decided to make Mexico City an international showcase of modernity, advocating reforms and changes to fit his vision. Electricity, modern plumbing and the wide gamut of arts all made Mexico City an attractive draw to tourists, while new railroads crisscrossed the country. To rid Mexico City of her reputation as a fetid Venice from all the floods, the government sponsored a massive project to build a canal and tunnel to pipe excess water out of the valley. To combat rampant crime, Díaz created new policing forces called *rurales* (Mexico's answer to the Texas Rangers) and *gendarmería* (Mexico City police modeled after the French police).

The previous revolutions had created an army of armed and disciplined peasants-turned-soldiers. Peacetime saw these well trained and equipped soldiers return home and embark on a life of crime to survive. Díaz recruited these bandits for his police forces, and improved

their wages and hours to draw competent and educated men into his service.

During this period, the Cainite conflict in Mexico City proper also began to die down. Some heralded this as a return to sanity. Melinda Galbraith, however, realized that fighting in Mexico City was quieting down simply because the *gendarmería* was proving effective. At one policeman per 153 people in Mexico City, it was more difficult to fight openly without bringing these well-armed and well-trained forces to bear against us. Two packs discovered that fact in a hail of gunfire that cut them to the quick.

While Díaz's reforms applied only to the heart of the city, leaving the outlying and poorer districts to the mercy of the Sabbat war, Regent Galbraith used the local respite to reconcile the immediate packs slowly. Mexico City became a tenuous neutral zone for the sect, a safe harbor in a world where the Civil War threatened to drive us into extinction. Our hoary Brothers and Sisters from Spain and the Carpathians came to Mexico City to reconcile their differences, and though such ventures failed more often than not, it proved we still had a chance for survival.

Still, if Mexico City was the eye of a hurricane, then the true storm ripped through the countryside with devastating results. In Tijuana, Veracruz and other Sabbat enclaves, Cainite packs fought one another with the ferocity of wild beasts. Cainites emerging from self-fulfilling mass Embraces often never survived the night, and entire villages were decimated when two large packs collided like tornadoes.

WWI AND RECONCILIATION

I'm frankly surprised we survived the march into WWI, much less the decades afterward. Díaz's reign ended in a series of revolutions that strove to return Mexico's lands to the poor instead of the aristocracy and foreign investors. Francisco Madero, a politician with aspirations of helping the downtrodden, usurped Díaz in a revolution that barely touched Mexico City. His successor, General Victoriano Huerta, seized power during a conflict called the *Decena Trágica* or "Ten Tragic Days."

While pretending to serve Madero by quelling an insurrection, Huerta laid waste to a radius of 20 city blocks around the Zócalo, destroying hundreds of buildings under cannon fire. Huerta later fled before the combined armies of rebel leaders Carranza, Obregón, Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. In turn, the four revolutionaries betrayed each other, resulting in a bloody dervish-dance of coups and revolutions. Carranza and Obregón took power before Villa and Zapata marched on Mexico City and occupied it. They then withdrew when Carranza and Obregón regrouped and retook the city. Both Villa and Zapata were later killed, while Obregón eventually overthrew Carranza.

Over 2,000,000 mortals died in those conflicts.

All this mortal stupidity and thirst for power should have ended Mexico City's position as a neutral zone for the war-torn Sabbat. On several occasions, it did. Violence was rampant and the revolution had spilled much blood.



Galbraith tried using her typical charm to keep the allied packs in line, but her efforts suffered setbacks when one pack or another settled old grudges. Eventually Galbraith succeeded if only *because* of the skirmishes gripping the city.

Huerta's actions during the *Decena Trágica* crippled several Mexico City packs in the fighting, forcing "orphaned" Cainites to seek shelter with Galbraith and her allies. The trouble was that these battles mostly occurred during daylight hours, when Cainites were most vulnerable. We lost many Brothers and Sisters to random cannon fire and blazes, but that wasn't the worst of it.

To strengthen his army, Huerta drafted 1,000 men into service a day through raids and forced conscriptions. His press gangs were most effective, however, at night. Peddlers and transients scattered for safety when night fell, which also restricted both our movement and ability to feed. More than one Cainite encountered the press gangs, and more than one young Lick was destroyed when he tried fighting the mob of soldiers. With disease and warfare culling the herd, blood became a valuable commodity. Suddenly, survival was a larger concern.

The disquieting truth was that we'd become bystanders caught in the crossfire of mortal revolutions with no choice but to stand our ground. We had nowhere left to run. Europe was fighting WWI and the Camarilla was using the Sabbat's predicament to seize our domains. Galbraith knew a momentous decision rested upon her shoulders. Already, she had

managed to ally the packs in and around Mexico City because they needed mutual protection against the mortals. With news that Mexico City had become neutral ground, many packs and Cainites who survived the ruination of their northern holdings drifted south for guidance and support. Mexico City became a rallying point for war-weary Cainites who had tired of fighting one another. Galbraith naturally used this to her advantage by "converting" supporters for her bid to stop the war.

When WWI ended, it coincided with the last of Mexico's revolutions as well. The Sabbat's internecine fighting had cooled considerably, but the hostilities remained. In a show of force, Galbraith summoned the sect's

NAGUALES

Have you heard of these woolen dolls called *naguales*? They're demonic figures from Indian mythology with four legs and an ugly human face, using demonic powers to frighten bad children. Now, something is destroying lone Cainites in their haven and leaving behind a *nagual* on their ashes. I found one on my last victim and I can't get rid of the damn thing. It keeps turning up. I heard the same thing happened to the other Cainites before they were destroyed, but I don't know who can help me. I did hear about some street vendor who sells the *naguales* to mortals, but I haven't found him yet. Maybe if I twist his head off, I'll get rid of this damn thing. I'm not sure though....

highest-ranking envoys to Mexico City. Galbraith, as Gorchist's senior consistory member, now presented herself as Regent of the Sabbath and demanded a cessation to all hostilities among Cainites. The sect had lost much because of its Civil War, and the time for reconciliation was at hand. Of course, it helped that she made her ultimatum while flanked by Seraphs Jalan-Aajav, Izhim Ur-Baal and the newly appointed Elimelech the Twice-Damned. Protected by these grim angels, Galbraith tolerated little argument from the already weary Lasombra and Tzimisce, especially since it was rumored she had secured the allegiance of Mexico City's 12 most powerful packs.

It was over. The Second Civil War had grudgingly ended, and Mexico City remained the Sabbath's bulwark with Regent Galbraith at its head.

EPILOGUE

As told by Juancho, Ductus of the Knotted Rose

Yes, there was a Third Sabbath Civil War, but it was brief and barely touched Mexico City. Instead, mortals came and went in their rule over *el D.F.*, sometimes rescuing her from the malaise of Third World status and sometimes dragging her back down. President Miguel Alemán, a champion of the former, made Mexico City a national hub for transport and an industrial powerhouse. President Díaz Ordaz brought the Olympics in 1968. Ordaz, mind you, also quashed a series of student revolts in the same year that eventually resulted in the army opening fire on a crowd of approximately 10,000 protesters about to disband and go home. Armored vehicles blocked their escape routes, however, and several hundred people died in a hail of machinegun fire.

The Tlatelolco Massacre, as it is known, just proved what we Sabbath knew all along. Regardless the reforms and promises of equality and democracy, Mexico City will remain tarnished and an authoritarian regime ruled by duly elected dictators. The poor continue growing poorer and the rich are measured in the five-finger percentages. Crime is rampant and corruption a vocation. The Church has lost and gained so much land and property over the centuries that in a supposedly Catholic-dominated city, faith holds little power here.

Why does the Sabbath love this city like no other? Not because we celebrate evil for evil's sake, but because *el D.F.* is electric, the closest thing to living we'll ever experience. It's like sleeping near a live wire. Mortal blood runs hotter here than anywhere else because *chilangos* are the hardest motherfuckers around. The American Wild West was a clumsy onanism compared to the raw sex of the revolutions. Mexicans know this and revel in their strength because they are *chilangos*. They've survived worse, just like the Sabbath. That's why the Camarilla fears Mexico City, and why they never tried retaking it. They know Mexico City is just one big gathering of Sabbath members waiting to be Embraced. The Camarilla knows we'll Embrace the whole city if we have to, and that scares them. As long as Mexico City exists, we'll never fall.

ADDENDUM: EL TEMBLOR

About 250 miles west of Mexico City, in the Pacific Ocean, the Cocos plate encountered a snag in the North American plate and stuck briefly. When it overcame the snag on September 19, 1985, it jolted forward over 10 feet. In Mexico City, where the muddy sediments under the city acted like Jell-o and magnified the effects, it registered as an earthquake of 8.1 magnitude on the Richter scale.

This wasn't the work of "dark rapacious forces of the eternal night." It was just an earthquake, albeit one of incredibly poor timing that struck at 7:19 AM, a couple of hours after we'd settled down in our havens to rest. Given the severity of the damage, the quake could have done what the Camarilla failed to do in crippling the Sabbath. While violent, the quake mostly destroyed buildings and structures within a 13-square-mile zone, which accounts for two percent of Mexico City's surface area. Still, many packs made their havens in the affected area.

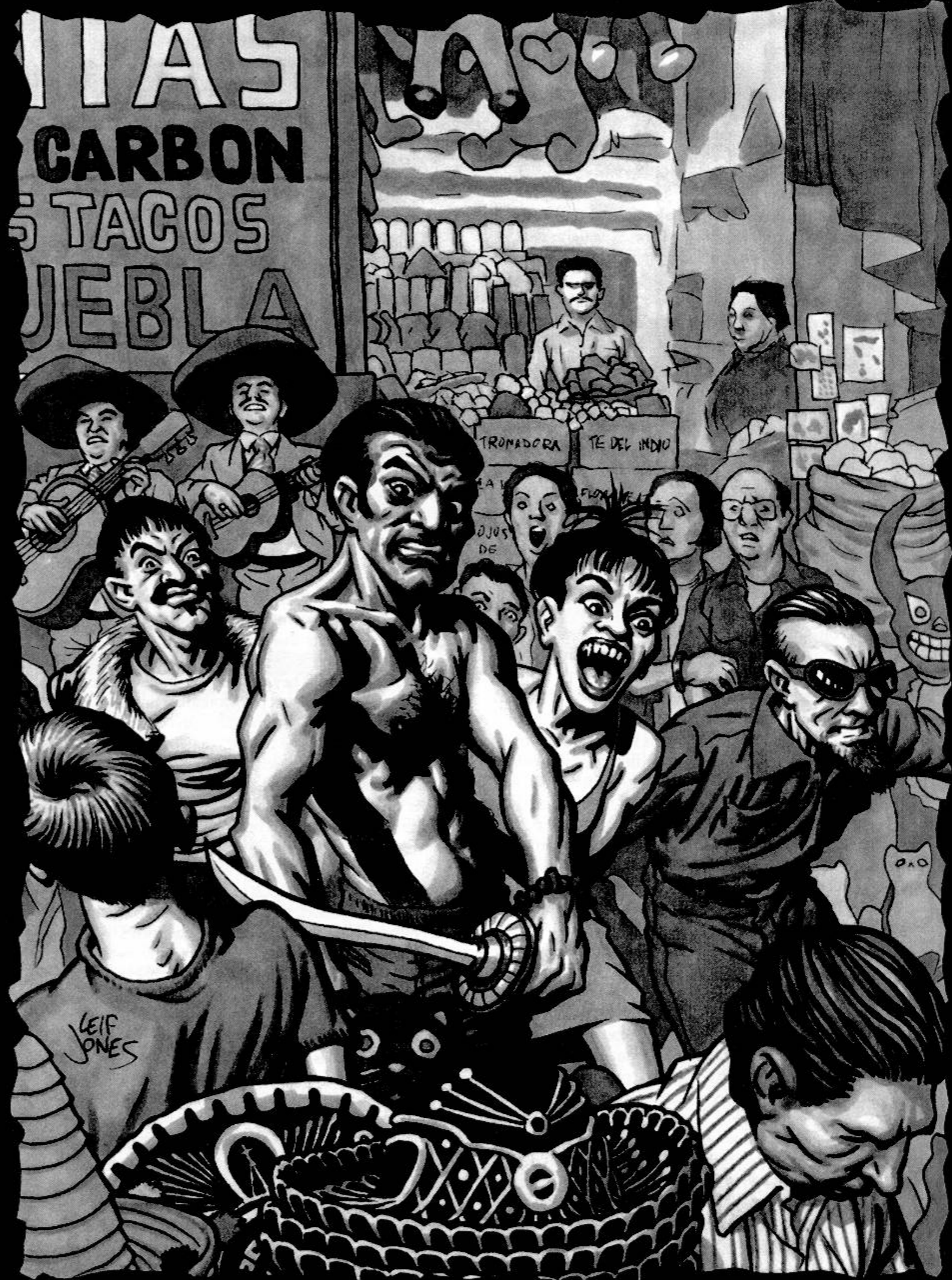
Havens, many of them underground or in ancient hovels, collapsed like houses of cards, burying entire packs beneath rubble and dirt. The fortunate ones remained buried until nightfall when they could awaken fully and extricate themselves from the mess. The unfortunate ones (estimated at 30 Brothers and Sisters) were exposed to sunlight when the ground cracked open, when "good Samaritans" pulled the "survivors" from the wreckage, or when fires ripped through some of the structures.

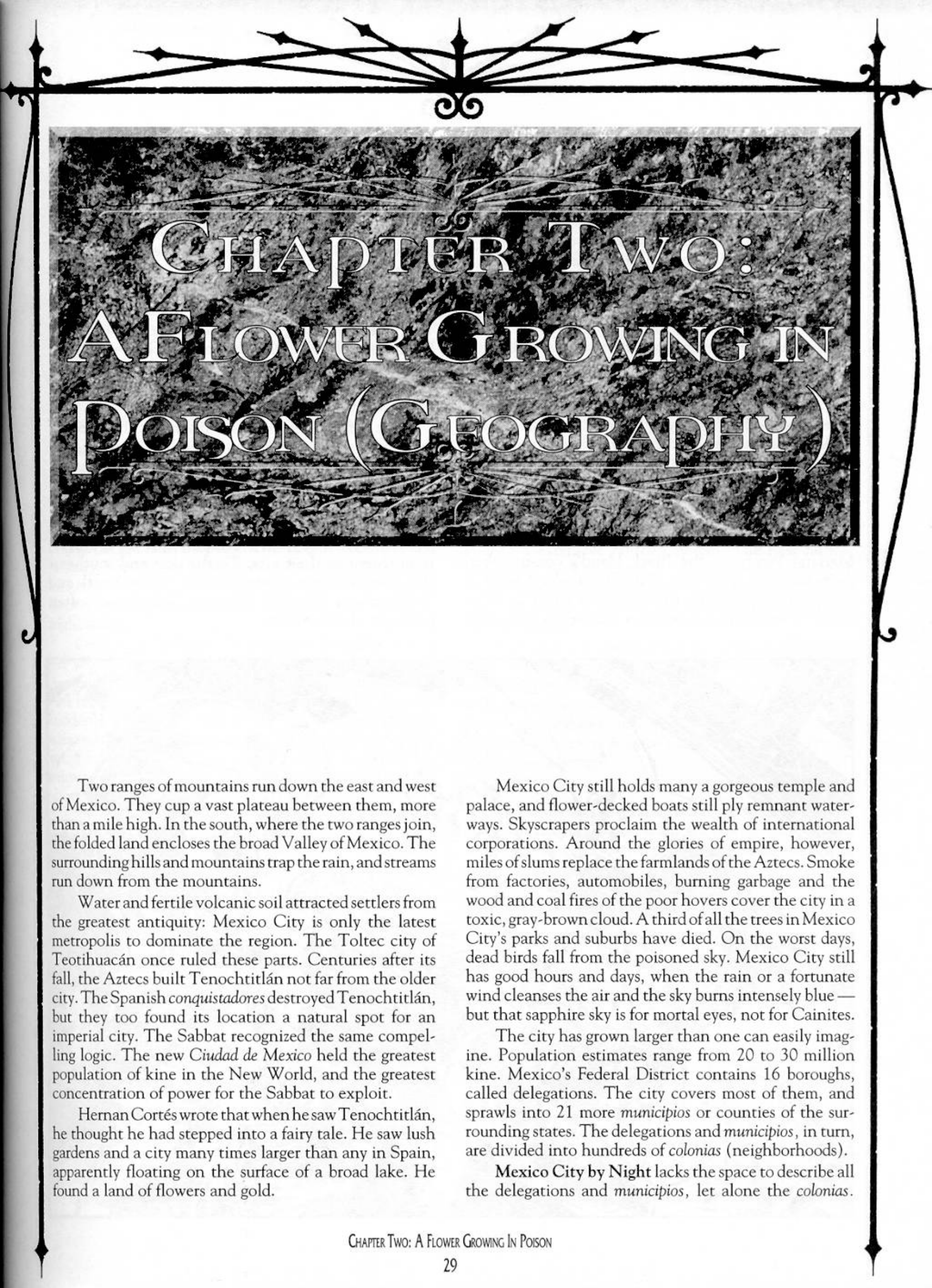
The earthquake was natural, most Sabbath agree, but some Cainites wonder why this was a "quiet" event. The quake caught those capable of divining the future or sensing danger completely off-guard. They didn't see it coming. Additionally, after the quake occurred, a pack found an unearthed Toltec burial chamber, while some mortals found gold jewelry dating back to Aztec times. The Sabbath believes *el Temblor*, or the great quake, disturbed the sediments of the former lake, pushing things best forgotten to the surface. If this is true, some wonder if the ancient Cainites who once ruled Mexico Valley might not be stirring from Torpor beneath the surface.

Most have forgotten those fears in the nearly 20 years since the quake struck. Afterward, the government paved and built over everything... well, almost everything. Fracture cracks still punctuate the shantytowns where nothing permanent was ever built, and many forgotten flooded basements were simply covered up after the quake. If *el Temblor* truly awoke ancient beasts, the like of which ruled alongside or fought Huitzilopochtli, then it is in these places where they will likely return. After all, given the impact the Aztecs still have on Mexico's identity, it's hard to believe that something from our past isn't still fueling those dreams. This is Mexico City, after all.

AUTHORS' NOTES

Most of Mexico City's history as recounted here deals with her distant past, particularly those events pre-20th century. The reason is because Mexico City's contemporary history is recounted in the sections with more bearing and relevance upon roleplaying and storytelling in the history of the supporting characters.





CHAPTER TWO: A FLOWER GROWING IN POISON (GEOGRAPHY)

Two ranges of mountains run down the east and west of Mexico. They cup a vast plateau between them, more than a mile high. In the south, where the two ranges join, the folded land encloses the broad Valley of Mexico. The surrounding hills and mountains trap the rain, and streams run down from the mountains.

Water and fertile volcanic soil attracted settlers from the greatest antiquity: Mexico City is only the latest metropolis to dominate the region. The Toltec city of Teotihuacán once ruled these parts. Centuries after its fall, the Aztecs built Tenochtitlán not far from the older city. The Spanish *conquistadores* destroyed Tenochtitlán, but they too found its location a natural spot for an imperial city. The Sabbath recognized the same compelling logic. The new *Ciudad de Mexico* held the greatest population of kine in the New World, and the greatest concentration of power for the Sabbath to exploit.

Hernan Cortés wrote that when he saw Tenochtitlán, he thought he had stepped into a fairy tale. He saw lush gardens and a city many times larger than any in Spain, apparently floating on the surface of a broad lake. He found a land of flowers and gold.

Mexico City still holds many a gorgeous temple and palace, and flower-decked boats still ply remnant waterways. Skyscrapers proclaim the wealth of international corporations. Around the glories of empire, however, miles of slums replace the farmlands of the Aztecs. Smoke from factories, automobiles, burning garbage and the wood and coal fires of the poor hovers cover the city in a toxic, gray-brown cloud. A third of all the trees in Mexico City's parks and suburbs have died. On the worst days, dead birds fall from the poisoned sky. Mexico City still has good hours and days, when the rain or a fortunate wind cleanses the air and the sky burns intensely blue — but that sapphire sky is for mortal eyes, not for Cainites.

The city has grown larger than one can easily imagine. Population estimates range from 20 to 30 million kine. Mexico's Federal District contains 16 boroughs, called delegations. The city covers most of them, and sprawls into 21 more *municipios* or counties of the surrounding states. The delegations and *municipios*, in turn, are divided into hundreds of *colonias* (neighborhoods).

Mexico City by Night lacks the space to describe all the delegations and *municipios*, let alone the *colonias*.

ADDRESSES

The street names within a *colonia* often follow a theme such as flowers, European cities or government ministries; for instance, Peony Street or Avenue of the Rural Electrification Department. Streets generally change names when they cross to a new *colonia*, while different *colonias* may use the same street names. Because of this, an address in Mexico City generally includes the *colonia* after the street name.

Instead we settle for even broader divisions, and sketches of a few neighborhoods that seem particularly important, distinctive or useful for the Sabbat.

As usual for the *by Night* supplements, we do not guarantee absolute fidelity to the real world. No doubt readers who live in Mexico City will discover many amusing or infuriating differences from the city they know. Some errors are unavoidable errors in research; others are deliberate simplifications to make the city easier for outsiders to understand.

This chapter gives a Cainite's-eye view of the city. Mariano Pomposo, the Black Hand's census taker, estimates that as many as 500 of the undead dwell in Mexico City and gather in dozens of packs and factions. Storytellers can use this chapter as a starting

point to design their own Sabbat packs and place them in the world's largest city.

A SENSE OF PLACE

Shallow lakes used to cover much of the Valley of Mexico. Over the centuries, the lakes silted full or were drained, but a layer of waterlogged lake sediment still underlies most of Mexico City. Drill nearly anywhere in the city, and you can pump out the remnant waters.

As the water table sinks, the loose subsoil compacts. This causes a slow, perpetual subsidence that can tilt buildings or break their foundations. That's why the Angel of Independence sinks. What is more, any haven dug too deeply may flood — which does not intrinsically bother the undead but could damage possessions.

The soft, wet subsoil also magnifies the effect of earthquakes. Hard rock resists bending, but the sediment layer heaves and ripples when the earth shakes. The last great earthquake, in 1985, killed thousands of people and destroyed many buildings. Some of them were never repaired.

On a clear day, city residents can see a longer-term threat to their city. To the east and southeast rise the volcanic mountains of Ixtaccihuatl and Popocatepetl. "Ixty" is dormant, but "Popo" often puffs out clouds of ash.



Mexicans know that volcanoes can erupt anywhere, anytime: In 1941, the brand-new volcano dubbed Parícutín sprouted in a farmer's cornfield in nearby Michoacán state. In a few years, Parícutín buried two nearby villages. Mexico City's sprawling slums now approach the flanks of the two volcanoes. The city already covers the lower slopes of Mt. Xíctli, an extinct volcano whose lava buried the pre-Columbian city of Cuicuilco.

The city's wiser Cainites know of the earth's treachery, too. The 1985 earthquake collapsed the underground havens of several packs as well as individual Sabbat. Many could not dig themselves out before they starved into torpor and were never rescued. It's not unreasonable to assume that workmen digging new subway tunnels or skyscraper foundations may one night receive a nasty surprise....

CLIMATE

Mexico City enjoys a temperate climate. A tropical latitude prevents extreme cold; a high altitude prevents extreme heat. Daytime temperatures do not vary much throughout the year from a 64-degree Fahrenheit average. Nights occasionally drop below freezing in December and January, but Mexico City never endures truly bitter, prolonged cold. The Sabbat appreciates the mild climate because cold weather seldom clears the kine from the night streets.

On average, Mexico City receives 26 inches of rain per year. The rainy season extends from May or June to September. Much of the rain comes in cloudbursts that can recur at the same time of day for months. The sky suddenly clouds over, rain pours down for about 15 minutes and the clouds dissipate with equal speed. Exceptionally tough and daring vampires may actually use these daily 15-minute periods of heavy overcast to move outdoors for short distances — if they can stay awake.

The junior Priscus Efraín Sortano obtained his position by observing this feature of the city's weather. Priscus Liesl Geier took a profound dislike to Sortano and, in front of two dozen witnesses, threatened to fight him to the death if they ever met again. Sortano sought her haven the next day. The quarter-hour of overcast gave him time to run from a subway station to her haven. They "fought to the death," but since Geier was asleep, the fight was brief. He diablerized the priscus in short order. The consistory accepted Sortano's suggestion that he had proved himself more fit to be part of that august body.

Temperature inversions and the southern cup of mountains trap wind and smog, giving Mexico City the worst air pollution in the world. Four million cars spew exhaust into the air, where it joins smoke from factories and household fires. Columns of stinking, black smoke rise from the city's dumps. The government forbade the burning of garbage, but the city has run out of space for landfill. The poor do not receive garbage collection anyway, so any garbage they do not burn ends up in the street.

GETTING THERE (OR GETTING OUT)

Even if a chronicle does not take place in Mexico City, characters may want to visit or Sabbat characters may wish to leave the city for a variety of reasons. Fortunately, Mexico City is the transportation hub of Central America. Characters can easily go to or from Mexico City by road, rail or air.

ROAD

Mexico's highway system converges on Mexico City. As long as driving vampires stay close to other vehicles, they run little chance of encountering Lupines or other hostile supernatural creatures. A pack with a ghoul and a bit of money can use a panel truck as a traveling haven. Such trucks frequent Mexico's highways, so a mobile haven attracts no attention in the cities.

RAIL

In the 1990s the Mexican government privatized the country's extensive railroad system. The new railway owners cut back on passenger service to concentrate on cargo. Four train lines to Mexico City still offer "general first-class service," but this merely consists of a reserved reclining seat.

Sabbat of a certain age deeply miss the good old nights of private rooms and berths. They could sleep through the day and emerge at night to stalk the passengers as a test of skill and discretion. A few very wealthy Sabbat keep private cars for the ultimate in luxury travel. Most Cainites, however, can travel Mexico's railways only by shipping themselves as freight.

AIR

Mexico boasts several airlines. As with everything else in Mexico, the nation's capital forms the hub. Most air travel goes through Aeropuerto Internacional Benito Juárez on the east side of the city. The airport used to be well outside the city, but the suburbs and shantytowns swept around it years ago.

AIBJ offers service comparable to any other North American airport. Arriving passengers can obtain Mexican pesos at their choice of banks, currency exchanges or ATMs (locally called *cajero automatico*). The airport also offers a parking garage, cell phone rental and the usual overpriced souvenir shops.

A food court services the kine. Mexico City's elders request that visiting Cainites not view the masses of travelers as their own buffet. Dead bodies in the airport attract government and media attention, reduce tourism and provoke hostile inquiries from other supernatural creatures.

A traveler can go directly to Mexico City's subway system from AIBJ, catch a bus, rent a car or hire a taxi. Counters marked *transportación terrestre* (ground transportation) sell

tickets to the various districts of the city for state-regulated taxis. Flocks of freelance taxi drivers called *piratas* (pirates) and native guides also offer to help visitors with their luggage, transportation, lodging and entertainment. One particular young man keeps an eye peeled for arriving undead: Feo Ramos, the one guide in AIBJ who can help a newly arrived Cainite with her special needs. He can guide a visiting Cainite to almost anyone or anyplace in the city.

TRAVEL IN THE CITY

Once characters reach Mexico City, they can get around in a variety of ways. The city center and inner ring of suburbs are well supplied with paved roads and mass transit. The outer ring of shantytowns are not. Mexico City transportation ranges from ultramodern subway trains to burros.

CAR

Most *chilangos* do not drive; nevertheless, four million cars clog Mexico City's streets. Roads in the capital range from the *Paseo de la Reforma*, the city's main arterial, to unpaved tracks in the shantytowns.

Driving in Mexico City requires strong nerves. *Capitalinos* take a casual attitude to traffic safety. One-way streets complicate navigation. Many major intersections take the form of traffic circles, called *glorietas*, with cars going both directions. An unwary driver can find himself trapped in a *glorieta* for many minutes, circling around and around while waiting for an opportunity to zip between other vehicles and reach his exit.

In an attempt to limit the air pollution, the *Hoy No Circula* (Today My Car Can't Circulate) law defines one day a week in which a car cannot operate. The last number or letter of the car's license plate determines when it cannot circulate. The police impound a violator's vehicle and assess a heavy fine. City residents circumvent the law by owning two cars.

TAXI

The difficulties of operating a private vehicle make taxis popular in Mexico City. Unmarked *turismo* sedans wait outside major hotels and in tourist areas, hired by the hour or the day. *Sitio* taxis operate out of stands and take radio calls. Negotiating fares in advance saves arguments later. Taxi drivers charge 10 percent more at night. On the other hand, drivers do not expect tips unless they have to help with luggage.

Many freelance cabbies belong to kidnapping and extortion rings. They drive customers to ATMs and force them at gunpoint or knifepoint to withdraw as much money as the bank allows. Victims may be held until after midnight, so the robber can force the victim to withdraw to their limit again. Only about one in 10 of these robberies is reported to the city police; locals know that many of the cops are corrupt and probably in league with the robbers.

The Sabbath find the whole racket vastly amusing — isn't it cute, the kine acting like wolves? Local

custom holds that any mugger or robber who draws a weapon on a Cainite invites the Sabbath to dine. The local Sabbath recommend the freelance cabs to visiting Cainites. If the driver is honest, you get cheap transportation; if not, you have a free meal. The police do not investigate the deaths of robbers whose victims turned the tables on them.

BUS AND PESERO

Many *capitalinos* use the city bus system. Buses go everywhere in the city, and the maximum fare is 3.5 pesos (about 35 cents). Of course, they do not run as often at night.

Peseros are minibuses that supplement the main bus lines. They, too, charge up to 3.5 pesos for long trips. *Peseros* operate on fixed routes. Passengers can board at regular bus stops and at most of the subway stations.

SUBWAY

Mexico City has a large subway system. Its 10 intersecting lines transport five million people each day. The metro connects to the four main bus stations, the Buenavista train station and the airport.

In contrast to the street chaos above, the metro is quiet, safe, efficient and reliable (if crowded). The clean, well-lit stations gleam with marble. Some stations include shopping centers. The Zócalo station features models of central Mexico City during three historical periods, while the Pino Suárez station boasts a small Aztec pyramid discovered during construction.

Subway trains run about two minutes apart. The metro operates 5:00 a.m.–midnight on weekdays, 6:00 a.m.–2:00 a.m. Saturday and 6:00 a.m.–1:00 a.m. on Sundays and holidays. The regulation that men must ride in separate cars from women and children during rush hour to reduce sexual harassment is not strictly enforced. The crowded trains do attract pickpockets, though.

The Nosferatu *antitribu* consider the metro part of their kingdom and are very proud of it. The Creeps occasionally host soirées in their subway stations, and are most particular that not a trace of blood or litter mar the station when the kine return in the morning. Hidden doors in the tunnels and maintenance areas open onto other sections of the Nosferatu kingdom.

A TOUR OF THE CITY

Mexico City extends outward from the Historical Center, the colonial city built on the buried ruins of Tenochtitlán. North, south, east and west, each quadrant of the city has its own character. The northern suburbs are chiefly industrial, but include vital religious centers. The west is upper-middle class, with many new business districts. The south is a patchwork of old villages engulfed by working-class neighborhoods. The east is most notorious for the shantytowns of the extremely poor.

All these generalizations have major exceptions, though. None of the delegations or *municipios* are homogeneous. In every direction, the city swallowed up older villages that remain like crystals embedded in rock; the southern quarter merely presents especially interesting case studies. Every quadrant includes shantytowns; the east merely has more of them, and some of the more infamous examples thereof.

The city's haphazard growth also created extreme contrasts of wealth. A shantytown may enclose islands of wealth and privilege; an upscale district often holds pockets of squalor. Indeed, such intimate juxtaposition of great wealth and appalling poverty is one of Mexico City's most notable features. Look out the windows of a posh hotel or modern apartment block: You may well see a hovel of corrugated iron and plastic sheeting right across the street.

Because of the city's chaotic growth, Storytellers can create whole-cloth *colonias* with any mix of social classes they want and place them nearly anywhere they want. Odds are, something like their made-up neighborhood probably exists.

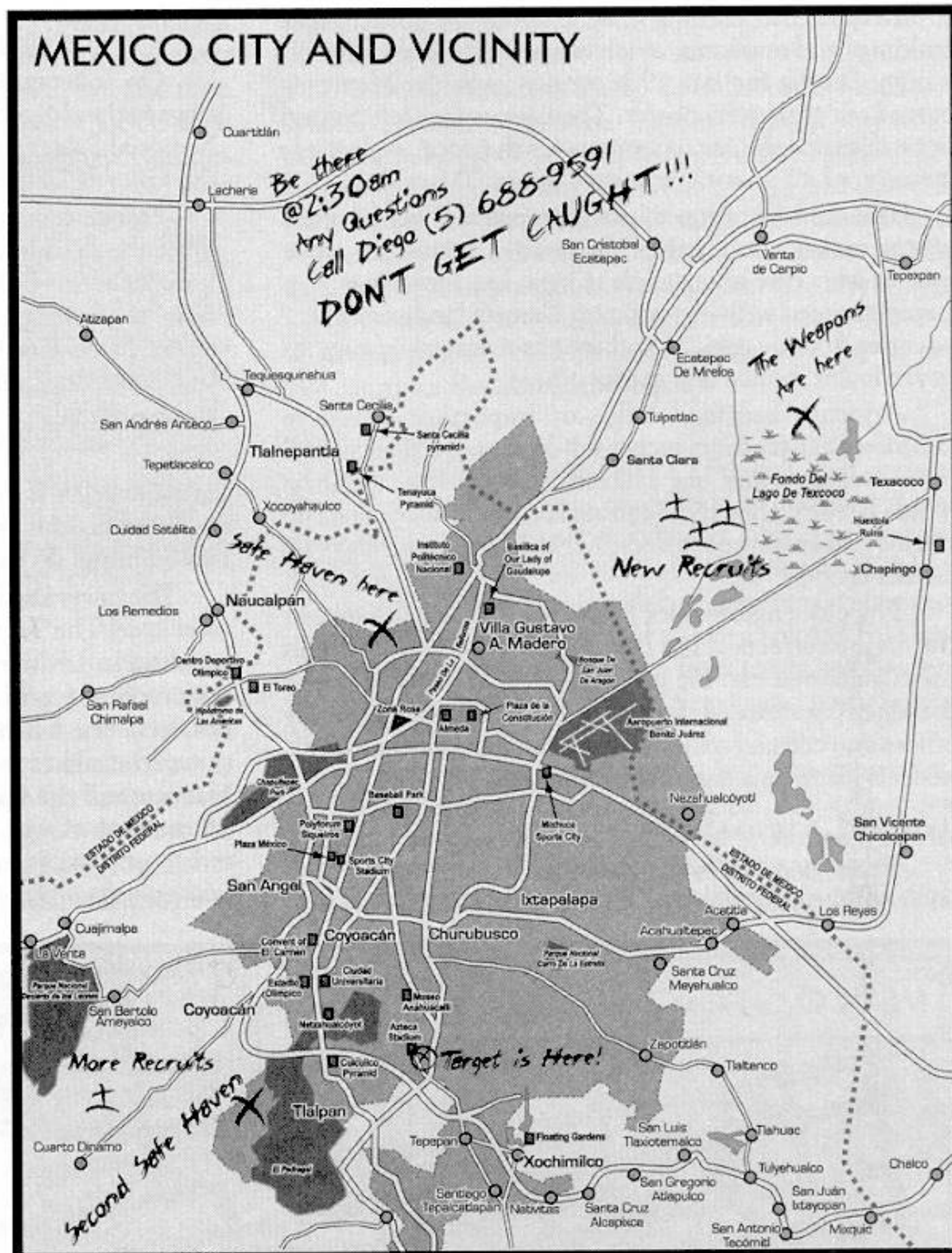
DOWNTOWN: THE CENTRO HISTÓRICO

As with most cities, the oldest part of Mexico City occupies its center. Some of the public buildings date back hundreds of years. Some of them are older than Mexico City itself.

At its center, Mexico City has a town square. The vast *Plaza de la Constitución* is better known as the *Zócalo*. It occupies the site of Tenochtitlán's religious and political center, the *teocalli*; the buildings have changed but the function has not.

The Spanish built the viceregal palace on the site of the Aztec emperor Moctezuma's palace. After independence it became the National Palace, the formal seat of Mexico's government. The building features a huge mural by Diego Rivera that portrays Mexico's history from pre-Columbian times to the revolution of 1912-1917.

The Metropolitan Cathedral fills another side of the *Zócalo*. Colorful paintings, statues and altarpieces of Christ and the saints decorate the interior of the largest, oldest



cathedral in North America. Subsiding foundations give the cathedral a perceptible tilt. Engineers have worked for decades to stabilize the foundations and prevent a collapse, and a web of scaffolds lines the interior.

Many of the older buildings in the Historical Center are now museums of some sort. For instance, the Palace of the Inquisition, built in 1571, later became a medical school and is now a museum of both medical and Inquisitorial history. The Templo Mayor archeological site includes a museum of pre-Columbian civilization, with artifacts from Tenochtitlán and other sites.

Businesses converted other historic buildings for their use. Banamex (Banco Nacional de México) occupies the palace of the short-lived Emperor Iturbide. The Casa de Azulejos, once the palace of a colonial aristocratic family, is now a restaurant.

Despite the cultural magnificence of government buildings and museums, much of the Historical Center is a slum. During the late 19th century, wealthy Mexicans moved out of the city center. The houses they left behind became *vecindades*, or tenements for the poor. A decrepit mansion of 20 rooms might now house 20 families.

The concentration of government and big business offices makes the Centro Histórico a haunt for those Sabbat who care about such things. Las Emblemas, the coven charged with covering up Cainite "indiscretions," operates from a *vecindad* and spends much of its time in government, police and media offices.

Another *vecindad* held an important Tremere *antitribu* chantry in its secret sub-basement. Esteban del Agua y Tierra and the Harbinger of Skulls called La Viuda Blanca, the city's leading *koldun*, now occupy the chantry and attempt to decipher the occult secrets of its former owner.

The elder ambassador Eleiser de Polanco also roams the nighted streets of the Historical Center, on foot or in his chauffeured car. He pretends for a moment that the darkened palaces hold sleeping aristocrats instead of empty offices and cultural exhibits. In his melancholy moments, he feels like a cultural exhibit himself.

TORRE LATINOAMERICA

Mexicans sometimes call the Latin-American Tower their Empire State Building. Although the Torre

THE INDEPENDENCE BELL

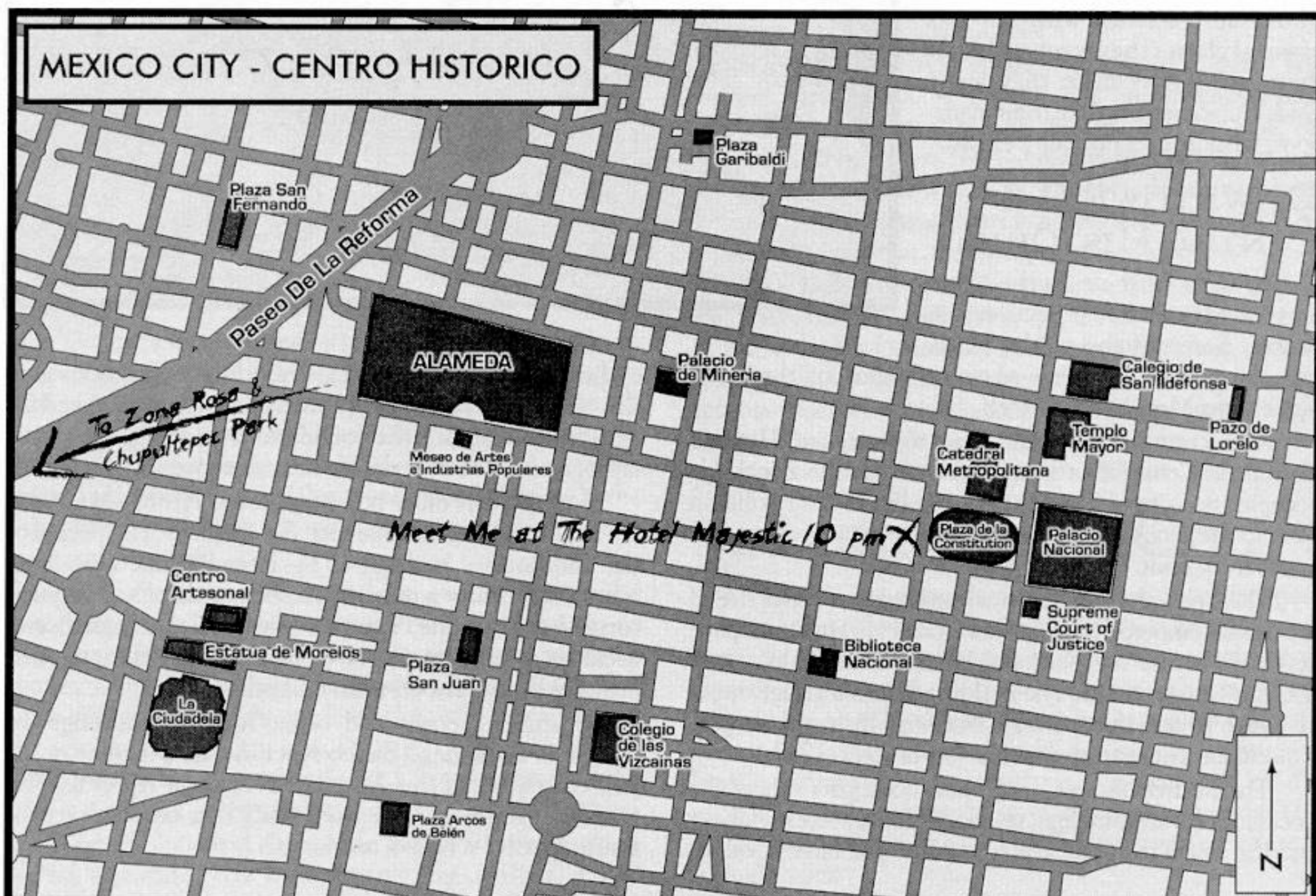
On Independence Day, the President of Mexico rings Father Miguel Hidalgo's bell from a balcony of the National Palace and repeats his call for independence, the *Grito de Dolores*.

Few mortals realize that this is not the original bell. Over the decades, hell-raising Cainite packs stole the Independence Bell many times, and elders who did not want to draw attention to the sect replaced it just as often. By now, various Sabbat packs own a half-dozen Independence Bells. No one knows anymore which one is the original.

Latinoamerica is considerably shorter (44 stories) than the more famous skyscraper and built decades later, the two buildings do look quite similar.

The tower also resembles the Empire State Building in its eclipse. The Torre Latinoamerica remained the tallest building in Latin America for decades, but a few taller skyscrapers recently rose in the city's western business districts. The Latin-American Tower retains its distinction of the highest aquarium in the world on the 38th floor. Nets around the building prevent suicides from jumping off the roof.

The Torre Latinoamerica also retains its importance as an office building for business, especially to the Sabbat.



From his offices in the tower, the revenant Pablo Grimaldi-Salamanca oversees the financial interests of numerous elders and covers up Cainite indiscretions. Now and then Pablo takes the elevator up to the observation deck to look down on his city — his city, no matter what the Cainites may think.

ALAMEDA PARK

Alameda Central Park is another of the city's parks. It takes the form of a geometrical Renaissance garden, with an oblique grid of paved paths. Every day, many *capitalinos* take a lunchtime stroll in the park to enjoy the shade and relatively clean air.

In colonial times, the park had a darker function. When the Spanish Inquisition found Indians guilty of heresy and backsliding into pagan ways, it burned them in Alameda Park. La Viuda Blanca sometimes walks the park at night, listening to the memory of their screams.

PLAZA GARIBALDI

This square in the northern part of the old town is the center of the mariachi industry for Mexico City. Every night, numerous mariachi bands play in the square, hoping that someone will hire them for a party or a midnight serenade to a wife or lover. Restaurants, nightclubs and bars surround the plaza. One end of the plaza holds a statue of a mariachi musician; the other holds a statue of Mexico's Valentino, the singing and movie idol Pedro Infante.

The Sabbath love Plaza Garibaldi. Imagine dozens of kine who wait around all night for a chance to go off with a complete stranger! It's like an all-you-can-eat diner, with music. If you like, you can even let the band play at your blood feast before you drain them.

Prudent Sabbath advise newcomers that they should not take advantage of Garibaldi Square very often. The bands will stop coming if too many of them disappear, and they might go to the police if they notice that musicians hired by a certain person never come back. Drunken revelers from the bars, however, are fair game in all seasons.

PASEO DE LA REFORMA

This magnificent boulevard is Mexico City's chief east-west axis. In the Centro Histórico it is 200 feet wide and belts of trees divide it along its length. Mirror-surfaced office towers along the Paseo furnish the city's most prestigious business addresses.

Each *glorieta* along the street's length holds a monument. The largest *glorieta* contains the Angel of Independence. The statue's pedestal holds the severed head of Miguel Hidalgo and the remains of other Independence heroes. The other nine *glorietas* boast statues of Christopher Columbus (Cristobál Colón in Spanish), Simón Bolívar, the last Aztec emperor Cuauhtémoc and a few other national heroes. Hernán Cortés is conspicuously absent from this parade of

fame. The westernmost *glorieta* features a nude statue of Diana the Huntress.

Nothing about the Paseo de la Reforma holds any special attraction for the Sabbath, though a pair of Giovanni once set out to snare the ghosts of Insurgency heroes and never returned. As the city's central boulevard, however, the Sabbath can hardly avoid the Paseo. Particularly for excursions into the western suburbs, directions often start from the Paseo or the city's main north-south arterial, the Avenida Insurgentes. The two avenues cross at the Cuauhtémoc monument, in the famous Zona Rosa neighborhood.

ZONA ROSA

The "Pink Zone" used to be Mexico City's premier shopping district, as well as one of its most upscale residential neighborhoods. The French-styled, 19th-century stone mansions survive in some areas, and the prices in the glitzy tourist shops remain quite high. Sculptures, fountains, murals and other public art add an air of culture. Fashionable *chilangos* still go to the Zona Rosa to see and be seen, and the neighborhood still boasts many posh hotels, nightspots and boutiques.

As evening comes, however, sleazy hucksters take over the sidewalks to entice passers-by into strip joints. Petty grifters, pickpockets and purse-snatchers likewise emerge to separate the unwary from their money. A hungry Sabbath can usually find a convenient juicebag no one will miss.

The Zona Rosa also holds the twin Ripley Museum and House of Wax (a single fee pays for entry to both). The Ripley Museum, also called the Museo del Increíble and connected to the well-known Believe It or Not organization, holds a collection of high weirdness — everything from New Guinea shrunken heads to a landscape painted on a potato chip to tiny figurines made of cockroach parts. Some Sabbath develop a taste for the utterly bizarre — a Tzimisce scientist looking for a new experiment or a Lasombra schemer pondering an innovative revenge can always find inspiration at the Ripley.

Next door, the House of Wax offers the usual figures of royalty, celebrities and famous people from history and fiction. The basement features the inevitable Chamber of Horrors. Hollywood icons like Frankenstein's Monster and Linda Blair (with a genuine spinning head!) mingle with tableaux of Spanish Inquisition tortures and Jeffrey Dahmer snacking on human viscera. Some Sabbath find it all quite entertaining. The House of Wax management prudently does not argue when certain people want to rent the Chamber of Horrors for a midnight party. Visiting Sabbath can have their photo taken pretending to bite Mother Theresa or arm in arm with Bela Lugosi's Dracula — something to show the packmates back home.

The Zona Rosa itself is an open territory. The adjacent Colonia Juárez, where more of the 19th

century mansions survive, is the domain of Bishop Rodolfo and his protégé Eliza. These two Malkavian *antitribu* explore the outer fringes of madness to prepare themselves for the ultimate reckoning of Gehenna. Colonia Juárez looks like a quiet, shabby-genteel neighborhood, but around it spread the crime-ridden *vecindades*. Bishop Rodolfo smiles as he reads of local murders in the daily news, and makes a little roach-part figure of every victim. He has even sent a few of his best over to the Ripley.

CONDESA

Just south of the Zona Rosa lies the hipper-than-thou Condesa neighborhood. Condesa has gentrified in the last decade or so. Restaurants, trendy bars, cafés and galleries now occupy the late 19th century mansions and commercial blocks. Many of the old buildings remain in poor repair, but that just adds ambiance for Condesa's too-cool-for-you crowd.

Many Toreador *antitribu* visit Condesa to hunt and mingle. The murder artists and pain poets delight in the culture, and draw would-be hipsters to them like the proverbial moths to a flame. The Priscus Venere Carboni reigns over his fellow Perverts in the guise of a bar's hired guitarist. Anyone who wants to hunt in Condesa must beg Venere's permission, and then amuse the Demon Maestro with the grace and cruelty of their hunts.

CHAPULTEPEC PARK

Mexico City's borders enclose many parks. The Bosque de Chapultepec ("Woods of Chapultepec") is certainly the grandest of them. It anchors the southwestern end of the Paseo de la Reforma. The great avenue continues to the west, through the park and beyond, but it is reduced in size.

When the Aztecs came to the Valley of Mexico, they first settled on the park's hill. Chapultepec ("Grasshopper Hill") later became a country estate for the Aztec emperors. The park's acres of gardens and woodland now surround *Los Pinos*, the residence of the President of Mexico. The park also holds a few small lakes, several museums, a zoo, a sports club, a mirror funhouse, amusement parks for children and grown-ups, a cemetery, a riding academy, a rodeo arena, an auditorium and a castle.

Chapultepec Castle began as a military academy. During the war with the United States, the cadets tried to defend Chapultepec Castle from the American army. The story goes that rather than surrender, six cadets wrapped themselves in Mexican flags and leaped to their deaths from its battlements. The monument to these *Niños Heroes* ("Boy Heroes") graces the main entrance to the park. In his brief reign, Emperor Maximilian remodeled Chapultepec Castle as one of his residences. In the 20th century, Mexico's presidents lived in Chapultepec Castle until 1940, when the Mexican government turned the fortified palace into the National Museum of History.

Chapultepec Park also holds the National Museum of Anthropology, with a massive statue of the rain-god Tlaloc at its entrance. The first floor exhibits artifacts from Mexico's pre-Columbian cultures, while the second floor is devoted to contemporary tribes. The artifacts on display are only a tiny fraction of the complete collection, one of the world's greatest troves of pre-Columbian art, artifacts, documents and folklore. Its chief rival is the Templo Mayor museum just a few miles away.

As a mysterious new enemy strikes down Cainite after Cainite in Latin America, Sabbat researchers led by the Lasombra Zadkiel ben Aron conduct frantic after-hours research at the two museums. So far, the Sabbat's only clue is a name, "nagual," that can refer to any sort of shape-shifting supernatural creature. Discovering what else stalks the night in Latin America has become critically important. The researchers hope that some ancient statue, petroglyphic inscription or collection of folklore can reveal the nature of their enemy.

Chapultepec also includes a large and modern zoo. Several enormous domes of netted metal stand out; the zoo's lions, tigers, jaguars and other big cats live in these open-air cages. Sabbat who follow the Path of the Feral Heart sometimes visit the zoo to observe the big cats, and maybe sneak into a cage to test themselves against these fellow arch-predators. Chapultepec Zoo is the domain of Efraín Sortano, one of the Sabbat's youngest prisci and a paragon of the Path of Metamorphosis.

WEST

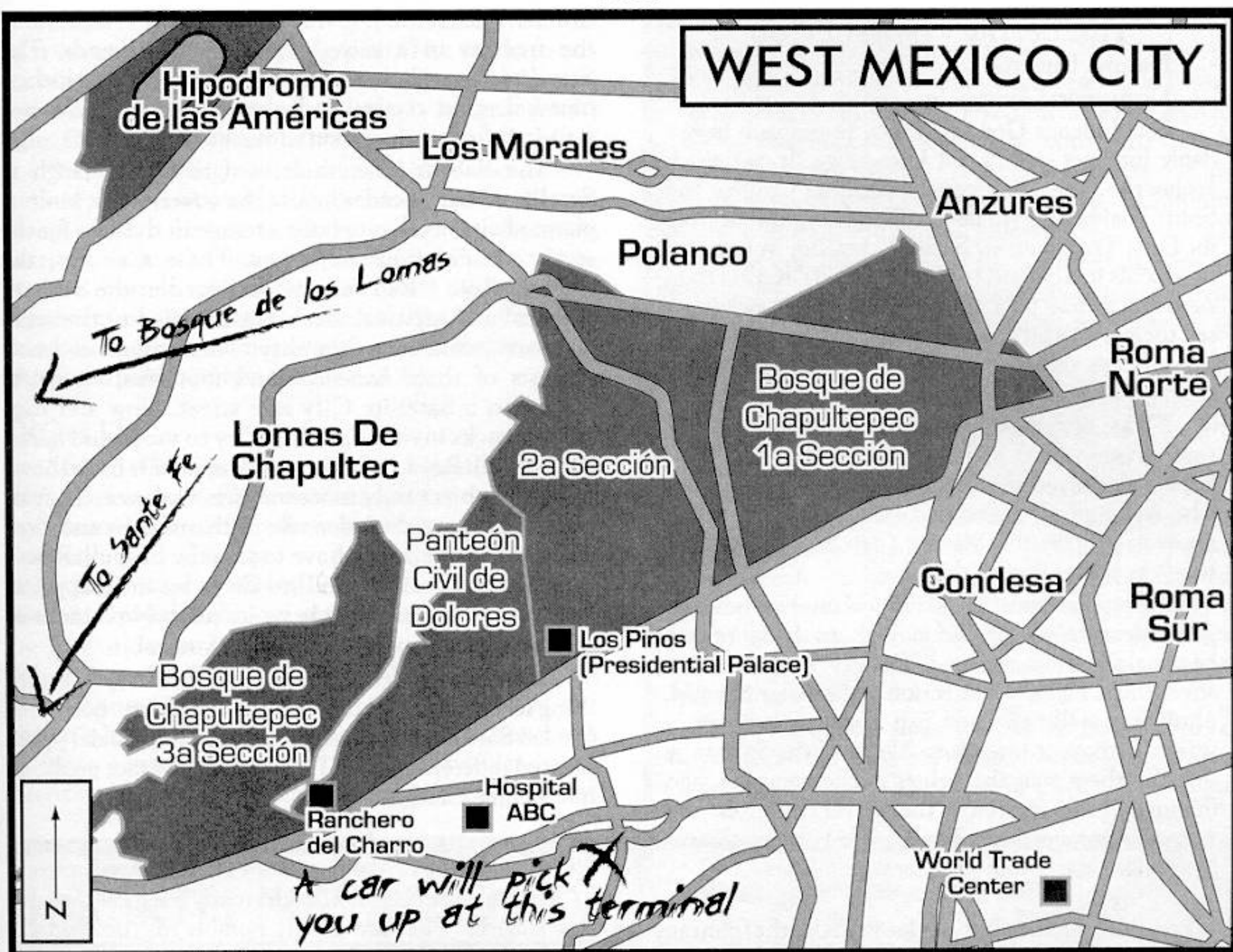
The western side of Mexico City holds many of the city's most prosperous *colonias*. Most neighborhoods are also quite new. Life in Polanco, Ciudad Satélite, Santa Fe and other *colonias* looks much as it does for middle-class and upper-middle-class Americans. The neighborhoods described here are fairly typical of Mexico City's western quarter. Other West Side neighborhoods include Tecamechalco, Interlomas, Lomas de la Herradura, Lomas de Bezares and Anzures.

OLD MONEY:

POLANCO AND LOMAS DE CHAPULTEPEC

In the latter half of the 19th century, wealthy families left central Mexico City to live in new suburbs beyond Chapultepec Park. Polanco is located just north of the park; Lomas de Chapultepec ("Chapultepec Heights") is just west. More than a century later, these neighborhoods present a mix of nice homes, high-rise apartments, retail and office skyscrapers — and a smattering of walled estates with armed guards at the gates. "The Lomas" holds Mexico City's most expensive homes, while Polanco boasts three of the city's best hotels.

Polanco also hosts a sizable Orthodox Jewish minority. Some *chilangos* jokingly call the neighborhood "Polanski" because of all the East European-descended Jews. Several synagogues serve this community.



For the Sabbath, Lomas de Chapultepec is "Elder Country." At least a dozen elders claim walled estates in the *colonia*. First among these dignitaries is Charles Delmare, called Charles VI, one of the Sabbath's older and more celebrated Cainites. He is the cardinal who established a Sabbath presence in South America, a signatory to the revised Code of Milan, and a stalwart defender of Melinda Galbraith's Status Quo faction in the Consistory. Sabbath advise visitors not to linger in Lomas de Chapultepec and, for Caine's sake, not to hunt there. The elders take vengeance on poachers.

THE TLALOC FOUNTAIN

Immediately to the west of Chapultepec Park lies a large pumping station for the city's water system. Diego Rivera decorated the pumping station with mosaics and murals. The largest mosaic graces a fountain across the street from the station. This fountain is a trapezoid over a hundred feet wide. Rivera's mosaic of Tlaloc, the Aztec god of rain and water, covers most of the fountain's basin.

The fountain possesses mystical properties. If a vampire or other supernatural creature comes near the fountain, a perceptive person might see a goggle-eyed face appear

and disappear in the flowing water. The proper sacrifice to Tlaloc — either a child's heart ripped from its chest or a criminal drowned in the fountain — summons the god himself, or at least a spirit who claims to be Tlaloc. The mosaic rises from the fountain's basin and assumes a three-dimensional form, with water still flowing across it. Tlaloc offers the sacrificer an hour of its service. Only the sacrificer or supernatural creatures can see the god.

Tlaloc cannot leave its fountain, but it can see and hear any location in Mexico City where water is present, from a canal in Xochimilco to a dripping tap in Satellite City. The god can also control the weather. It knows a great deal about Central American mythology, religion and spirits, but doles out its knowledge slowly.

Tlaloc never fights. If someone attacks the god in any way, it sinks back into the fountain and becomes an unliving mosaic again.

No one knows who enchanted the fountain, apparently not even Tlaloc itself. No other Rivera mosaic shows supernal properties. Some of the new Tzimisce *koldun* recently discovered how to summon Tlaloc; the fountain's magic feels somewhat koldunic to them, insofar that blood sacrifice invokes a spirit of the land.

TLALOC, THE VENGEFUL GOD

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Guru

The hideous God of Waters possesses a formidable intellect and occult knowledge. It can teach *koldun* the Paths of Neptune, Weather Control and Spirit Thaumaturgy. Tlaloc's disciples follow the rules for Dark Thaumaturgy because they do, in fact, sell their souls to a demon (or rather, a god). Rather than signing a formal pact to Tlaloc, however, sacrificers sell their souls a bit at a time. Sky-blue veins appear in a sacrificer's aura and grow stronger with each offering, as Tlaloc gains a greater hold on its disciples.

Tlaloc appears to care only that sacrifices continue, but in truth it hates the Sabbat. The early Sabbat destroyed the hierarchy of native vampires who worshipped Tlaloc and other gods. Tlaloc intends to destroy the Mexico City Sabbat, and the heedless *koldun* further this plan.

Storytellers must decide for themselves how the god expects to use the *koldun*. Perhaps the sacrificers become slaves of the god. Perhaps each sacrifice strengthens Tlaloc's connection to the material world, until eventually the god can appear whenever it wants. Perhaps it intends to "destroy" the Sabbat by drawing them into the beliefs of the vampires who dominated Mexico before the arrival of Cortés, and Mexico City becomes Tenochtitlán again. Clever Storytellers can think of other possibilities.

Less than a dozen Cainites know about the fountain's power, and they keep their knowledge secret. On the one hand, the god is too useful as a hidden ally. Tlaloc spies on their enemies and teaches magic of weather, water and the Central American spirit world. On the other hand, human sacrifice to gain occult power looks a lot like Dark Thaumaturgy, and the Sabbat Inquisition is so inflexible about such things. Esteban del Agua y Tierra warns against calling on Tlaloc: He avoids powers that he cannot command outright. Other mystics dismiss these concerns. A few *koldun* now adapt Tlaloc's teachings to their own style of magic.

CIUDAD SATÉLITE

In the 1960s, urban planners advocated building "satellite cities" to draw growth away from overburdened central cities. Mexico City followed this suggestion with a planned community to the northwest of Mexico City, in Mexico State. Logically, they called the new development Satellite City. In a few years, however, the ever-expanding suburbs met Ciudad Satélite and are already sweeping beyond them.

Ciudad Satélite looks very much like suburban California, right down to the shopping malls. Many companies keep their offices (or Mexican branch offices) in Satellite City, in generic office parks and

towers. The traffic is Californian, too: It crawls along the freeway in a rush hour that never ends. The Satellite City slicker with his trendy *norte* clothes, hair gel, gold chains and chrome-wheeled car is a standard figure of mockery for *chilangos*.

The Sabbat have their own reason to laugh at Satellite City. Decades before the government built its planned city, a Cainite built a refuge in the area for the sect's conscientious objectors. These Cainites, the Calpulli Rojo ("Red Family") believed in the Sabbat's political and mystical ideals but objected to the sect's pervasive, deliberate brutality. Their compound now consists of three *haciendas* and four smaller, newer homes on a Satellite City side street. Now and then Sabbat packs invade Satellite City to mock and harass the Calpulli Rojo, but the coven's members have shown that they object only to *meaningless* violence. They do not object to violent defense of themselves and their domain. Sabbat do not have to join the Calpulli Rojo if they want to exploit Satellite City's business opportunities, but they must abide by its rules: No attacks on other Cainites, and clean up after you eat.

Satellite City features a monument as cryptic as anything left by a lost civilization. As one drives north into Ciudad Satélite, one passes a cluster of trapezoidal pylons painted different colors. This work of abstract public art has become Ciudad Satélite's defining icon.

BOSQUES DELAS LOMAS, LOMAS DE BEZARES AND VISTA HERMOSA

These three neighborhoods greatly resemble the other new suburbs. They are chiefly notable for the degree to which the inhabitants hire private security guards to patrol the streets. This gives these *colonias* unusually low crime rates. The Cainites who live in these wealthy and well-guarded neighborhoods take care to avoid the notice of the guards — or they pay their salary and make them their accomplices.

In a small irony, the inhabitants of the West Side *colonias* include many successful gangsters. A house in the West Side is a mark of respectability as well as wealth. The former kidnapper-enforcer and current Black Hand member Mariano Pomposo took great pride in reclaiming the home in Vista Hermosa that he owned as a mortal. In his usual quietly terrifying way, he has warned all the major covens that it will go badly for them if some silly game of theirs makes his property values drop.

SANTA FE

The newest planned suburb on the West Side was built on a gigantic landfill, but one would not know it to look at it now. Santa Fe offers high-class, high-priced office space. Major companies like GE, IBM and Daimler-Chrysler place their Mexican main offices in Santa Fe office towers; so do major Mexican companies such as Televisa. This makes Santa Fe the premier playground for those Sabbat who engage in high finance.

Santa Fe also features many gated communities built on a "townhouse" row-housing plan. The residents pay for very good security. Any Sabbat gangbanger who tries invading these high-priced enclaves is in for a deadly fight. Conversely, it's just as hard to get out undetected.

Behind the high brick walls and armed guards, some of these row houses hold herds bound by fear of a bloody master. In one small, very elite development, everyone's name includes Grimaldi. Luckily, the neighbors are entirely too polite to ask about the *odd* noises that occasionally drift across the walls. After all, one does not accuse such moneyed and fashionable people of being a public nuisance!

NORTH

Mexico City's northern quarter is best known for smokestack industries such as oil refineries, paper mills and auto plants. Much of the bulk cargo for Mexico City — and therefore much of Mexico — passes through the many railyards of Azcapotzalco and Gustavo A. Madero Delegations. Azcapotzalco also contains the city's stockyards.

The industrial north also sports the National Polytechnic Institute and one of the three campuses of Autonomous University of Mexico, one of the nation's leading schools of science and engineering. These two institutions often host international conferences of scientists and engineers. Tech-loving

Sabbat will make a special effort to seem mortal, simply for the sake of attending.

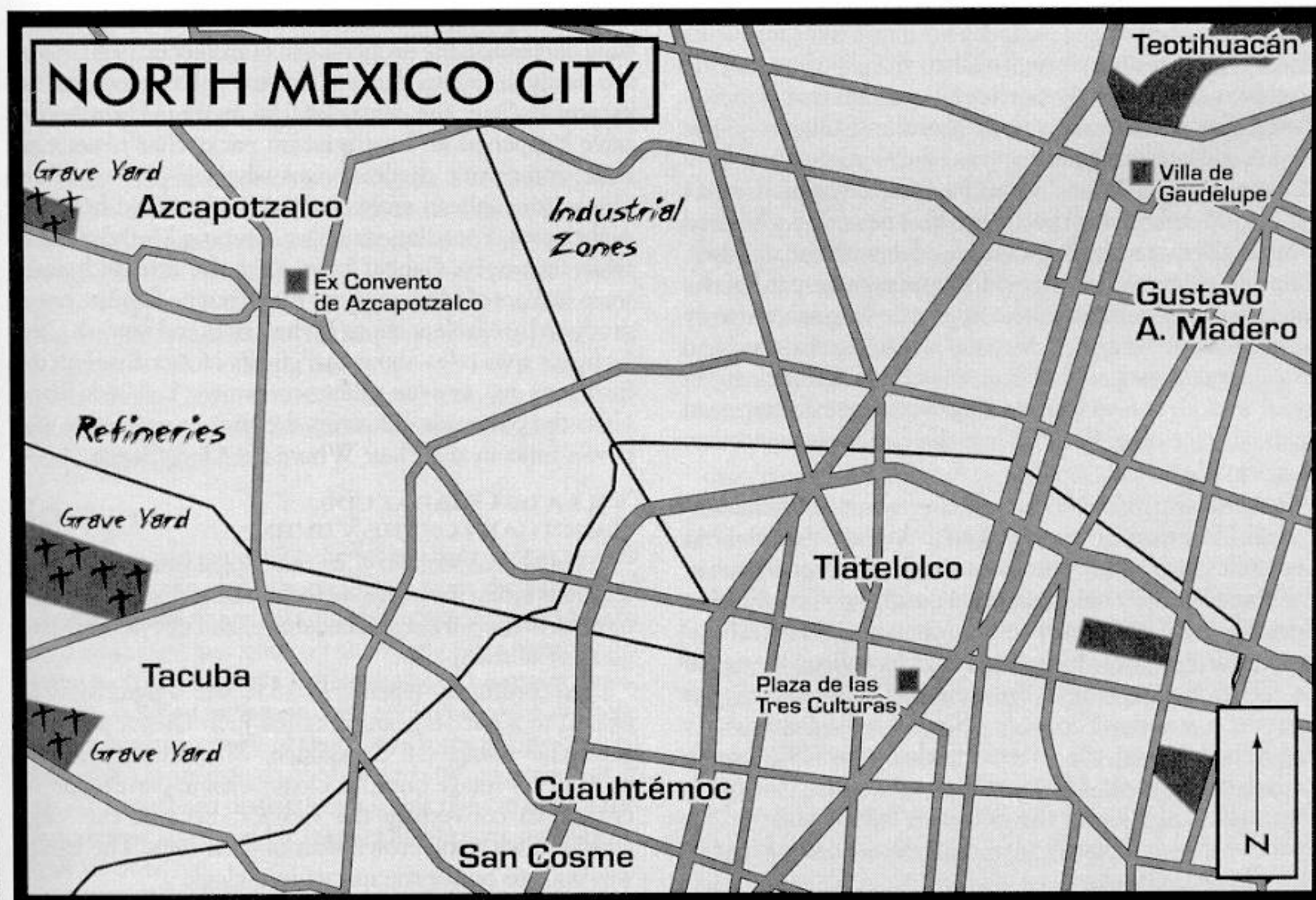
One of Mexico City's leading Cainite scientists dwells in Azcapotzalco. Dr. Vermudo de Sancha, MD keeps his haven in a derelict factory that he converted into an operating theater and clinic for injured Cainites. He also hosts meetings of the University of Night, an informal group of Cainite scientists and scholars.

The mortal inhabitants of the northern districts are chiefly working-class. These districts have a rough reputation, and none more so than the Barrio de Tepito.

BARRIO DE TEPITO

The famous boxer Kid Azteca came from this *colonia* on the border of the Historical Center. The 1985 earthquake wrecked much of Barrio de Tepito, and the government encouraged many of the people to move away. Not everyone left, however, and after dark, the Barrio de Tepito becomes a den of prostitutes, gangsters and the Sabbat. The heart of Tepito also still holds a huge market where vendors sell cheap electronics, used clothing by weight, and odd stuff scavenged from junkyards and the street. Tepito's market is a godsend for scroungers both living and undead.

Tepito's gangsters include a Sabbat pack called *Los Encapuchados* (the "Hooded Ones"). These Cainites seek to take over a share of the trade in illicit narcotics and



become a major cartel in the Mexican Mafia. Mexico City's senior dominion, the Nosferatu *antitribu* called Teresita, keeps her haven on the northern edge of Tepito. Teresita trains new recruits for the Black Hand and finds Tepito an excellent training ground: Her cadets, whom she calls her own *Niños Heroes*, can practice their lethal lessons on tough mortals before they graduate to more dangerous "Kindred" prey.

TLATELOLCO: THE PLAZA DELAS TRES CULTURAS

The northern quarter retains several relics of native civilization. The Tlatelolco neighborhood, located north of Paseo de la Reforma, holds one of them. This neighborhood was Mexico City's first suburb: Tenochtitlán became so crowded that people moved to a nearby island and built Tlatelolco. This satellite town held the greatest market in the Aztec Empire. The market plaza still exists, and one can see the remains of walls and a pyramid. The Spanish built a church, convent and school for missionaries on another side of the plaza. A third side holds the modern offices of the Ministry of Foreign Relations. Near it lies a gigantic housing project called Ciudad Tlatelolco. The old square is now called the Plaza of the Three Cultures for the three ages of Mexican history thus represented.

After 1968, Tlatelolco gained a more sinister reputation. In that year, government troops massacred university students who gathered in the Plaza to demonstrate for reforms. The troops did not wear uniforms and they waited until nightfall to fire, so that no one could testify that any particular soldier had actually killed anyone. Mexico's then-president, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, did not want protesters — he thought they were "Communist agitators" — to mar the Olympic Games held in Mexico City that year. The next day, the lead story in the city's chief newspaper dealt with the weather. The government did its best to suppress any word of the massacre and it still does not appear in Mexican history schoolbooks. Some of Mexico's leading writers and intellectuals gathered testimony from survivors, however, and Díaz Ordaz ended up with an international scandal. At home, the PRI lost the last of its credibility as a "revolutionary" party.

A few Cainites claim that they were at the massacre and fed well on the students. A few other Sabbat say that they *were* students at the demonstration, Embraced after their mortal wounding. The Sabbat does not take great care in documenting its members' past, so any of these Cainites could be telling the truth or lying. Saying that you were "at Tlatelolco" has become a standard boast for Sabbat who particularly enjoy bedeviling the mortal authorities. The coven called *El Grito de Dolor*, which compares Mexico's reformist struggles to the Sabbat's fight against elder tyranny, holds a yearly memorial *ritus* at the Plaza of the Three Cultures.

SO WHAT IS IT?

No one knows the secret of Teotihuacán except Tlaloc... and you, the Storyteller. We leave this as a deliberate mystery that you can explain however you want.

TEOTIHUACÁN

Tlatelolco is not the only Aztec remnant in the north of the city. The ruined pyramids of Tenayuca and Santa Cecilia exist further north, on the border of the Federal District. Even farther north, beyond the suburban sprawl, squats the massive ruins of Teotihuacán.

The Aztecs regarded Teotihuacán as an ancient, holy and uncanny site. Its name means "place where the gods began." In their legends, the gods were born at Teotihuacán, and two gods sacrificed themselves there to create the sun.

The largest monuments at Teotihuacán are called the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon. They are much bulkier than the Great Pyramid of Egypt, though they are made of earth rather than stone. These and smaller pyramids and platforms cluster around a gigantic plaza.

Teotihuacán is an Aztec name. No one knows what its builders called this complex of pyramids, platforms and temples, but beyond doubt it formed the center of their religion. Teotihuacán is now an archeological site and national preserve, but still accessible to tourists.

Some younger Sabbat hold *ritae* at Teotihuacán when they can evade the archeologists (any security guards are too easily bribed to matter). Sabbat elders avoid the vast pyramids. Over the centuries, too many uncanny events have happened at Teotihuacán: packs that never came back; inquisitive thaumaturges who fell prey to strange obsessions; undead archeologists who suffered horrifying nightmares. Speculations about sleeping Methuselahs remain unproven. Sabbat have seen the rare and elusive were-jaguars of Mexico at the ruins, but no Cainite has yet produced a *reliable* account of their rites and powers. Other Cainites spin tales about the ghosts of sacrificial victims from long ago, or even stranger creatures. La Viuda Blanca visits the pyramids, but even she cannot yet define what power lurks in the Place Where the Gods Began.

VILLAGE OF GUADALUPE, SANCTUARY OF THE VIRGIN

Northern Mexico City also contains many living religious sites, including several baroque churches. The basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe, on Tepeyac Hill, is the greatest of them all.

According to legend, in 1531 the Virgin Mary appeared to a native peasant called Juan Diego, who came from the village of Guadalupe. She miraculously imprinted her image onto his cloak. This apparition proved critical in converting the Indians, because the Virgin appeared with the brown skin of their race. The basilica was built to honor the miraculous cloak.

RELIGION

Most *chilangos*, like most Mexicans, call themselves Roman Catholic Christians. The small percentage of non-Catholic *chilangos* chiefly follow various Protestant sects. The city also has a minor population of Jews (some, like the elder Zadkiel ben Aron, descended from Sephardim expelled from Spain centuries before). Mexico City also claims a small community of Buddhists, who worship at their own temple and community center. Mexico has received Asian immigrants since the 19th century; Mexico City even has a small Chinatown near the Historical Center. A few non-Asian Mexicans adopt Buddhism as well, and do not consider this inconsistent with Roman Catholicism.

The cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe became so popular that the Pope declared her the eternal Empress of Latin America and Queen of Mexico. Some historians doubt the authenticity of the whole story — or that Juan Diego even existed. Ethnologists note that the Virgin of Guadalupe looks just like the Aztec goddess Tonantzin (“Our Mother”), and that the present basilica occupies Tonantzin’s old shrine. Such arguments, however, mean nothing to the Mexican people.

The Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe now receives more pilgrims each year than any other Roman Catholic shrine. On the Virgin of Guadalupe’s December 12 holiday, countless Mexicans gather in the square before the basilica and hundreds of Mexicans dance in traditional Aztec garb.

Wise Sabbat clear out of Villa de Guadalupe for a few nights around the festival, because the celebration as a whole creates an uncomfortable degree of faith throughout the neighborhood. A few devotees of the Path of Night, or other Cainites who preserve some twisted remnant of mortal faith, hover at the edges of the *colonia* — the echo of sacred power hurts so good. Among these Cainites are Villa de Guadalupe’s resident Sabbat pack, the Machete Cross, and their mad priest Father Yoel Rosen.

SOUTH

Mexico City extends quite far to the south. Avenida Insurgentes is the chief thoroughfare from the Historical Center to the southern suburbs. Most of southern Mexico City is working-class housing and blue-collar industry, in *colonias* such as Tacubaya and Ixtacalco. This region does, however, hold a few upper-class enclaves. Most of these enclaves began as towns of their own, some dating back to before the Conquest, that Mexico City encircled as it grew. The southern districts also holds the campus of the Autonomous National University of Mexico, a veritable city of its own.

LUCHA LIBRE!

The masked wrestlers of *lucha libre* are one of Mexico’s most distinctive cultural tropes. Masks were popular in the 1930s: “El Enmascarado” came at the same time that *The Phantom* debuted in newspaper comic strips and *The Man in the Iron Mask* was a best-seller in Mexico City. A young wrestler named Rodolfo Guzmán Huerta put it all together to create the wrestling character of El Santo, the heroic Man in the Silver Mask. Through wrestling matches, movies and comic books, El Santo became a cultural icon — Latin America’s answer to Superman and Batman — and cemented the mask as a necessary adjunct to any *luchador*.

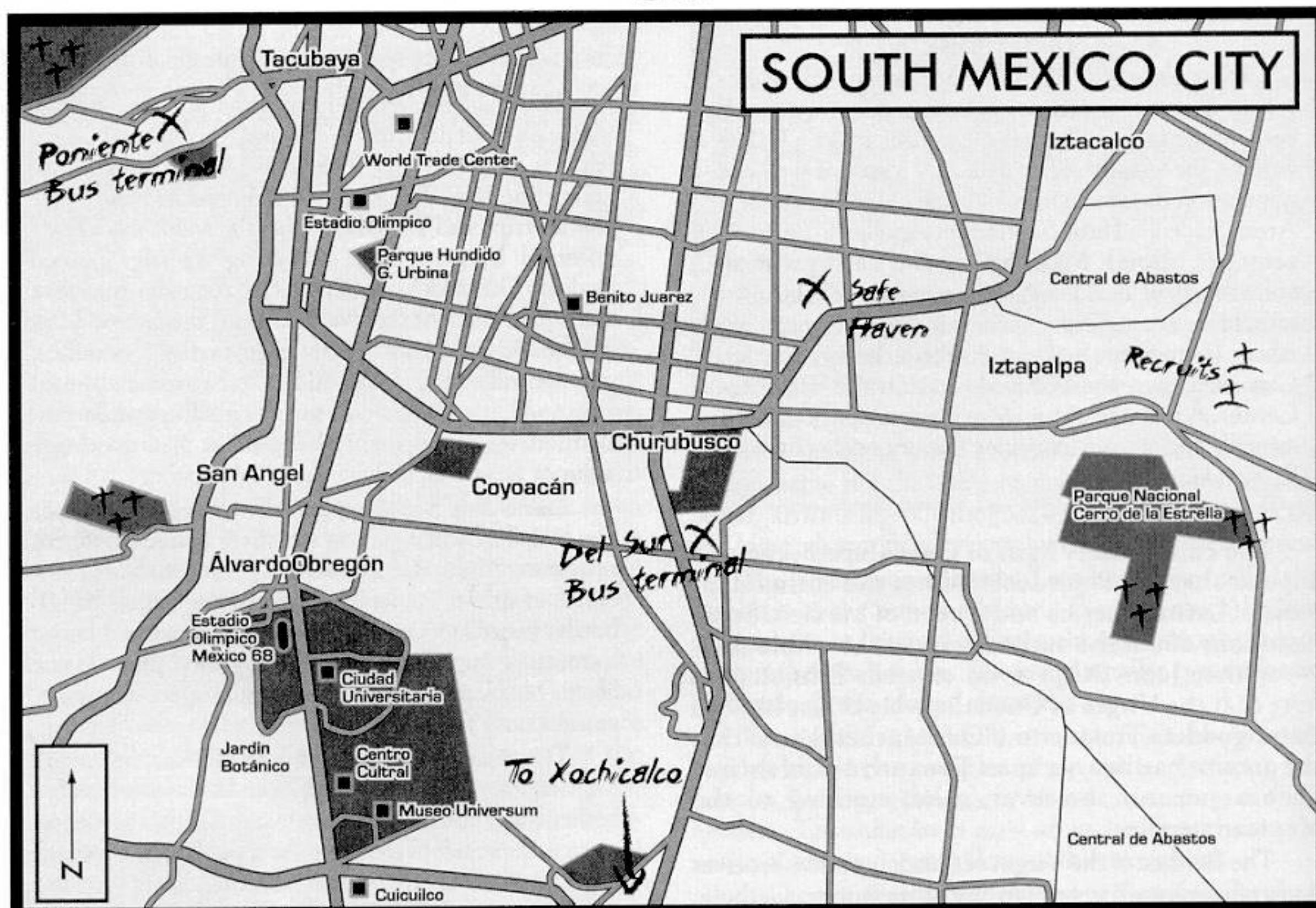
Lucha libre bouts express the struggles of Mexican life. The fair-fighting wrestlers called *científicos* or *técnicos* fight the *rudos* who personify hated enemies of urban Mexicans, from street bullies to US border guards to Death itself. Each match is a body-slammings, high-testosterone morality play. *Lucha libre* is Mexico’s second most popular spectator sport, second only to soccer.

The craze quickly spread to the Sabbat. It’s a rare Mexico City neonate who did not know of *lucha libre* before his Embrace. It was only natural that someone notice the resemblance between Sabbat Monomacy and the duels of the squared circle.

Mexico City’s Sabbat now enjoy their own *lucha libre* spectacles. The Cainite wrestlers reverse the usual morality play: The “heroes” are *rudo* characters inspired by famous Sabbat warriors, kine villains such as Nazis and drug dealers, predatory animals, natural disasters and the like. The *técnico* “villains” pose as Sabbat enemies such as Camarilla archons, Lupines, witch-hunters and the sun. Some characters, however, come from neutral sources such as Central American gods, Disciplines or whatever else pops into a Cainite’s active imagination. Sabbat *lucha libre* is far less scripted than the mortal version, but the promoters usually decide in advance who wins.

Sabbat *lucha libre* merges with Monomacy in the mask vs. mask battles. Among mortals, the loser of such a fight is unmasked and can never wear that mask again. The winner keeps the loser’s mask. Among the Sabbat, mask vs. mask Monomacy can go to Final Death, leaving the loser’s mask and fangs as a trophy of the kill.

Very few *luchadores* make it into the Black Hand, although many apply. The Seraphim and Dominions also discourage Black Hand members from adopting masked and costumed identities. They do not like to see the Jyhad against the Camarilla treated as a game; the Dominion Teresita openly despises *lucha libre*. If a Cainite *luchador* should prove himself an especially apt fighter, though, anything is possible.



TACUBAYA AND IZTACALCO

These two districts lie due south of the *Centro Histórico*. They are fairly old, working-class suburbs. Sport is Tacubaya's claim to fame: It holds the City of Sports and, nearby, the Plaza México — the largest bullring in the world, with seating for 50,000.

Bullfighting remains popular in Mexico. The Sabbath likes it too. Unfortunately, the Plaza México is too exposed for a clandestine bullfight. In the past, Sabbath packs won glory for themselves by finding a way to stage a decent bullfight somewhere else — in one of the larger parks, perhaps. The trick was to build a *corrida* (bullring), hold the fight and tear everything down again without leaving traces.

A few years ago, however, the Toreador *antitribu* Priscus Venere Carboni purchased a large warehouse in Iztacalco and turned it into a small sports arena. By raising the audience on catwalks, Carboni left the entire factory floor free to use as a *corrida*. It lacks the scale of the Plaza México, but Carboni rents out the facility whenever anyone wants to sponsor a bullfight.

The Sabbath also place a few Cainite spins on the sport. A ghoulish bull is only the simplest variant. A ghoulish frenzy, with horns strapped to his head (or created using Vicissitude) provides its own sort of amusement. Other variations include a kidnapped human set against a *szlachta*

or bull, with the Embrace as his backhanded reward if he survives. Cainites also use Carboni's arena for other sporting events, including Games of Instinct and Monomacy. Dozens of Cainites may attend these events, and any mortals drawn by the lights and sounds of excitement are a pleasant bonus.

Carboni acts as master of ceremonies for bullfights or other spectacles, but on most nights he stays in Condesa. He leaves the night-to-night operations of his arena to a large coven called the *Partido Devolucionario Institucional*, led by a Malkavian *antitribu* who calls himself General Perfidio Díos. The PDI, with more than 20 members, dominates Cainite affairs in Tacubaya and Iztacalco.

COYOACÁN AND SAN ANGEL

Hernán Cortés occupied Coyoacán after his initial flight from Tenochtitlán. Suburban sprawl engulfed this village 50 years ago. The megalopolis surrounds Coyoacán, but does not absorb it. Like many such encircled towns, Coyoacán has narrow, cobbled streets and older buildings. The university to the south is the chief outside influence on Coyoacán. The neighborhood features many bookstores, galleries, coffeehouses and other businesses that cater to the highbrow.

Cortés was not Coyoacán's only famous resident. In the first half of the 20th century, Mexico's most

famous artist, Diego Rivera, lived in the town with his legal wife Frida Kahlo, his later common-law wife Angelina Beloff (both also artists of some fame) and his houseguest Leon Trotsky. Not far away is the house where Trotsky lived after his affair with Kahlo became socially awkward. The Trotsky house is also now a museum. Visitors can see the bullet holes left by an assassination attempt led by Rivera's fellow muralist David Siqueiros, a fervent Stalinist. A Soviet agent later murdered Trotsky in the house. El Grito de Dolor, the city's largest coven, models one of its *ignoblis ritae* on the Trotsky assassination.

Coyoacán also holds the urban haven of Szechenyi Jolán, one of Mexico City's oldest and most powerful Tzimisce. This priscus prefers to reside in a small southern hamlet that she owns completely, but two of her ghouls always occupy the small, vine-wreathed stone cottage and can pass messages to Jolán.

San Angel, due west of Coyoacán, greatly resembles it. The elder Eleiser de Polanco, ambassador from the Sabbat of Spain, claimed San Angel as his domain by destroying the Sabbat pack who previously resided in it. San Angel reminds him of the past... and college students out late make a convenient dinner.

THE PEDREGAL, UNAM AND CUICUILCO

A huge lava flow from the extinct volcano Mt. Xictli created the Pedregal, a ridge of barren rock south of Coyoacán and San Angel. Part of the ridge now forms one of Mexico City's upscale suburbs, the Jardines de Pedregal. The Pedregal area also holds the massive Azteca Stadium and, to the west, the Olympic Stadium and Village.

Avenida Insurgentes follows the Pedregal south to the main campus of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, called the Ciudad Universitaria. This is Mexico's premier institute of higher learning. It is enormous, with about 250,000 students. UNAM highlights include the inevitable mosaic murals (this time by Juan O'Gorman and David Siqueiros), theaters, sculpture and botanical gardens, and a 10-story library. One of the more enigmatic features is a massive environmental sculpture. This consists of massive, slanting concrete piers around a knob of bare volcanic rock.

UNAM is probably the world's greatest center of Noddist scholarship. Some of the professors are blood-bound ghouls working for undead patrons. Others are conditioned, suggested or nudged to research in certain directions. Some Noddists simply offer cash incentives to investigate certain problems in history, archeology, politics and other fields, with plausible but false explanations for their interest. Most Noddists consult UNAM's library and scholars at some point. Uncovering the past and present machinations of Methuselahs and Antediluvians requires vast amounts of information and top-notch scholarship, and UNAM supplies both.

No Sabbat reside in the Jardines de Pedregal, however, or UNAM. Over the decades, several packs tried. Within a decade, pack members developed the fabled Methuselah's thirst, devoured their packmates and had to be put down like rabid dogs. The reason lies south of UNAM in the lava-smothered ruins of Cuicuilco, a civilization older than Teotihuacán.

Around 100 AD, the Pedregal lava flow buried Cuicuilco in lava more than 16 feet deep. Only a few of the tallest structures rose above the lava. The largest of these is a circular step pyramid 75 feet tall and 390 feet wide. At the top, a deep pit holds an oval stone altar. Excavations in the 1930s revealed other structures and altars. No further excavation has taken place since that decade.

As the archeologists dug by day, blood sorcerers and Noddist scholars worked by night to decipher inscriptions and artifacts that never made it to any museum of the kine. They found that when the Pedregal buried Cuicuilco, it trapped a sleeping Methuselah — one so powerful that even in torpor, its will and its thirst reached out to overpower Cainites who spent too much time near it. Gorchist, the regent of that time, responded by declaring the entire Pedregal his domain. Other Cainites could visit but not stay. Melinda Galbraith repeated that prohibition.

The Sleeper of Pedregal is not a very great secret in the Sabbat. Every Cainite of bishop or higher rank knows about the Methuselah; they just do not talk about it very much. Now and then, some whelp suggests digging out the Methuselah and diablerizing it. Isn't that what the Sabbat is about? Elders respond by saying that of course the Sabbat will destroy the Sleeper... in time, when they know how to do it safely and without tearing up half of UNAM. If the neonate persists, the elder takes her head off for impertinence.

XOCHIMILCO

Like Coyoacán, this upscale suburb used to be a town of its own. Before that, Xochimilco was one of the five interconnected lakes in the Valley of Mexico. The Indians farmed in Lake Xochimilco using *chinampas*.

The usual description of *chinampas* as "floating gardens" is not correct. *Chinampas* do not actually float; rather, they are a form of land reclamation. The Indians created the gardens by heaping up reeds and dredged lake sediments into platforms that reach a few feet above water level. Willows planted on the platform anchor it to the lake bed with their roots. The Indians did (and still do) employ floating seed-beds of reeds and mud, however, and early authors confused these floating seed-beds with the *chinampa* gardens themselves.

Over the centuries, the *chinampas* filled more and more of Lake Xochimilco until there was no lake left — just a network of canals. The people of Xochimilco still farm the *chinampas*, though, and the delegation still

deserves its Nahuatl name of "The Place of Flowers." Xochimilco's flower gardens supply Mexico City with a vast and steady stream of blossoms.

Gaily painted *trajineras* (gondolas) carry visitors through the canals that run between the gardens. Each gondola's name is spelled out in flowers, and some boats are almost covered in blossoms. Tourists and *chilangos* both enjoy an afternoon out on the flower boats.

Most Sabbath do not care much about the scenic beauty of Xochimilco but some of them find the canals and gardens useful for hiding their victims' bodies. Even better, they can deliver the bodies to Xochimilco's leading Cainite, the gardener and Cathari priestess Caridad de Flores. This Cainite occupies a mansion and estate that faces a canal. Tall hedges and an iron fence surround the estate; a gate accesses the canal for "deliveries" by water. The splendid gardens around the house are nothing compared to the garden inside it.

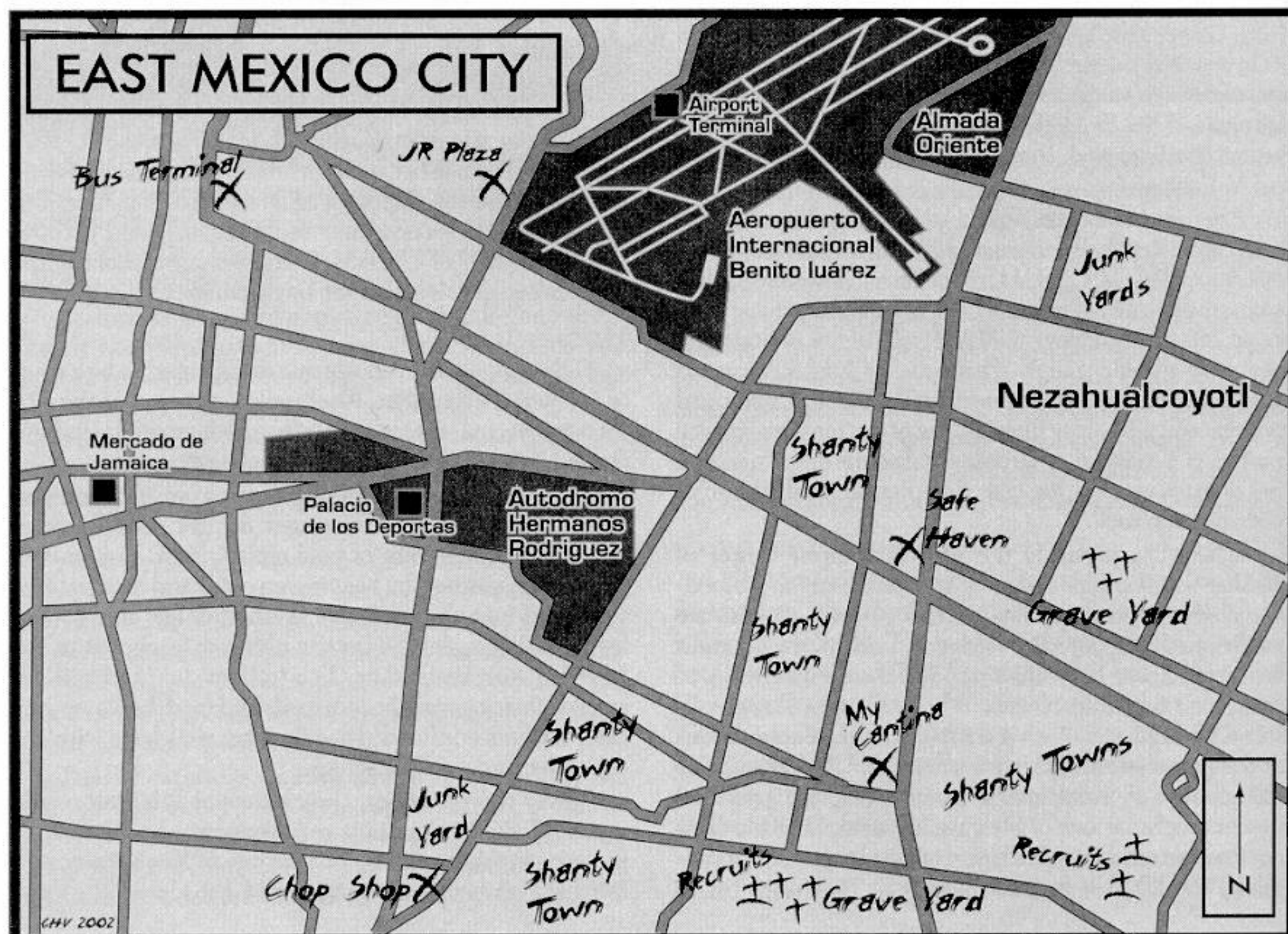
DESIERTO DE LOS LEONES

Desert of the Lions is Mexico City's second-largest park. It is located in the southwest of the city, near the Pedregal lava field. The park consists of a pine forest on the lower slopes of Mount Xictli. It is much wilder than *Bosque de Chapultepec*, and lacks the museums and other entertainments. It also suffers much more from the air pollution.

At night, the park becomes a favored haunt of the Black Hand. The Sabbath's most dedicated warriors often train in the park through games such as hide-and-seek or blindfolded tag. Sometimes these Cainites kidnap a convenient mortal and hunt him through the woods. Country Gangrel *antitribu* also roam the park or sleep through the day in its soil. The two groups generally stay away from each other (except for the Gangrel in the Black Hand, of course). Additionally, the recent influx of Gangrel from the Camarilla has tipped the balance between the two groups, and some Gangrel now grumble about sharing the park.

EAST

In the 1950s, millions of peasants left their farms and villages to seek their fortune in Mexico's premier city. The booming oil and construction industries promised jobs and wealth. Of course there were not enough jobs for everyone who wanted one. Many couldn't even find housing. Most of them squatted on vacant land or illegally rented land on the communal farms called *ejidos*. They built hovels of whatever materials they could scrounge: mud brick, corrugated iron, cinder blocks, plastic sheeting, marsh reeds and the like. These desperately poor people made Mexico City the biggest metropolis in the



world. The Mexicans call these shantytowns the *ciudades perdidas* — “lost cities.”

These squatter neighborhoods now ring the city, but they are most extensive on the city's eastern and southeastern fringe. The *municipios* of Nezahualcoyotl, Texcoco and Chalco are particularly notorious in this regard. Some of these shantytowns grew so large that they could be major cities of their own. Now and then the Mexican government extends electricity, water lines and other utilities to a shantytown, even though the people do not legally own their homes or land. The *ciudades perdidas* multiply faster than the government is willing to act, however, and far beyond the ability of private charities to help the people. Some people estimate that more than 500 *ciudades perdidas* cluster around Mexico City, compared to about 350 legal *colonias*.

The shantytowns receive policing as much as they receive utilities and other government services. Drug abuse is rampant. So are domestic abuse, assault and robbery. Fathers are often absent, and drunken or brutal when present. Many of the people have no jobs, no education and no hope. Indolent youths often join gangs. What can they do except fight for scraps and seek a moment of chemical escape? The Sabbath feels right at home in these environs. If Cainites leave a few dead bodies in the street, the police shrug and write them off as victims of gang violence... and a few more people who will never trouble their betters again.

ECATEPEC, VENUSTIANO CARRANZA AND IZTAPALAPA

Closer to the city center, the east side consists of industrial and working-class neighborhoods, much like the northern quarter. These also include some of Mexico City's most populous delegations.

The delegation of Venustiano Carranza lies between the Historical Center and the AIBJ. Mexico City's largest coven, *El Grito de Dolor*, has its parish in Venustiano Carranza. This coven boasts more than 30 members, which grants its ductus, Bishop Natalio, greater influence than his age or rank would suggest. Coven members hunt and maintain personal havens throughout the eastern quarter.

Iztapalapa puts on Mexico City's second-largest religious festival, surpassed only by the festival of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Every year at Easter, kine in Iztapalapa mount a passion play of epic proportions. Like the celebration of the Virgin, Iztapalapa's dramatization of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ generates a frightening degree of faith that most Cainites prefer to avoid. The Little Sisters of Zillah, a coven with a missionary bent, remains in Iztapalapa as a penance for their crime of existing as Cainites. The Little Sisters have recently gained greater prestige in the Sabbath thanks to the prophetic zeal of its pack priest, Josefa Teotalco.

NEZAHUALCOYOTL

Ciudad Nezahualcoyotl takes its name from an Aztec emperor who wrote beautiful poetry. The name means

“Starving Coyote.” Fifty years ago, Nezahualcoyotl was a rural *municipio* made up of communal farms, called *ejidos*, and drying mudflats left by the vanishing Lake Texcoco. Immigrants found they could not find housing in the city, so several thousand families built adobe shacks in Nezahualcoyotl at once. They guessed that the government would not risk a riot or bad publicity by evicting so many squatters at once. The first settlers laid out a grid of streets and divided the land into plots. They hooked their neighborhoods to Mexico City's electricity, water and telephone systems without paying. Hundreds of thousands of other squatters followed.

As the shantytown grew, however, Mexico City's politicians started looking at its people through new eyes: as prospective voters. The government gradually legalized the squatters' land titles, paved the roads and arranged for legal utilities. People opened shops and small businesses. Brick replaced adobe. “Neza” seemed on the way to becoming an ordinary, working-class neighborhood, though its squatter roots still provoked scorn and mistrust from *chilangos*.

In the late 1980s, however, Mexico's oil boom collapsed and unemployment surged. Young Nezans sought work in the US. Many of them came back with gangster styles and attitudes learned in American inner cities. An urban punk ethic enhanced Neza's reputation as a dangerous, lawless place. Now more than 1.4 million people live in the world's largest slum.

Nezahualcoyotl's very notoriety sometimes brings small benefits. International boxing matches have taken place there. A UN development agency held a concert in Nezahualcoyotl to draw attention to the Third World's urban poor. As the poster child for shantytown squalor, the Starving Coyote actually receives more government help than do most of the *ciudades perdidas*.

The Nezans may not have a second chance to gentrify themselves, though. From the beginning, the Sabbath hunted freely through Neza. Bored, frustrated young men easily moved from kine gang life to the Sabbath. Now, however, the Nezans face something even worse than Sabbath gangbangers. A brood of Blood Brother Cainites escaped after the destruction of the Tremere *antitribu*. These “Hungry Sisters” find densely packed, impoverished, violent Nezahualcoyotl a perfect environment, and the lineage grows with frightening speed. So far, neither witch-hunters nor Sabbath elders notice the Hungry Sisters, but these mad Cainites could easily at least expose the existence of vampires as they overrun the neighborhood.

CARTO LANDIA

The name means “Cardboard Land.” It is one of Mexico City's newer *ciudades perdidas*, in the eastern fringe of the Chalco area. Squatters build their one-room huts out of pressed cardboard because that's what they can scavenge.

The Mexican city or national governments could not afford to help the Carto Landians for many years, even if they wanted to do so. In many *ciudades perdidas*, help

comes only from private charities. Churches sponsor many of these charity offices. For instance, the *Asociación Mexicana de Transformación Rural y Urbano* (AMEXTRA), a charity group sponsored by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and other denominations, built a small medical clinic in Carto Landia. The charity workers also teach women about small businesses they can run from home, such as cutting hair, cooking, baking, arts and crafts. Such charities are the squatters' only advocates to the rest of the world.

As charity workers gain the trust of the squatters, they may learn about more personal threats to the people of a *ciudad perdida*. The Mexican government may not notice dead squatters, but charity workers do. The Society of Leopold regularly sends witch-hunters into Carto Landia and similar shantytowns to question the charity workers about deaths and disappearances that seem more than usually strange. Indeed, some of Mexico's most dedicated witch-hunters began as charity workers in the *ciudades perdidas*.

THE LOWEST

Carto Landia is not the lowliest habitation of Mexico City's poor. In some areas, sand-quarries left shallow, man-made caves. People live in them. The caves are prone to collapse, but they are free shelter.

Other people live in graveyards. It's free space. Perhaps they sleep under a shrub, or turn a tarp into a crude tent. Mexicans sometimes leave offerings of food on their relatives' graves; the dead might not care, but the homeless appreciate it. They can resell the flowers and candles left on the graves as well.

The poorest of the poor live in garbage dumps. A house of cardboard still beats a junked car and a plastic

tarp. The squatters pick through trash in search of anything they can use or sell for a few coins. They live amid filth, breathe the stinking smoke from illegal garbage fires, eat spoiled food and drink polluted water. Their death rate from disease is appalling.

No one looks out for the people of garbage, sand-caves and cemeteries. The Sabbath can prey on them with impunity. Some packs claim communities of the homeless as their herds, and treat them as kine in truth. They exercise no discretion because their prey is invisible to the authorities. Some people even accuse the police of organizing death-squads to thin the ranks of the homeless.

One Sabbath pack, the Filth Angels, draws its membership from the garbage-pickers of a dump in Iztapalapa. The Filth Angels rarely venture beyond that dump, so few Sabbath know of them or care.

UNDERGROUND

In its central districts, Mexico City has all the underground spaces of any metropolis, and a few unique to itself. Mortals built most of it. Ever since the Sabbath came to Mexico City, however, Cainites exploited kine civil engineering works as cover for their own digging.

In 1607, the Spanish colonial government ordered the city's first big dig. Fifteen hundred Indian laborers dug a system of drainage canals and the Desagüe de Huehuetoca, a five-mile tunnel through the northern hills, to draw off excess water. The project was left incomplete, and so it did not prevent a flood in 1629 that left most of the city under water for five years. The government ordered the drainage system expanded... and the Sabbath diverted work gangs to delve tunnels of its own.

As the city expanded, so did its secret underground. The Nosferatu *antitribu* arranged for the construction and sealing of excess subway, sewer and utility tunnels, according to their usual plans. As skyscrapers like the Torre Latinoamerica were built, Cainites added subcellars for their private use. Sometimes they duped contractors into doing the work. Other times the Sabbath enslaved kine laborers: It was, and is, easy to find cheap, disposable workers in the slums. Mexico City now boasts one of the largest Nosferatu kingdoms in the world, and many other Cainites enjoy their own secret, subterranean havens and passages.

The Sabbath were not the first vampires to dig beneath the city, either — because neither they nor the Camarilla were the first undead in the New World. When the Sabbath came to Mexico, they destroyed a handful of elder monsters who stalked the Aztec nights and feasted on blood that poured down drains in the sacrificial altars. The Spanish never found the elder vampires' hidden catacombs, but the Sabbath did and took them for their own use.

The Sabbath faces a constant challenge in steering subway tunnels, sewers, telephone cables and other excavations away from their own tunnels and vaults. The Sabbath elders face a second challenge in hiding their private diggings from each other. Not a few elders con-

LAKE TEXCOCO

From covering much of the Valley of Mexico, Lake Texcoco has shrunk to a small patch of marsh and a salt-frosted basin of dried mud. A patchwork of squatter shacks and small farms surrounds the lake's remains.

The Mexican government wants to build a new airport on the Texcoco lakebed, to replace the aging Benito Juárez International Airport. Environmentalists protest that the airport would disturb migratory birds that nest in the remnant wetland. The farmers do not want to lose their land, especially at the price offered by the government. Some engineers object that the Texcoco mudflats could not support the weight of the airport. The Sabbath doesn't give a damn one way or another. Pablo Grimaldi-Salamanca, however, positioned his assets so that his revenant family will make a fortune off the new airport — money that he needs for his long-term plans. In Pablo, the Texcoco Airport has a powerful hidden supporter with a stronger voice in the Sabbath than even the Consistory realizes.

struct crypts and passages that they hope remain unknown to their rivals. The elders bury many secrets and scandals in their vaults, from torpid rivals to secret treaties with Camarilla princes.

UNIVERSIDAD DEL TERCER CIRCULO DEL SERPIENTE DORADO

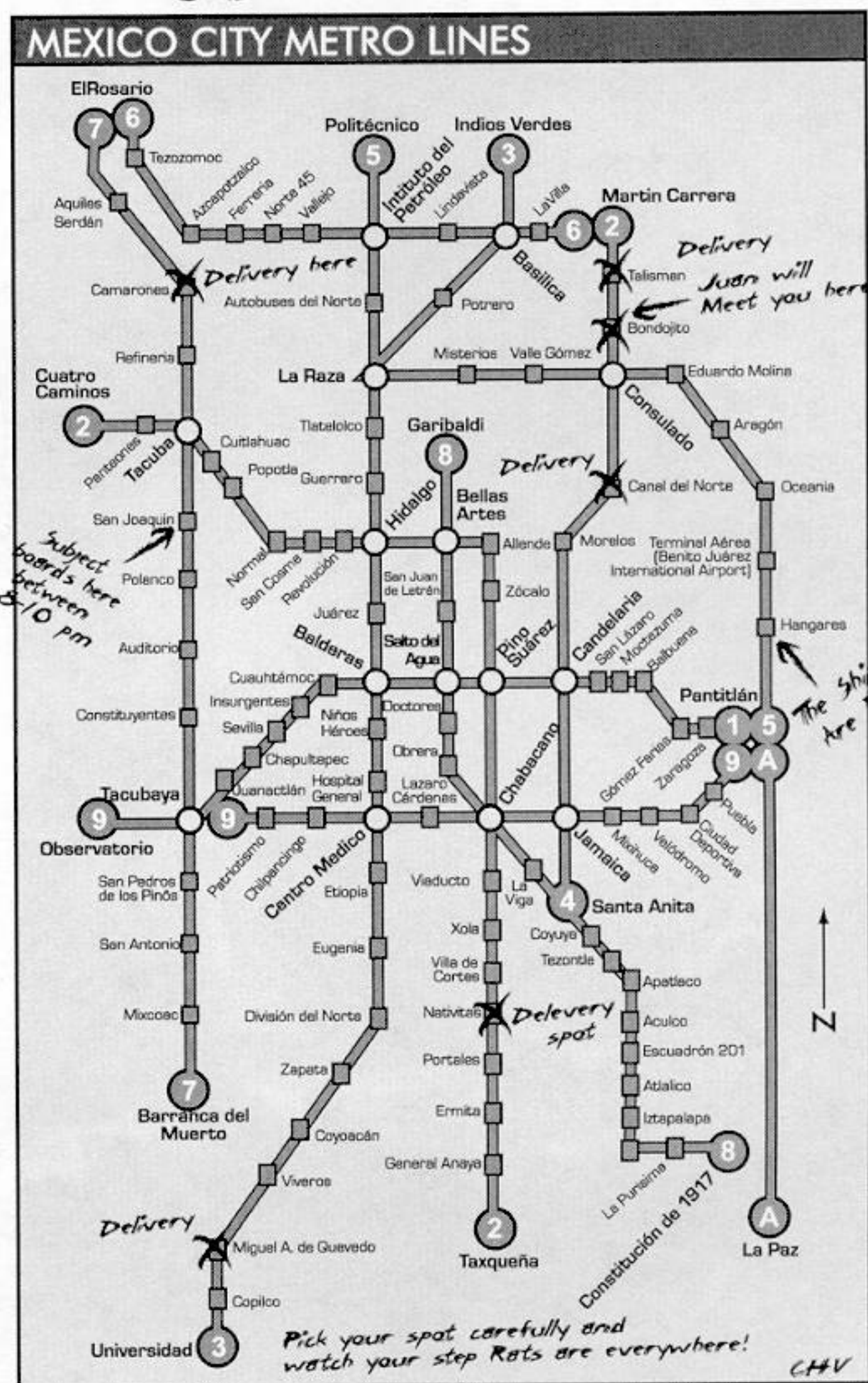
The Tremere *antitribu* called their central chantry the "University of the Third Circle of the Golden Serpent." Like the chantries of the parent clan, it served as their communal haven, college and sorcerous research laboratory. The Cainites of "House Goratrix" built their chantry more than a thousand feet below the surface, deep in the volcanic bedrock of the valley. Some terrible and unknown force destroyed the Tremere *antitribu*, but their underground chantry remains — albeit scorched. The sorcerous wards and curses that protected the chantry apparently vanished with the Tremere *antitribu* themselves.

Before one can investigate the remaining secrets of the chantry, one must find it. We do not provide a specific location for the entrance to the chantry: That is best left for each Storyteller to decide for herself. For inspiration, however, here are three possible locations for the entrance to the labyrinth:

- A disused grain silo in Azcapotzalco. A trapdoor in the floor is known only to Cainites... for now.
- The basement of a run-down mansion in the Centro Histórico. Pushing the right brick opens a secret door.
- A skyscraper in Polanco. Pressing the correct sequence of buttons in the elevator takes one to the chantry.

Once characters find the entrance, they must navigate a descending, seven-layered labyrinth to reach the chantry itself. The labyrinth is not enormous, but safe passage from each level to the next depends on passing some test. For instance, the *Guide to the Sabbat* mentioned a large albino alligator on one of the upper levels. Assuming that this was a supernatural guardian (and not, say, a Nosferatu's animal minion), the alligator could recognize Tremere *antitribu* and let them pass, but would try to stop Cainites of other clans.

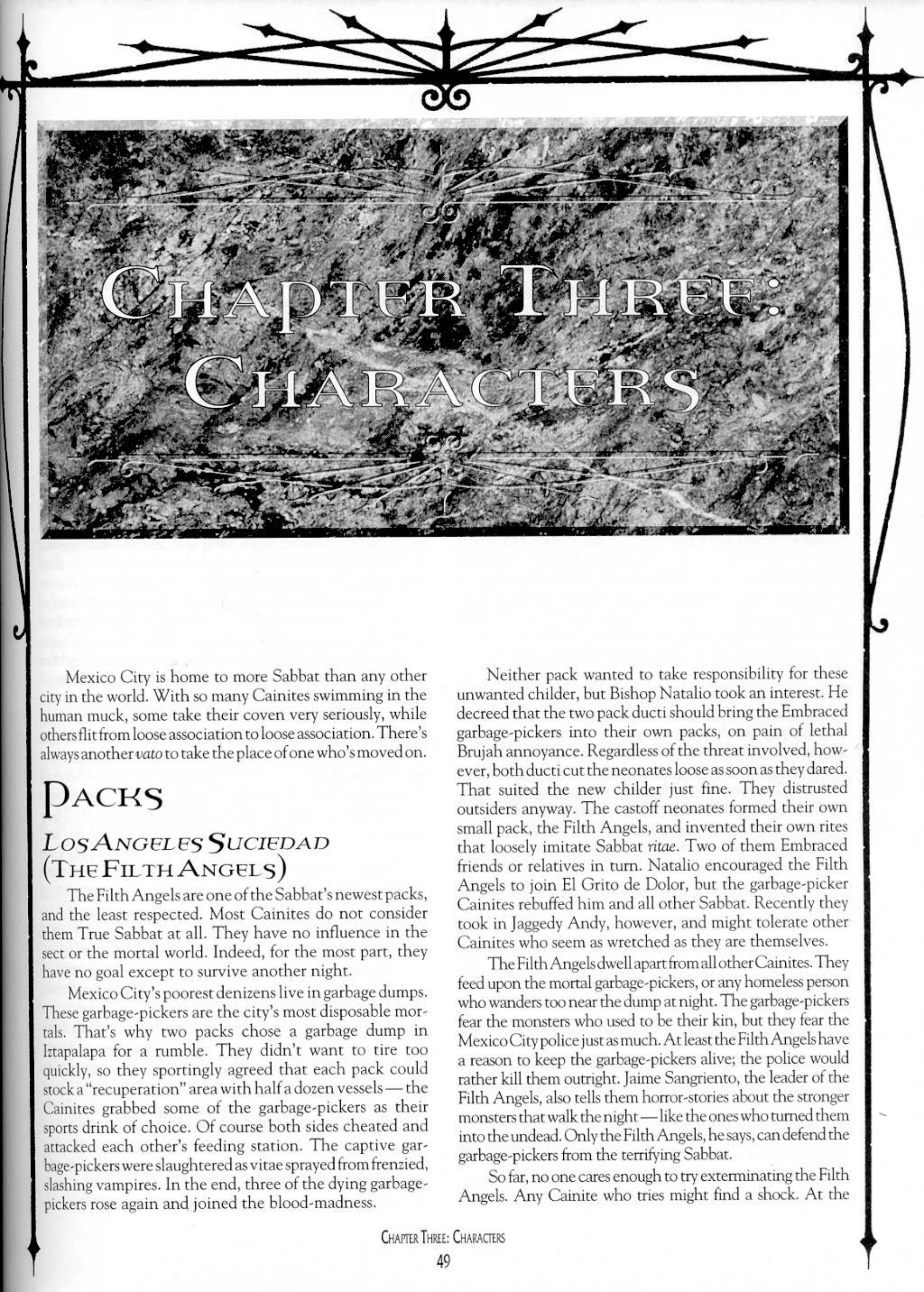
Other tests depend on occult knowledge. For instance, two levels might be linked by a 200-foot shaft between two small, round chambers marked with the signs of the zodiac. A character who touches the sign



currently in the descendant (just passing below the western horizon) can drop down the shaft and land without harm. A person who jumps down the shaft but does not touch the right sign probably makes quite a mess. Touching the ascendant sign (the one rising over the eastern horizon at that time) gently wafts a character up the shaft. To repeat, this is *only an example*. Storytellers should devise their own "tests" for passage. Bear in mind, though, that the Tremere *antitribu* did not want to make reaching the chantry too difficult for clanmates who knew the proper route.

At the Storyteller's option, the chantry discovered by Esteban de Agua y Tierra might provide access to the Universidad labyrinth. This does not constrain the location of the labyrinth's main entrance: Esteban's looted chantry might hold some sort of magic portal that transports characters to the labyrinth.





CHAPTER THREE: CHARACTERS

Mexico City is home to more Sabbat than any other city in the world. With so many Cainites swimming in the human muck, some take their coven very seriously, while others flit from loose association to loose association. There's always another *vato* to take the place of one who's moved on.

PACKS

LOS ANGELES SUCIEDAD (THE FILTH ANGELS)

The Filth Angels are one of the Sabbat's newest packs, and the least respected. Most Cainites do not consider them True Sabbat at all. They have no influence in the sect or the mortal world. Indeed, for the most part, they have no goal except to survive another night.

Mexico City's poorest denizens live in garbage dumps. These garbage-pickers are the city's most disposable mortals. That's why two packs chose a garbage dump in Iztapalapa for a rumble. They didn't want to tire too quickly, so they sportingly agreed that each pack could stock a "recuperation" area with half a dozen vessels — the Cainites grabbed some of the garbage-pickers as their sports drink of choice. Of course both sides cheated and attacked each other's feeding station. The captive garbage-pickers were slaughtered as *vitae* sprayed from frenzied, slashing vampires. In the end, three of the dying garbage-pickers rose again and joined the blood-madness.

Neither pack wanted to take responsibility for these unwanted childer, but Bishop Natalio took an interest. He decreed that the two pack ducti should bring the Embraced garbage-pickers into their own packs, on pain of lethal Brujah annoyance. Regardless of the threat involved, however, both ducti cut the neonates loose as soon as they dared. That suited the new childer just fine. They distrusted outsiders anyway. The castoff neonates formed their own small pack, the Filth Angels, and invented their own rites that loosely imitate Sabbat *ritae*. Two of them Embraced friends or relatives in turn. Natalio encouraged the Filth Angels to join El Grito de Dolor, but the garbage-picker Cainites rebuffed him and all other Sabbat. Recently they took in Jaggedy Andy, however, and might tolerate other Cainites who seem as wretched as they are themselves.

The Filth Angels dwell apart from all other Cainites. They feed upon the mortal garbage-pickers, or any homeless person who wanders too near the dump at night. The garbage-pickers fear the monsters who used to be their kin, but they fear the Mexico City police just as much. At least the Filth Angels have a reason to keep the garbage-pickers alive; the police would rather kill them outright. Jaime Sangriento, the leader of the Filth Angels, also tells them horror-stories about the stronger monsters that walk the night — like the ones who turned them into the undead. Only the Filth Angels, he says, can defend the garbage-pickers from the terrifying Sabbat.

So far, no one cares enough to try exterminating the Filth Angels. Any Cainite who tries might find a shock. At the

behest of the Filth Angels, the garbage-pickers stockpile homemade spears, machetes and torches, and build simple deadfall traps in the hills of refuse. The living and undead garbage-pickers know their squalid little realm extremely well, and can appear from and disappear into dozens of hiding-places.

LA CRUZ DE MACHETES (THE MACHETE CROSS)

This small pack dates back to the 1980s. It began when liberation theology met the Sabbat. For centuries, the Roman Catholic Church acquiesced to Latin America's gross inequalities of wealth and power (when it was not actively complicit). The liberation theology movement argued that the Church ought to challenge the established power elites and fight for human rights. Of course, many ideologies about "fighting the power" appeal to the Sabbat. Not all inductees lose their mortal religious and political convictions upon experiencing the Embrace, as evidenced by the fact that Sabbat packs have fought on both sides of every Latin insurgency of the past century.

Father Corbacho, a village priest in Guatemala, was Embraced specifically for his religious and political radicalism. A Lasombra used him as a catspaw in a scheme to sabotage a rival's plantation. The undead priest played his part like a good little dupe, then set out on his own. He joined a few other Cainite insurrectionists to form the Machete Cross. The pack took direct action against rich landlords, exploitative foreign companies, oppressive military commanders and such ilk. The members Embraced new childer, and occasionally fell to the Beast or the rifles of private guards or military death squads.

In 1989 the pack made a pilgrimage to the basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe and never got around to leaving Mexico City. Father Corbacho, now near Wassail, heard the message of the Path of Night from the abyss mystic Zadkiel. The priest — who still thought of himself as Catholic — would not "stoop to learn from a Jew," but found another teacher who imparted the rudiments of the Path. Several years later, the Tzimisce scientist Dr. de Sancha asked the Machete Cross to take in his mad childer Father Rosen. The pack agreed, out of respect for a priest. When Father Corbacho finally slid into Wassail and had to be destroyed, Father Rosen took over as pack priest.

The Machete Cross combines piety with crude vigilantism and sensational violence. Its members believe that they are God's scourge upon the wicked. They murder wealthy people whom they regard as oppressors or exploiters of the people, take their money and fence their possessions. Victims range from drug dealers to businessmen and politicians. The Cross gives the proceeds to religious charities or directly to the poor. None of the members are very stable — though a few hover at a very low Humanity — so they are not too picky about their choice of victims or vessels. If anyone kills an "innocent" vessel by accident, Father Rosen assigns 10 Hail Marys and a charitable act of contrition.

The pack does not fear to fight fellow Cainites, either. They may attack Sabbat who damage churches, exploit

the poor (apart from feeding on them) or kill priests, monks or nuns. Characters can encounter the Machete Cross because of their depredations, or in the course of their "charity work" and "revolutionary struggles."

Zadkiel looks in on the Machete Cross every few months. The abyss mystic hopes that he can penetrate Father Rosen's madness and lead him to the Path of Night. So far, however, no one in the pack has made the full conceptual leap from Humanity to Path. Failing that, Zadkiel figures that when he needs some expendable pawns he can direct through his persuasive talents, the Machete Cross can fit the bill.

The Machete Cross communal haven consists of a church in Gustavo A. Madero delegation that partly collapsed in the 1985 earthquake. The pack sleeps in the crypt, while Father Rosen keeps his religious accouterments in an intact vestry.

LAS HERMANITAS DE ZILA (LITTLE SISTERS OF ZILLAH)

This lowly pack has gained new prestige because of its priest Josefa. These female vampires describe themselves as Noddists, but their approach is more pietistic than scholarly. Like their supposed Second Generation namesake, they consider themselves to be "childer and brides of Caine" — undead nuns. The Little Sisters see themselves as humble servants of the Sabbat and therefore of Caine. They eschew the Sabbat's usual militarism and avoid the sect's internecine struggles. Instead, they seek to spread the word of Caine to all his descendants.

To this end, the pack sponsors readings from the *Book of Nod* with commentary from noted Cainite scholars. Members also hand-copy sections of the *Book of Nod* as a pious act and paint icons of Caine, the martyred Second Generation and Saulot, the "good Antediluvian" who obeyed Caine (and is believed safely destroyed). They trade these items for minor boons. Hermanita icons and copies of the *Book of Nod* may travel far beyond Mexico City because of the pack's most remarkable pious activity.

The Hermanitas do not care about the Sabbat's Jyhad against the Camarilla and the ancients. Instead, they concentrate upon the prophesied night when Caine shall judge all his descendants. The Hermanitas de Zila train missionaries who spread the word of Caine to the ignorant vampires of the Camarilla and independent clans. A member leaves on such a mission once every few years, so the Hermanitas see high turnover. Their communal haven holds a list of the missionaries and how each met her martyrdom.

The pack originated some time in the late nineteenth century. Its history remains somewhat obscure because Sabbat internal conflicts and surges in missionary callings have nearly destroyed the pack several times. In 1964, just one Hermanita survived to begin the pack anew. Las Hermanitas de Zila now has six members, and only one member has been a Cainite longer than Josefa. The pack never received status as a founded coven because of this lack

of continuity. The pack once had a male counterpart, Los Hermanitos de Enoch, but the last members met their end in 1993 when they tried to proselytize a Camarilla conclave.

Las Hermanitas maintains amicable relations with El Calpulli Rojo. Some of Mexico City's Noddists donate money to support its works, and might venture a diffident word in the pack's defense. Las Hermanitas say nice things about them in return, however, the pack has no really strong allies. Its current haven is a rotting house in Iztapalapa.

LOS NIÑOS HEROES (THE BOY HEROES)

Every Mexican schoolchild knows about *Los Niños Heroes*, the six military cadets who leaped to their death rather than surrender to invaders from the United States. They are one of Mexico's great symbols of fervor and gallantry. Teresita, the diminutive *Nosferatu* *antitribu* who trains potential Black Hand cadets, offers them as role models for her students. These neonates form her coven, though few Cainites stay for more than five years before graduating into the Black Hand or suffering Final Death. Teresita is their pack priest and ductus as well as their commanding officer. The little dominion currently seeks a new batch of trainees.

The Niños Heroes dwell in the cellar of a building that collapsed in the 1957 earthquake. The kine replaced the building, but the Sabbat arranged to have the old cellar sealed away. Access now comes through the storm drains. The cellar is divided into several chambers for sleeping, training and *ritae*. Teresita keeps the haven clean and well lit: She says that Blood Feasts are no excuse for dirt and stink. Her private boudoir features a four-poster bed with lace curtains and delicate tables crammed with knickknacks and vases of flowers.

PARTIDO DEVOLUCIONARIO INSTITUCIONAL (INSTITUTIONAL DEVOLUTIONARY PARTY)

This coven's name is a play on the name of Mexico's longest-lived and most successful political party. The bishop who calls himself General Perfidio Díos leads the coven as its ductus and chief intellectual, with the debauched and enigmatic Caridad de Flores as pack priest.

The coven's parish is a small courthouse in south-central Mexico City. The 1985 earthquake did not damage the courthouse too seriously, but General Perfidio arranged to have it condemned and abandoned. About a half-dozen Cainites share the courthouse, while more than a dozen other Cainites associate with the PDI more loosely. The PDI also operates a sports center for Cainites in the same neighborhood.

The PDI strongly supports the Sabbat's war against the Camarilla. Every year it sends a small pack into a Camarilla-held city to gather intelligence. General Perfidio trades this information to the Black Hand in return for boons, while Caridad helps the Hand with unusual assassinations. General Perfidio also argues that the Sabbat should involve itself in mortal business and government to a greater degree.

LAS EMBLEMAS (THE BADGES)

In many ways, this coven has the dirtiest job in all of Mexico City: These Cainites must clean up after all the others. When crazed Sabbat rip out throats on the *Paseo de la Reforma*, when a fleshcrafted horror terrorizes a shopping mall, when a millionaire's son becomes the guest of honor at a Blood Feast, someone has to hide the indiscretion lest the kine discover the Sabbat.

Las Emblemas began with Captain Isidro de Saldanha. This cop-turned-Lasombra protected the Sabbat from its own carelessness for 30 years before the consistory granted him his first deputy. Once or twice a decade, Captain Isidro finds another Cainite willing to join the coven.

Most of the Badges' work deals with mortals. They dress in a wide variety of uniforms and flash police badges or civil service ID to gain access to victims, crime scenes, police stations and government offices. Members erase the memories of witnesses and investigators, destroy paperwork and physical evidence, and cajole, bribe or Dominate government officials into quashing investigations. After a visit from a Badge member, news directors decide that a story is too absurd to run. If necessary, the Badges set up a mortal criminal to take the blame for a Sabbat atrocity. After a bit of Cainite influence, their chosen petty thug may himself believe he committed the crime. In extreme cases, the Badges kill to protect the Sabbat's secrets; Captain Isidro dislikes this because killing people involved with a strange crime tends to attract even more attention.

When the regent ordained Las Emblemas as a founded pack, she ordered all Sabbat to cooperate with them in covering up indiscretions. Failure to do so would violate the Code of Milan's stricture for Sabbat to protect each other from the sect's enemies. As a token of their authority, coven members receive a ritual brand on their forearms, using the same process that marks members of the Black Hand. The stylized badge of Las Emblemas, however, commands far less respect than the Black Hand's mark. Many Loyalist Sabbat consider Las Emblemas a special betrayal of the sect's ideals. Emblemas pack members who suffer Final Death usually do so at the fangs, claws, torches or chainsaws of other Sabbat.

Las Emblemas accepts any Cainite who sufficiently impresses Captain Isidro. Some Cainites ask to join. Captain Isidro may pressure neonates with special skills to become deputies of the pack. He has few threats to use on reluctant neonates, but he is persistent. The coven currently boasts about half a dozen members from a variety of clans. No member besides Captain Isidro has been a Cainite more than a few decades.

THE SCHICHIRIEL

The "Black Ones of God" consist of the abyss mystic Zadkiel ben Aron and his disciples. Members study the Path of Night, abyss mysticism, or both. Disciples often go for weeks without contacting other members, and Zadkiel does not insist that his disciples renounce membership in other packs or covens.

The small, loose-knit coven has a subterranean haven somewhere in the Mexico City storm drain system. Some

of the Nosferatu *antitribu* know where it is, but they charge a hefty fee to disclose its location. The haven is a large brick vault crisscrossed with pipes. A stream of water constantly falls into a central pool. The disciples sleep on bare slabs of brick and stone, while moisture-proof cabinets hold Zadkiel's occult texts and tools for *ritae*. Pedestals support 10 statues of gods and goddesses of death and darkness, each bearing a Hebrew word on their forehead.

The pool is actually a well 100 feet deep. Zadkiel sleeps in the bottom of the pool. Five abyssal entities haunt the depths of the well and attack anyone except Zadkiel who descends more than 20 feet into the black, unnaturally icy waters. See Chapter Five for information about abyssal entities and abyss mysticism.

UNIVERSIDAD DE NOCHE (UNIVERSITY OF NIGHT)

One of Mexico City's loosest associations consists of several Cainites with interests in science, or something that looks like science. Doctor de Sancha opens his personal haven to meetings of the University of Night, so the members can share their research. Members are welcome to bring guests, whether fellow scientists or interested laypersons. The Universidad's leading members, de Sancha and his sire Efraín Sortano, take a classically Tzimisce offense to gate-crashers. Most members also feel at least a mild contempt for sorcerers, and the pack's name is a deliberate challenge to the "University" of the lost Tremere *antitribu*.

Dr. de Sancha built his laboratory-haven in an abandoned factory in Azcapotzalco delegation; the police never visit his neighborhood of industrial derelicts. The factory floor is now an operating theater. The doctor built a row of small, sturdy cells in his factory and fills them with kidnapped victims who serve as both lab animals and herd.

EL GRITO DE DOLOR (THE CRY OF PAIN)

Literally "The Cry of Pain," this coven's moniker is also a play on words, echoing the Grito de Dolores, the call for independence from Spain launched by Miguel Hidalgo in 1810 from the town of Dolores, northwest of the capital. El Grito is the pack of Bishop Natalio, and its name captures his blend of Sabbat philosophy and Mexican revolutionary nationalism.

El Grito is one of several unusually large packs that call Mexico City home. Beyond Natalio himself, it includes a core of six of his most trusted fellows and a dozen others whose commitment is still being tested. The core members participate in the Vaulderie most often and serve as "visiting priests" among the loose packs of *vatos* and *chicas* who follow Natalio's lead in the shantytowns and Mexican hinterland.

LOS HECHICEROS DEL TEOCALLI (THE SORCERERS OF THE TEOCALLI)

"The Sorcerers of the Teocalli" (the old Aztec ritual district around the current Zócalo) are a loose association of

occultists and mystics who have picked up the pieces of the disappearance of the Tremere *antitribu*. The young *koldun* Esteban del Agua y Tierra and the Lazarene Viuda Blanca are the two most well-known, and they form a coven of two. Other *hechiceros* gravitate around them, bound by interest in the arcane lore and the wisdom of the Final Nights. Their associates include many Noddists, as well as the Malkavian Bishop Rodolfo and his student Eliza Villanova.

EL CALPULLI ROJO (THE RED FAMILY)

During the extended conflict between Spanish-Embraced *gachupín* Sabbat and *creole* Sabbat, several packs fell to Final Death in the internecine sect fighting of the eighteenth century. Frances Derossi, a Brujah *antitribu* with moderate leanings, was furious over the needless waste. The Camarilla still posed a grave threat, but the Lasombra and Tzimisce continued feuding while mortal politics managed to affect many Brothers and Sisters of Caine who still bore mortal grudges. Derossi believed in the Sabbat, but was not supportive of the savagery inherent in those Cainites stalking the New World. He believed violence was a tool, not a habit, and certainly did not condone its prolific usage among sect members. Something had to be done, and while Derossi had few illusions of grandeur, he knew he would have to serve as an example if only to save other Cainites like himself who found themselves caught in the middle of sect feuds.

Armed with the conviction of his beliefs, Frances Derossi slowly purchased tracts of land from poor farmers forced to supplement income from failed crop harvests and floods. Although it required a few years to buy the handful of acres and interconnect some of the *haciendas* into a walled compound, Derossi created a communal haven for Cainites willing to serve the sect but uncomfortable with the Sabbat's violent tendencies. Eventually, the gathered Cainites became an interim pack for those bereft of a group or uncertain who they wished to join. Derossi called this pack El Calpulli Rojo or "The Red Family."

Although Derossi met Final Death in 1971, his neutral haven for Cainites seeking alternatives within the sect remains. Derossi also financed the construction of a newer compound, but it is currently in dilapidated condition thanks to decades of neglect, thinning financial resources and the 1985 quake. Fortunately for El Calpulli Rojo, Regent Galbraith declared it a Founded Pack. They also enjoy the support of Bishop Natalio, who appreciates the merit of their function.

El Calpulli Rojo's main objective is to provide a haven for Sabbat looking to escape the sect's violent nature. While the pack currently comprises four permanent members, the compound sees as many as seven visitors at a time, with guests residing there from weeks to months. Most vampires who remain a year or more become permanent members. The compound is open to anyone seeking sanctuary and who willingly takes an oath not to commit violence within its walls. Unfortunately, this is mostly perfunctory since, often, the only punishment for such transgressions is banishment from the compound. Still, with the regent and a notable bishop support-

ing the endeavor, few Cainites are stupid enough to enter the communal haven with the express purpose of wreaking havoc.

Meanwhile, pack ductus Joseph O'Grady scouts out other packs and factions, trying to find permanent havens and Paths of Enlightenment best suited for the compound's residents. Many wind up as administrators for Regent Galbraith or the bishops, as information gatherers for the Inquisition or as librarians for the occult-minded Los Hechiceros del Teocalli.

While many Brothers and Sisters in Caine frown upon the "spineless" members of El Calpulli Rojo, few deny the secondary service the pack provides in keeping their Cainite wards loyal to the sect. El Calpulli Rojo conducts *ritae* like the Vaulderie, as well as Sermons of Caine, and requires all members and guests to attend these functions; the pack surrenders anyone who refuses participation in various Sabbat rites over to the Inquisition as heretics. While O'Grady dislikes such extreme and final measures, he knows his group walks a thin line despite their support. Should anyone ever accuse El Calpulli Rojo of heresy or undermining the cause, both Regent Galbraith's and Bishop Natalio's support will evaporate. As such, O'Grady offers the Inquisition full cooperation and disclosure as a preemptive measure against any accusations leveled against his group.

ENCAPUCHADOS (HOODED ONES)

The sect has long maintained its aversion to and dissimilarities with mortals: The kine are fodder, the kine are weak, the kine are playthings, etc. Unfortunately, the Sabbat sometimes relies too heavily on defining itself according to how it differs from mortals. Hardly surprising, therefore, that some Sabbat don't bother with such descriptions, and go about pursuing wholly material and personal agendas. It's even less surprising that these few buck the trend further, and remain active in mortal organizations.

The Encapuchados, or Hooded Ones, trace their beginning to the early 90s, when the Gulf Cartel was still part of Mexico's big four, and Juárez Cartel kingpin Amado Carrillo Fuentes was the most powerful drug baron in Mexico. At that time, the Tijuana Cartel under the Arellano Felix brothers was riding high following its 1993 assassination of Guadalajara's Catholic Cardinal Juan Jesus Posadas-Ocampo. The assassination impressed a Mexico City pack called Los Muertos Alegres (The Happy Dead), who Embraced two local gangsters from the Tijuana Cartel. The two men, Carlos Díaz and Miguel Orozco, became True Sabbat and quickly earned reputations for their efficiency and brutality. They also, however, remained loyal to the notion of making money.

Over time, Díaz and Orozco convinced their packmates that the undirected violence inherent among younger Sabbat was like charity: Nobody profited. Instead, Los Muertos Alegres focused on inflicting lucrative misery, whether it was running prostitution rings with ghoulish hookers (they healed with ease and their need for vitae kept them servile), selling drugs to mortals or engaging in kidnappings schemes (contrib-

uting to the Mexican "cottage industry" that as a whole earns \$165 million in ransoms each year). Díaz and Orozco argued that while the Sabbat prided itself on its independence and freedom from mortal concerns, money still talked and independence couldn't buy fine suits or expensive cars without resorting to the scavenger existence of theft. Los Muertos Alegres made a fortune, and its members liked being rich. That's when Díaz and Orozco convinced their packmates to sell their services to Benjamin Arellano Felix. They would protect the Tijuana Cartel's interests and territory in Mexico City against the Gulf, Sonora and Juárez Cartels, and they, in turn, would be rich Cainites.

For three years, the newly christened Encapuchados worked for the Tijuana Cartel as enforcers, hit-men and couriers, reaping substantial profits while providing the cartel with some of its reputation as a ruthless syndicate. Unfortunately, this also earned it censure from the Sabbat bishops, who discovered and disapproved of the Encapuchados' dabblings with mortal concerns so heavily. Faced with sect sanction and possibly destruction, Díaz and Orozco once again provided their pack with an alternative direction that would allow them to reap some profit while serving the Sabbat in a satisfactory manner. They would seize the cartel's massive methamphetamine operations supplying narcotics to North America, thus using the drug pipeline to gain stronger Sabbat footholds in US cities where the supply chains turned into distribution networks.

So far, though, the plan is not progressing well. The Tijuana Cartel is a juggernaut with ties all the way into Mexico's presidential office, which is proving stubborn and just as ruthless as the Sabbat, and the Encapuchados have yet to take any of the major drug producing factories or distribution networks. Meanwhile the bishops watch the Encapuchados to ensure their behavior benefits the sect. Under such scrutiny and desperate for some success, Díaz and Orozco are now pursuing alternatives including picking up the pieces left behind by the disintegrating Gulf Cartel, which once supplied the US with a third of its cocaine. With the arrest of cartel members across the continent, the Gulf syndicate is losing power rapidly, and rumors claim the once-allied Cali Cartel in Columbia, which pipelines cocaine through Mexico, grows chummier with the Juárez Cartel every day. The Encapuchados are hoping to pick up stray supply lines used by the Gulf Cartel and grow from there.

CHARACTERS

LASOMBRA

CHARLES VI, THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

8th generation, childe of Chlodobert the Lame

Clan: Lasombra

Nature: Rogue

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Embrace: 1236

Apparent Age: Mid-30s

Neonates who hear about Charles VI often ask if the Sabbat really Embraced a king. If Charles' plans work, it will have.

Charles Delmare followed a fairly common course for a young Lasombra in the Renaissance. In life he was a French knight who distinguished himself by fighting on both sides of the Albigensian Crusade. Such enterprise attracted the notice of a Lasombra lord, who Embraced Charles rather than let him die of a fever. Charles then fought on both sides of the Anarch Revolt until his grandsire discovered his double-dealing and warned other elders. After that, Charles had to commit to the anarchs. In the aftermath of the rebellion, Charles joined a pack that rampaged through the south of France for several decades, then overran a small town in the Central Massif. When the Sabbat moved to the New World, Charles followed.

The Lasombra knight became a bishop in Montreal, then an archbishop in French Guiana. Thanks to machinations of enemies within the sect, in 1808 Charles became the sixth cardinal to claim sway over the Sabbat in South America. The previous five cardinals all suffered Final Death within five years of their appointment, courtesy of South America's werewolves, werespiders and were-God-knows-what-all-else. Everyone wondered how long "Charles the Sixth" would last. To everyone's surprise, Charles lasted 150 years before he retired to the consistory as a priscus. He joined the junta that appointed Melinda Galbraith to the regency.

Charles VI tries to be all things to all Cainites. He joins the Ultra-Conservatives in arguing for more centralized power, but reaches out to moderates and listens to the concerns of neonates. He rallies the Loyalists with fiery speeches about elder tyranny, though never about Sabbat elders; he arranges the destruction of neonates who actively oppose his fellow elders, and so places those elders in his debt. Charles expects to become regent himself some night, and that night cannot come too soon for him—for the hour is late and the Sabbat's enemies are strong.

For centuries, Charles thought that power was its own purpose and reward. Through his decades as cardinal, however, Charles realized that the Camarilla and Sabbat knew only a fraction of what haunted the night. He met Cainites from India and Africa who held traditions and grudges that did not fit into the Sabbat's worldview of Jyhad. His agents collected information about the continent's shape-shifters, though very little about them made sense. Ghosts, sorcerers, things without a name — more than he had imagined.

If he could find so much in less than two centuries, how much did the Antediluvians know? How could he be sure that the Ancients limited their machinations to their childer?

Charles seeks to reshape the Sabbat as a disciplined army because only that, he thinks, can defeat the Ancients and whatever minions they may possess. The abyss mystics of his own clan frighten him because they deliberately open themselves to unknowable, alien powers. Serpent of the Light *houngans* and *koldun* sorcerers apparently make the same rash mistake. The Sword of Caine must not invite fifth columnists

into its centers of power! Charles helped unleash the Inquisition to purge the Sabbat of infernalism, and when he becomes regent, he intends to grant it even wider powers.

Charles also believes that the Sabbat must gain more influence over mortal business, politics and organized crime. He spends an hour a night with his revenant "man of affairs," trying to learn modern financial practice. Many Mexican city and federal officials know Charles as a rich man who can make or break careers, though they think he's a Mexican Mafia kingpin or old-money aristocrat.

The Lasombra elder stands 5'4" tall, with a stocky build, a square, bony face and a winning smile. He has shoulder-length auburn hair worn pinned back, and a short beard and mustache. He wears a brown suit and fedora, with flashy cufflinks, tie tack, watch-chain and jeweled rings. He loves fine clothes, though he refuses to change his wardrobe's style more than once every 50-100 years, and the last time came in 1935.

Charles dwells in a mansion in Lomas de Chapultepec. His old suit of armor stands by the main staircase (as he hasn't worn it in centuries). Hundreds of portraits further adorn the house: Once or twice a year, Charles hires a painter so he can see if his appearance has changed. It never has, but he still worries. When the burden of deceit grows too great, however, Charles retreats to a small, bare room paneled in mirrors. A few hours spent looking at the infinitely multiplied absence of himself leaves Charles drained and despairing enough to commit any treachery or abomination for the sake of power.

ELEISER DE POLANCO, ENVOY OF MOTHER SPAIN

7th generation, childe of Hector Aguilera

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Judge

Embrace: 1031

Apparent Age: late 30s

History is a strange mistress indeed. What, he often asks himself, is a Castilian *caballero* like Don Eleiser de Polanco doing walking around in the nights of the early 21st century? Certainly that was not the destiny he saw for himself in those far-off days of his mortal life, when he rode against the Moor and claimed lands for his family and lords. Visions of praying in medieval Toledo still come unbidden to his days of cold, dead slumber and he wakes an hour after dusk with a hunger for light he cannot admit to any of the monsters about him. But Fate has dealt this child of Castilla la Vieja the hand it has, and he has no choice but to play it.

A millennium ago, when he was first brought into the night, it was as service to lords more powerful than any king or caliph he had known. Then it was as the unliving power-broker of Toledo in the nights of the War of Princes, a time of conquest, intrigue and revelry that still brings a smile to his flawless face. But if that war was fought by princes like him, it was fought for elders who saw them all as game pieces to be sacrificed and consumed. The Camarilla calls the Third Generation a myth, but Don Polanco thrice traveled to Sicily to stare over Montano's shoulder at the Founder itself. The

darkness there was like nothing else, a hunger to consume absolutely everything. If that was what he served, de Polanco had no more interest in service. Thus when the flames of revolt spread across the clan, he stood with Gratiano and helped the great diablerist enter the Castle of Shadows to commit his great crime. He remembers with a chill the smile on the Eldest's face when the final act took place, the satisfaction that one of his childer had, at long last, bested his father.

Over the centuries, de Polanco has been accused many times of being an unliving relic. He flirted with unlife among the scattered *antitribu* immediately after the Convention of Thorns, but those wretches seemed only to dream of past glories. In the seventeenth century, he returned to the bosom of the clan and helped to found Los Reyes de las Sombras — the Kings of Shadow — a movement among Lasombra to salvage their tradition of subtle, quiet manipulation of humanity in the service of the purportedly inhuman Sabbat. Los Reyes brought reliable resources to the regent and cardinals, and a way to counter the efforts of the Camarilla. They also provided Lasombra elders with a way to ensure that the various Toreador *antitribu* and Tzimisce revenants didn't gain a stranglehold on mortal institutions in Sabbat domains. For de Polanco, Los Reyes gave him a way to serve his clan and advance the laudable goals of the sect (such as survival) while distancing himself from the petty tyrannies of crusades and the delusion of the Paths of Enlightenment.

Still a child of the Reconquista at heart, de Polanco moved to the wilder frontier of the New World soon after founding Los Reyes. This had the great advantage of putting distance between himself and Archbishop Monçada, whose power in Madrid was stifling. He operated out of Argentina, Chile and Peru, fighting the Camarilla when necessary, and always ensuring that a certain amount of the colonial revenues made it into Sabbat coffers. First sea and then air transport made his existence far more mobile in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and he abandoned holding specific territory, becoming an emissary at large for those cardinals who understood the importance of a pliable mortal herd and the usefulness of a flush bank account.

When Monçada, by then a cardinal, ended up on the losing side of an Assamite's blade in 2000, de Polanco held a quiet Blood Feast in which the victims were all priests he deemed corrupt. He flirted with the idea of settling in Spain again, perhaps in Toledo, but fate had other things in store for him. He participated in the Court of Blood that judged Monçada's childe Lucita, an infamous *antitribu*, for complicity in the death of her sire. He watched her make, and perhaps helped along, the same realization he had made so long ago: that despite its numerous faults and excesses, the Sabbat was really the only hope a Lasombra had to survive these Final Nights. He supported her in assuming Monçada's old archbishopric, and when she looked for a representative in Mexico, he stepped forward.

De Polanco has been in Mexico less than a year and spent most of it untwisting the knots of rivalries and paranoia that grip the sect's heart. Lucita's main concern

has been to be left alone to cement her new position, and in that de Polanco has served her well. His analysis that the Sabbat hold on much of the East Coast of the United States is largely untenable in the long term was met with scoffs and challenges from some, but quiet understanding from the cardinals who authorized the Kings of Shadow to undertake some efforts to stabilize the situation — efforts de Polanco had already initiated months earlier. He has also supported those focusing on strengthening other Sabbat holdings, such as Detroit, Montreal and even Mexico itself, to avoid another debacle like the fall of New York. In arguing his case, he has come to suspect that Regent Galbraith has somehow become a thrall to the Salamanca brood of Grimaldi revenants, to whom she allows a great deal of freedom and protects with an iron hand. This bears further investigation.

ZADKIEL BEN ARON, THE ABYSS MYSTIC

Background: Zadkiel's history extends long before his birth. When Spain and Portugal expelled their Sephardic Jewish populations, many Sephardim fled to Brazil, where they discovered that country's diamond mines. Later, Portugal purged Brazil in turn. The re-exiled Jews moved to the Low Countries and New York, bringing the diamond trade with them. This time, however, the Portuguese missed a few Sephardim who pretended to convert to Roman Catholicism. A few false *conversos* stayed in the diamond trade and became very rich. Zadkiel was born to a family of these "hidden Jews." His family's wealth enabled him to seek a first-rate education in Holland — ostensibly as a lawyer, but also as a rabbi.

Another group fled Iberia along with the Sephardim. At about the same time, the Sabbat Lasombra tightened their grip on the Iberian night. Some of the nascent Lasombra *antitribu* hid among other exiles to establish lineages in Brazil. One such lineage chose Zadkiel for his erudition.

The Schichiriel lineage followed an abyssal version of the mystical Kabbalah, which was itself another export



with the Sephardim. Kabbalism speaks of 10 "emanations" that manifest aspects of the otherwise unknowable Godhead. For every light, however, there is a shadow. One school of kabbalism posits that each positive emanation from God creates a corresponding negative emanation of sin, evil and unbeing. The Schichiriel, the Black Ones of God, pursued mystic comprehension of divinity through these negative emanations or *qlippoth*, for they believed that God contained all evil as well as all good.

The Sabbat found South America difficult to invade, in part because of the Lasombra *antitribu*. In 1803, however, a Lasombra came to Brazil who could match the *antitribu* in cunning and exceed them at lies. Charles Delmare, sixth Cainite to attempt the cardinalcy of South America, deceived the Schichiriel and destroyed them. Zadkiel alone survived by selling himself to Charles.

The grim rabbi served the Sabbat cardinal throughout his tenure — as faithfully as Montano served the Lasombra Antediluvian, some said. When Charles' junta broke up in the aftermath of the third Sabbat civil war, Charles left his advisor in Brazil. Several years later, however, Zadkiel came to Mexico City on his own.

In the ensuing decades, Charles found no reason to suppose that his former advisor resented being cast aside. Zadkiel became Mexico City's leading teacher of abyss mysticism, and a spiritual advisor to young and old Lasombra.

Zadkiel rarely involves himself in Sabbat politics and eschews Jihad. He speaks only to defend the interests of other Cainites who prefer mysticism to fighting the Camarilla. Other Lasombra awarded him a bishop's recognition simply because they thought a Keeper of his age and power should own a title. Zadkiel himself uses no title except "rabbi." He and Efraín Sortano feel a cool, distant solidarity because of their teaching roles and neutrality in sect politics.

The abyss mystic is not an easy Cainite to find as he stalks the city as a shadow. The persistent seeker finds Zadkiel ready to counsel any Cainite (Sabbat or otherwise) who suffers under the burden of undeath. Zadkiel explains the Shadow Side of God. He teaches the Path of Night in all its forms, and knows enough about other Paths to counsel their followers as well.

Image: Zadkiel seldom resumes the form of a man. Even then, a subtle chill and shadow follow him. He seems dark, despite the pallor of his skin. He stands 5'8" tall, with a slender build and short, gray hair slicked back from a receding hairline. He dresses all in black, with a flapping black overcoat. Zadkiel prefers to spend his nights transformed into a shadow. In this form he looks like a gaunt, manlike silhouette of darkness when he walks or stands. When he moves quickly, his overcoat swirls out like a cowl and his head looks distinctly birdlike. Feral Claws used while hunting make him look even more like a huge, predatory bird of tangible darkness.

Roleplaying Hints: You haunt the city as a cold enigma that swoops from the shadows to clutch and feed. Sometimes you erase your victim's memory. Sometimes you leave your victim in terror to remember darkness, the Kiss and your

warning to fear God for death can come at any time. Logically dissect the Cainites and kine you meet, to show them the selfish passions and weaknesses that drive their choices. If they wish to improve themselves, help them, no matter what they consider improvement. You do not condemn evil; you condemn *thoughtless* evil. If a person resists self-examination, inflict all the terror and misery you can devise until he makes a definite moral choice, even if it is suicide. You do not command any other Cainite except in self-defense: Let them make their own choices, and endure the consequences.

Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Aron ben Aretz

Nature: Guru

Demeanor: Deviant

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1749

Apparent Age: early 40s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Instruction 4, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 3, Performance 2, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Academics 3, Cryptography 2, Expert Knowledge (Talmud) 2, Law 1, Linguistics 3 (Hebrew, Portuguese, Dutch, English), Occult 5, Sabbat Lore 4

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Dominate 5, Obfuscate 2, Obtenebration 5, Potence 2, Protean 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Rituals 1, Sabbat Status 3

Virtues: Conviction 4, Instinct 3, Courage 2

Morality: Path of Night 6

Willpower: 8

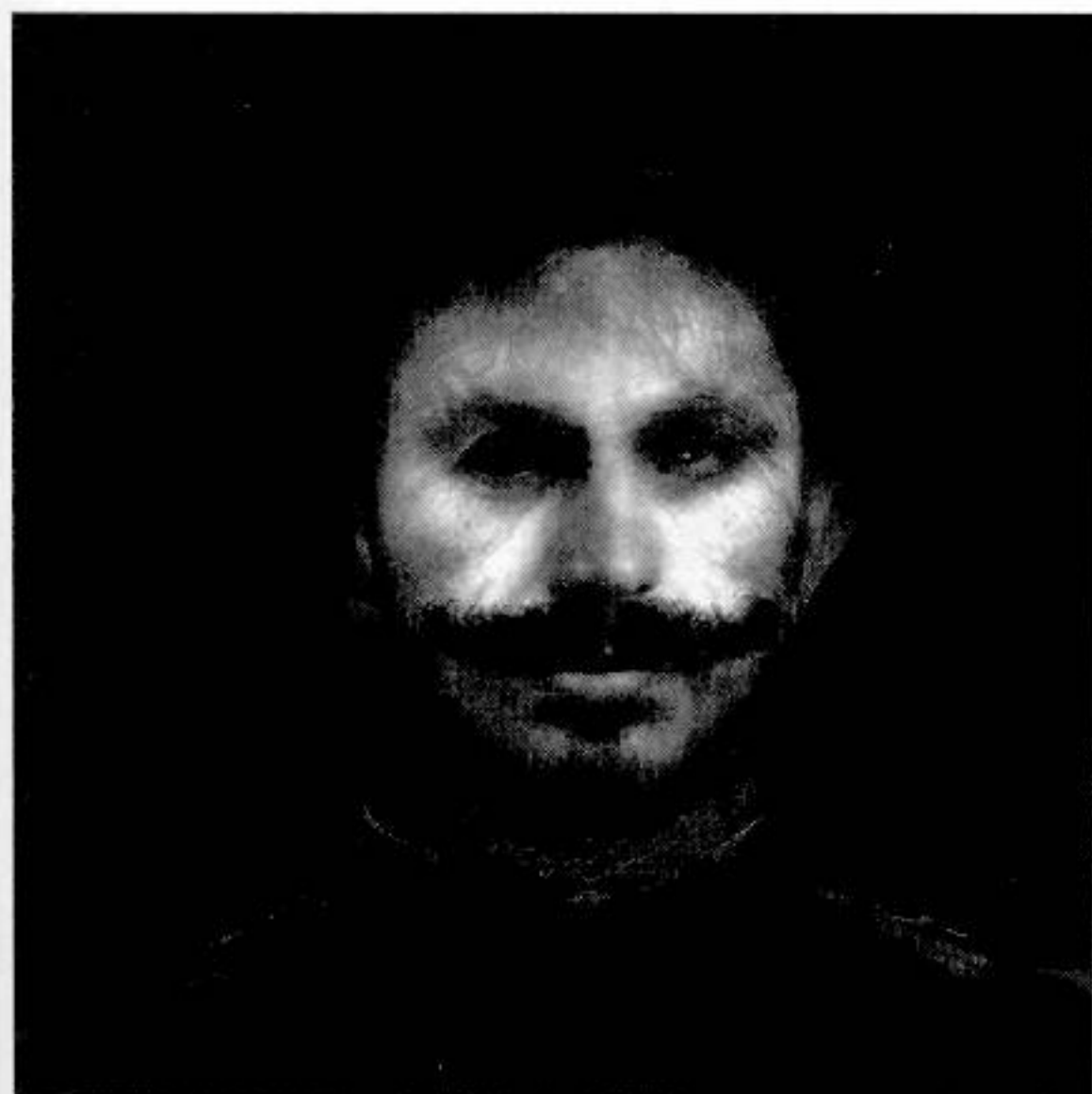
Merits/Flaws: Controllable Night Sight (see **Clanbook: Lasombra**). Zadkiel can see in darkness and shadow as if they were light, but light obscures his vision as if it were darkness. He can turn this condition on and off at will.

CAPTAIN ISIDRO DE SALDANHA, BISHOP WITH A BADGE

Background: Someone has to keep the cops in line. Although most of the Sabbat fun and games take place in the slums, now and then a pack commits an atrocity that the mortal authorities cannot easily ignore... but Isidro de Saldanha helps them.

Isidro was a mortal captain among Porfirio Díaz's federal police. He broke strikes by breaking strikers' heads. He kept the poor from bothering the rich. He recognized that some laws do not apply to some people, and he received money in return for his discretion. He had a wife, a mistress and several stout children.

Then his children died, one by one. His wife left him for a button-maker. His mistress gave him gonorrhea. She was the mistress of several other men as well. Captain Isidro's scowl grew fiercer and prisoners in his precinct did not always survive his interrogations. His men trembled when he walked by.



At last the author of his misery revealed himself. Don Vicente had tested a dozen other policemen that year, and only Captain Isidro had not broken. As a reward, Isidro would receive a new assignment in service to Mexico's true masters. Of course the captain tried to kill Don Vicente, but the Cainite knocked the gun from his hand, laughing, and held Isidro as helpless as a puppy while he drained the policeman's blood. As compensation, Don Vicente let his new childe vent his frustration on his former wife and mistress, held ready for Isidro's first meal.

Isidro learned to obey his new masters. He mastered the arts of memory-manipulation, bureaucratic snafu and making evidence disappear. As Mexico City grew, Isidro recruited assistants to help with the workload. They became Las Emblemas — the Badges. The consistory rewarded him with the title of ductus, and then bishop, but he still prefers "Captain."

The Sabbat's policeman does not speak of the quandary that he has never resolved. Captain Isidro believes in order and protecting those in power from the rabble. His job demands that he protect rabble — and he sees that the packs running wild through Mexico City *are* rabble — from the mortal authorities. He has not lost his distaste for small-time mortal criminals, either. Whenever possible, Captain Isidro sets up mortal drug-pushers, muggers, purse-snatchers or gangsters to take the fall for the Sabbat's depredations. He openly supports the Ultra-Conservative cause, in hopes that a centralized Sabbat would rein in the sect's more brutal and crazed members.

Image: Captain Isidro is a large, strong man with a pronounced gut, a fleshy face and a heroically bristling black mustache. He usually wears some sort of uniform, from a modern police captain to a sewer inspector, all with the appropriate documentation.

Roleplaying Hints: Animals and filth. You're surrounded by animals and filth. Speak deferentially to Sabbat of higher rank, but let the rabble know that you expect obedience from

them. The first punk who mouths off gets his arm broken. That usually keeps the rest in line, even if broken bones don't mean as much to the undead. And the next smartass who hears your pack's name and brays out "Badges? We don't need no steenking badges!" gets his guts ripped out — those lessons from your Gangrel deputy have really paid off.

Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Don Vicente Ortiz y Peralta

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Soldier

Generation: 13th

Embrace: 1906

Apparent Age: late 30s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 1, Brawl 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 1, Firearms 3, Security 1

Knowledges: Area Knowledge (Mexico City) 2, Investigation 3, Law 3, Politics 1, Underworld Lore 2

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 3, Potence 3, Protean 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 5, Influence 2, Sabbat Status 2

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 2, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 4

CARIDAD DE FLORES, THE FLOWER OF NIGHT

Background: The Cainite who now calls herself "Charity of Flowers" has won unusual respect for such a young vampire; she was Embraced only 70-odd years ago. She distinguishes herself as a member of the Black Hand and as a priestess and teacher of the Cathari Path. She calls herself a gardener.

Caridad's story began in the 1920s. She came from a very rich family and turned her young life into an endless round of dances, parties and cruises. She spent as much time in Paris, New York and the nascent Hollywood as in her native Mexico City. When she returned to her home town, she taught her more straight-laced, traditionally Catholic peers how the '20s roared. Yes, she shocked them... but they usually invited her back.

The Great Depression struck Mexico as well as the U.S. There would be no more cruises to Europe or dancing 'til dawn for Caridad. Instead, her father arranged for her to marry an older man whom he wanted as a business associate.

Her husband treated Caridad as a treasure, something to show off to other men then lock away. She loathed him. Cut off from her old social set, Caridad returned to her childhood interest of gardening. With little else to pass her time, she became very good at it. Seducing visitors and their male servants became a spiteful second hobby, just so she could soil her husband's "treasure." When Caridad could not stand her husband anymore, she combined her interests. She easily duped the butler into giving the old man a poison she concocted herself.

Caridad was not quite clever enough. The butler had loose lips; the police found the residue of the poison. Caridad faced a noose and the lusts of her jailers. She then received a nighttime visit from Donna Fería. Her situation intrigued the older vampire. Caridad agreed to become Donna Fería's childe in return for an escape from jail and hanging.

Over the decades, Caridad learned the mysteries of the Path of Cathari and abyss mysticism. She identified strongly with Persephone, the Greek goddess of the underworld, a flower-maiden consigned to a world of death. Over the decades, Caridad drifted away from Donna Fería to associate with several packs. She quietly established her own haven, traveled now and then, and learned how to poison the undead as well as the living. Eventually someone in the Black Hand noticed Caridad's talents and she became an associate to that subset of warriors and assassins.

Caridad now plays several roles. She serves the PDI as pack priest. She introduces neonates to the Path of Cathari, and guides them along the Path as best she can. She supplies drugs to addicted Cainites. The Assamite sorcerer Ikraam depends on her for the *kalif* drug that he uses in his blood-magic. Once in a while the Black Hand calls on Caridad to poison some "Kindred" that it wants destroyed.

Caridad prefers, however, to stay near her mansion in Xochimilco. A gate opens from her extensive, walled garden onto one of Xochimilco's canals. The mansion's windows are bricked up on the inside, with cunning paintings on the glass to counterfeit views of an interior. Caridad removed most of the interior floors to create a second, indoor garden lit by grow-lamps. Flowers, shrubs and vines twine around and through the cadavers of her victims, and perfume mingles with the stench of rot. Many of the flowers are black or odd silver-gray hues. In the center grows a pomegranate tree that Caridad fertilizes with her own vitae. The garden also includes potent, drug-producing plants, of which opium poppies and mandrakes are the least exotic. Among the

plants and cadavers loll a dozen or so mortal addicts, stupefied by drugs and the gifts of the Damned.

Few Sabbat consider the Charity of Flowers much of a political player. The elders may employ her in the short term, but they think that she is too erratic to make much of a long-term ally or serious rival. Caridad does not want to be thought ambitious. The local Black Hand leaders know better, but they realize that Caridad seeks the sort of behind-the-scenes influence that does not make her a target for Monomacies.

Image: The Charity of Flowers has pale skin, an oval face, jet-black hair worn long and loose and a somewhat zaftig figure. She wears loose robes or caftans of translucent black silk, a silver pomegranate pin and flowers in her hair.

Roleplaying Hints: Never explain your actions. Seem to pursue one pleasure after another without rhyme or reason. Pepper your speech with enigmatic *non sequiturs* about sex, death and flowers. Give random gifts of flowers. Nobody else knows whether you pursue a plan or simply pursue some nihilistic new debauch.

Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Donna Fería

Nature: Enigma

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Generation: 11th

Embrace: 1935

Apparent Age: early 30s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Intimidation 4, Leadership 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 3, Melee 1, Performance 3, Professional Skill (gardening) 4, Security 1, Vamp 4

Knowledges: Academics 1, Black Hand Lore 2, Linguistics (English, French) 2, Medicine 1, Occult 4, Science 3

Disciplines: Dominate 4, Obtenebration 3, Presence 1

Backgrounds: Black Hand Membership 2, Herd 3, Resources 2, Rituals 3, Sabbat Status 2

Virtues: Conviction 4, Instinct 3, Courage 3

Morality: Path of Cathari 5

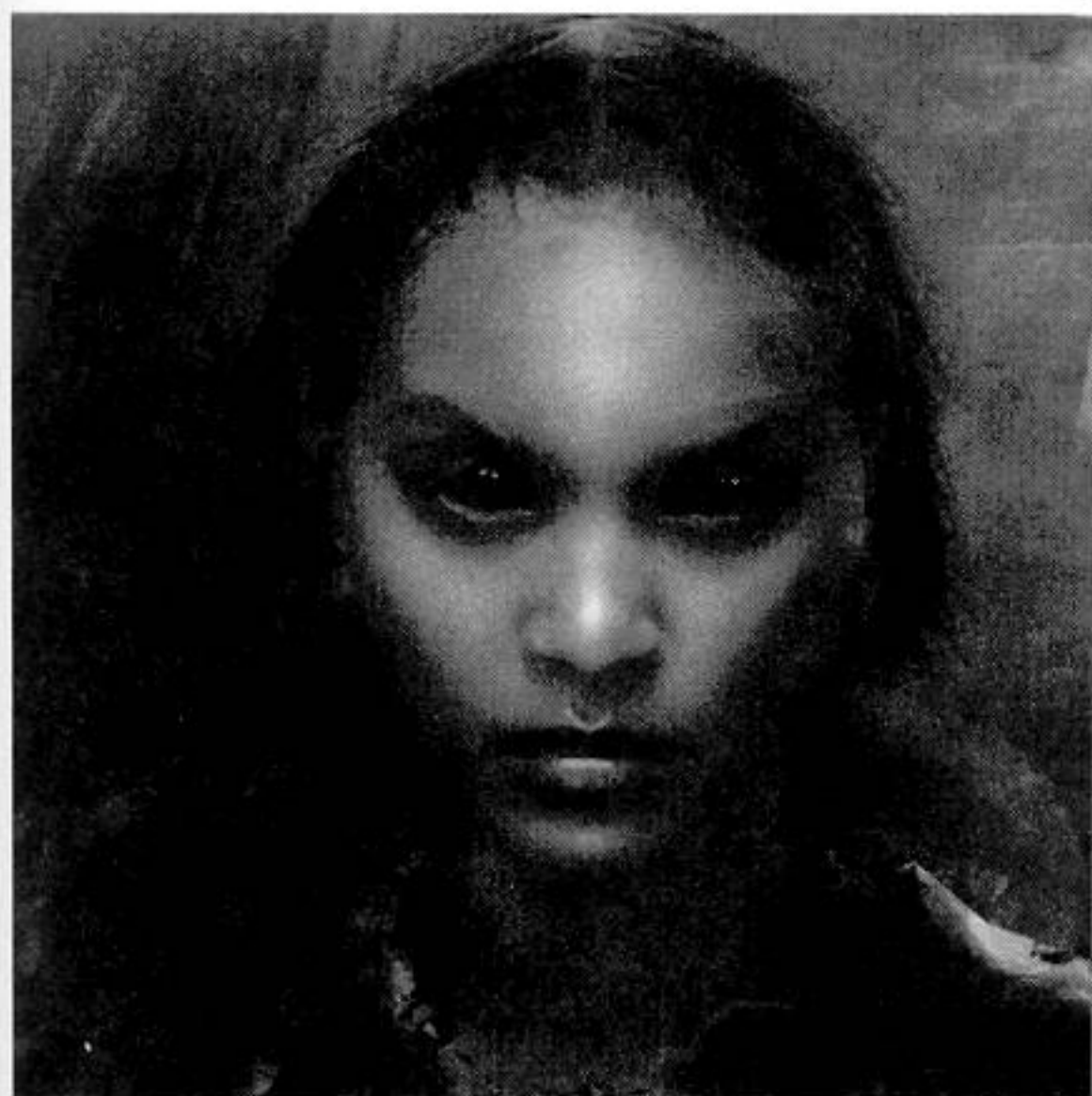
Willpower: 6

CLOVA HAINES, THE CAPITALIST OF CAINE

Background: Clova Haines' parents moved from Jamaica to New York. She worked hard to escape the slums and, in time, earned a business degree and found work at a brokerage house. She could not imagine that one of her clients was a Lasombra bishop in the retinue of Archbishop Polonia. Her work sufficiently impressed the bishop, however, and he made her his personal financial manager. She spent 10 years as the bishop's doting ghoul before Polonia ordered her Embraced to better capitalize upon her service.

A few years later the Camarilla drove the Sabbat from New York City. Clova was the only survivor from the bishop's pack because she felt less blood-inspired loyalty to





the other members. She ran, hid and finally walked to New Jersey along the bottom of the Hudson River.

Clova faced the choice of regrouping with Polonia or setting out on her own. She chose the latter course. Of all the Sabbat-held cities, which offered financial opportunities to match New York? Clova decided to aim high and seek her fortune in Mexico City itself.

Soon after Clova arrived, she realized that her place in Polonia's extended staff had insulated her from the more brutal and raucous aspects of the Sabbat. Mexico City showed her violence and madness beyond anything she imagined — but where could she go? The New York assault showed her what the Camarilla did to her kind. She attended every *ritus* she could find and offered her services as a financial planner to the Sons and Daughters of Caine. Most Cainites jeered, but not all. Even better, she found the Calpulli Rojo coven, which existed specifically for idiosyncratic Cainites like herself.

Clova Haines now operates the Grupo Triskelion, or "Triskelion Group," out of a basement office in Satellite City. (The company name holds no special significance. Clova simply liked the three-legged triskelion symbol and thought the name sounded intriguing.) Clova has two mortal employees in her thrall, a bed in a back room and a small but growing list of Cainite clients. As her clients discover the pride and pleasure of wealth, the jeering diminishes. Clova looks forward to the night when prisci and archbishops give her the investment capital to grow into a major investment firm.

Image: Clova is a dark-skinned woman with crinkly, dark-brown hair that she pulls back in a bun. She dresses in business suits during work hours. When Clova attends *ritae* to drum up business, she loosens up a bit.

Roleplaying Hints: Don't let that blood-gods-of-the-night shit impress you, or that end-of-the-world shit frighten you. Most of these guys couldn't balance a checkbook without setting it on fire; if they weren't Cainites, they'd be on welfare or in jail. They *need* you, but just don't know it

yet, so let the mockery bounce off your austere smile. Share the blood, yeah, sure, play along with the rituals so they'll talk to you. Ditch the jacket, it's too formal. It's not too different from the wilder parties you remember from college, after all, or the loopier bonding-games the consultants had you play. Think of it as networking. Everybody's dancing, so join in. Really, some of them are okay beneath the bragging. Laugh at the jokes, let your hair down. Jump the fire? Why not? It's kind of fun, really. Oh my, how did you end up naked and covered in blood-sweat? Ahem. Better find a shower or a towel before you return to the office.

Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Hector Wilson

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Capitalist

Generation: 12th

Embrace: 1994

Apparent Age: 28

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Expression 1, Leadership 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 1, Fire Dancing 1

Knowledges: Academics 3, Computer 3, Finance 4, Law 2, Linguistics 1 (Spanish), Politics 1

Disciplines: Dominate 2, Obtenebation 1, Potence 1

Backgrounds: Resources 2, Retainers 2

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 3, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 4

TZIMISCE

SZECHENYI JOLÁN, MOTHER OF HORRORS

6th generation, childe of Baian

Clan: Tzimisce

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1150

Apparent Age: late 20s

Jolán carries both great shame and great honor in her lineage. By Embrace, she descends from Lugo the Bond-Breaker. By birth, she comes from the Vlaszy family — Hungarian revenants who fought Lugo's rebels and were utterly destroyed. For six centuries, Jolán has used her mother's surname of Szechenyi (Hungarians traditionally place the surname first). Ever since her kin's destruction, Jolán has striven to prove herself a loyal Sabbat and scion of her clan.

Her diligence brought Jolán political and supernatural power. She performed several prestigious diableries. Her knowledge of Tzimisce history and tradition has few equals. She assisted Velya the Vivisectionist, the Sabbat's

mightiest *koldun*, in developing a purely Discipline-based method of generating the terrible *vozhd* war-ghouls. For this she gained her nickname as the Mother of Horrors. She also supervises the breeding of Mexico City's revenants, and her oversight prevents the Grimaldi from suffering the same physical and mental degradation as the Bratovitches and the Zantos. Few Tzimisce wield greater influence in a Consistory's debates, or attend more frequently.

It isn't enough. Jolán knows that some among her clan still consider her blood tainted. She must show them all that she is true Tzimisce, *perfect* Tzimisce, and so she defends her clan's traditions and heritage at every opportunity. She supports every Tzimisce's right to absolute power within his chosen domain, no matter what his age or generation. This makes her a standard-bearer for the Moderate faction.

For all that Jolán gives lip service to the war against the Camarilla and the Ancients, she does not believe that Gehenna is nigh or that the Sabbat must regiment itself. She takes pride in her many enemies among the Ultra-Conservative faction, for a Tzimisce is known by the enemies she defies and destroys... and destroy them she will, when she completes her great work.

The Mother of Horrors collects children born with major birth defects. She brings them to a tiny hamlet called Sechenia in the mountains southeast of Mexico City. About 20 people seem to live in Sechenia; the actual number is closer to 60, but the others dwell in a labyrinth of subcellars and tunnels that connect Jolán's hacienda to the adobe houses clustered around it.

Jolán subjects all the children to her blood bond. She corrects the deformities of some adoptees so they can farm and support the others. The strongest and healthiest children grow up to become her ghoul bodyguards. On rare occasions, Jolán even Embraces one of her deformed orphans. These children form her coven, and Jolán destroys any other Cainite who enters her village. Jolán protects her children and children as they protect her, and they love her very much.

The Mother of Horrors does not collect deformed children out of mere eccentricity. She believes that revenants bred from such stock would possess a greater potential for Vicissitude — perhaps enough to learn the Discipline beyond a minimal capacity without the need for low-generation Cainite vitae. Her experiment has not yet succeeded. Jolán now offers a reward for a living Lupine, werecat or other shape-shifter. She hopes that breeding them into the lineage will unlock the human form from stasis and create a revenant of perfect mutability. Jolán believes that such an achievement will establish her as a paragon of her clan... and in the meantime, she has abundant starter material for *vozhd*. Jolán knows that the spectacle of a *vozhd* or three devouring her enemies will also enhance her reputation.

Jolán also owns a house in Coyoacán, staffed by a pair of her ghouls. She uses it for meetings with other Cainites and revenants. If Jolán is not in residence, petitioners may ask the ghouls to send her a message requesting an audience.

The Mother of Horrors prefers to look young, beautiful, female and mostly human, but everything else can vary. Her favorite nonhuman forms are snake-haired Medusa and the avian wings and legs of a harpy. She seldom wears more than a plain white robe. Jolán often appears at consistories carrying a severely deformed infant — armless or legless, conjoined twins, or the like — whom she suckles with vitae from her breast. Jolán also keeps a half-dozen ghoul bodyguards nearby. She reshapes them into Greek-god icons of masculine beauty, or semi-human mythological creatures such as headless blemmyes or one-legged sciapods.

EFRAÍN SORTANO, THE ZOOKEEPER

Background: Mexico City's Sabbat call Efraín Sortano the Zookeeper because he claims the zoo in Chapultepec Park as his personal domain. Any Cainite who wishes to hunt in the zoo, or feed upon (or play with) its animals, must join the Zookeeper in a *Vaulderie*. Sortano is easy to meet: Just sit quietly on a bench in the zoo, and Sortano will notice you within the hour.

Sortano was Embraced more than two centuries ago. He speaks little of his past or his sire, but he claims that the great naturalist and explorer Alexander Humboldt set him on his path as a Metamorphosist. The Zookeeper still calls Humboldt the greatest man he ever met, even if the naturalist was only mortal. Sortano decided that to discover the secret of transcending vampirism, he must understand the animal world from whence humanity emerged. As he puts it, "You must start at the base of the mountain before you can scale the heights." Before Sortano learned the shapeshifting arts of the Gangrel, he used Vicissitude to warp his own body into animal forms. He also reshaped one animal into the form of another, people into animals, or animals into people — all to discover how much an animal's character survived changes of form. He seized the zoo as his domain so he could study animals from around the world.

The Zookeeper's twisted pets proved so useful to the Black Hand that he became a dominion in that august body. When stalking and diablerizing Camarilla elders lost his interest, Sortano attained renown as an exemplar of Metamorphosist research. The consistory appointed Sortano to the rank of *priscus* specifically to represent the interests of the sect's other Metamorphosists. Although the Sabbat includes many older and far more powerful Metamorphosists, most of them are too detached from worldly affairs to attend consistory meetings.

The very factors that make Sortano known as a great Metamorphosist ironically limit his advancement in that Path. The Zookeeper cannot keep the Path's injunction not to teach. Would-be Metamorphosists find Sortano a reliable but challenging mentor. He tries to send his pupils into learning experiences — such as forcing them into new forms for a week or so — instead of lecturing them about the Path's philosophy. The city's Sabbat also recognize the Zookeeper as a teacher of Disciplines, not least because he occasionally instructs non-Tzimisce in Vicissitude.



Both mortal and Cainite politics bore Sortano. He wields some influence over the zoo's policy and funding, but he uses other Sabbat as proxies. Although Sortano is less active in the Black Hand than he once was, now and then he supplies an animal war-ghoul or reshapes a Cainite soldier into some deadly abomination. As the Sabbat's youngest priscus, representing an interest group whose members tend toward isolation, the Zookeeper's voice carries little weight in consistory intrigues. Only a sense of duty to his fellow Metamorphosists keeps Sortano showing up for consistories.

Sortano commands more power than the other prisci realize, though. Dozens of Sabbat neonates and ancillae around the world owe him boons for his instruction. Mexico City's followers of the Feral Heart Path respect Sortano as well. Sortano's "pack" is a loose assortment of his students or Cainites with an interest in the zoo. Most of them are Tzimisce and Gangrel *antitribu*; he is also a member of the University of Night. He can claim five prestigious diableries of other Cainites, two of which lowered his generation. His most recent diablerie (in 1978) destroyed a priscus who had threatened to slay him. Perhaps most importantly, large numbers of Mexico City's nighttime animals — the feral cats and dogs, the bats and rats — obey Sortano and serve as his Contacts. So far, Sortano remains neutral in the Sabbat's political disputes.

Image: The Zookeeper seldom looks the same from week to week. He takes one animal or half-animal form after another, but retains speech in all of them. He rarely takes a fully human form, and no longer remembers what he looked like in life. A hidden locker in the zoo's maintenance tunnels holds a change of nineteenth-century clothing, which Sortano wears on the rare occasions when he must impersonate a mortal; he prefers to look like an animal.

Roleplaying Hints: You prefer animals to your fellow Cainites, except for your students. Two centuries are not enough to plumb all the mysteries of the animal world, even

when you can see them from the inside. You are extremely possessive and protective of the zoo, and keep it stocked with fine specimens of rare species. Dozens of animals in the zoo, and other zoos around the world, used to be humans before you experimented on them. Sleep in the earth using your Cainite powers, to stay closer to the natural world.

Clan: Tzimisce

Sire: Fyodor Andreyev

Nature: Pedagogue

Demeanor: Deviant

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1780

Apparent Age: indeterminate

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Instruction 3, Intimidation 3

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Body Crafts 4, Fire Dancing 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Linguistics 2 (German, Russian), Medicine 2, Occult 1, Science 4

Disciplines: Animalism 4, Auspex 2, Fortitude 2, Protean 4, Vicissitude 4

Backgrounds: Black Hand Membership 2, Contacts 4, Influence 1, Sabbat Status 4

Virtues: Conviction 3, Instincts 4, Courage 3

Morality: Path of Metamorphosis 6

Willpower: 6

Note: The Zookeeper possesses a combination Discipline power that enables him to take the form of any animal or bird between the size of a buffalo and a rabbit. See "Shape of All Beasts" in Chapter Five.

DR. VERMUDO DE SANCHA, PAIN SCIENTIST

Background: Most Sabbat know the infamous Sascha Vykos as the paragon of the Path of Death and the Soul, but few see that august priscus up close or for long. When most Mexico City neonates think of Death and the Soul, they think of Dr. de Sancha, and Sabbat of other clans consider him an ideal, archetypal Tzimisce.

When the Tzimisce naturalist Efraín Sortano decided that he needed to learn more about modern forensic medicine, he picked a doctor to teach him. Vermudo de Sancha, MD taught medicine at UNAM, Mexico's premier university. Sortano picked de Sancha after hearing the doctor explain the necessity of animal vivisection in medical research and training. Better that dogs and monkeys and guinea pigs suffer, he said, than that humans die. Medical discoveries came only through direct observation of actual living creatures.

Sortano made Dr. de Sancha his ghoul for several years. Eventually the force of the Blood and the strain of serving a monster took its toll on de Sancha's sanity. His experiments, teaching and opinions became... erratic. When two faculty members walked in on Dr. de Sancha

vivisecting a man while explaining points of interest to a large dog, the doctor's career was over. Sortano — the dog — knew it was time either to kill or Embrace his ghoul, and he chose the latter course.

The Zookeeper hoped that his childe would follow him into Metamorphosist research. Over the years, however, de Sancha drifted into different research priorities. He found the Death and the Soul philosophy more appropriate to his work. His fervent research earned him the nickname of *El Torcedor*, the Twister, from other Sabbat.

De Sancha now spends his nights in a grisly quest to understand how pain and mutilation affect the mind, in both the short and long terms. He has attained some renown as an interrogator. Sabbat consult de Sancha when they cannot force a person to talk through Disciplines, or simply want to break an enemy's will.

Image: Unlike many Tzimisce, Dr. de Sancha never uses Vicissitude to alter his appearance. As he says, he's a scientist, not a sideshow freak. He remains a small, neat man with gray hair and a short mustache. He wears a gray business suit, a white lab coat or a green surgical smock.

Roleplaying Hints: Remain courteous, even solicitous, while you inflict horrible mutilations on your victims. Carefully record their suffering. Administer tests before and after, to measure how their mental abilities change. If anyone asks why you study pain and death, explain that you do not cause gratuitous suffering; it's only to help you understand the vampiric condition. It's better that kine suffer than that Cainites suffer Final Death or wasteful torpor because no one knew how to treat them. You haven't actually found purely surgical procedures that help wounded Cainites, but you do not give up hope.

Cainites or kine who enter your operating theater willingly can leave healthy and whole. Anyone who deliberately asks for your medical help is a *patient*, not a lab animal, and entitled to the protection of the Hippocratic Oath — even



against other Cainites. Mortal patients, however, receive merely mundane care, without the use of Vicissitude.

Clan: Tzimisce

Sire: Efraín Sortano

Nature: Scientist

Demeanor: Monster

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1943

Apparent Age: mid-40s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 2, Empathy 1, Interrogation 4

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Body Crafts 3, Etiquette 1, Melee 1

Knowledges: Academics 3, Investigation 2, Linguistics 2 (English, German), Medicine 4, Occult 1, Science 3

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Auspex 4, Vicissitude 3

Backgrounds: Herd 2, Resources 4, Sabbat Status 2

Virtues: Conviction 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 2

Morality: Path of Death and the Soul 5

Willpower: 5

FATHER YOEL ROSEN, SIN-EATER

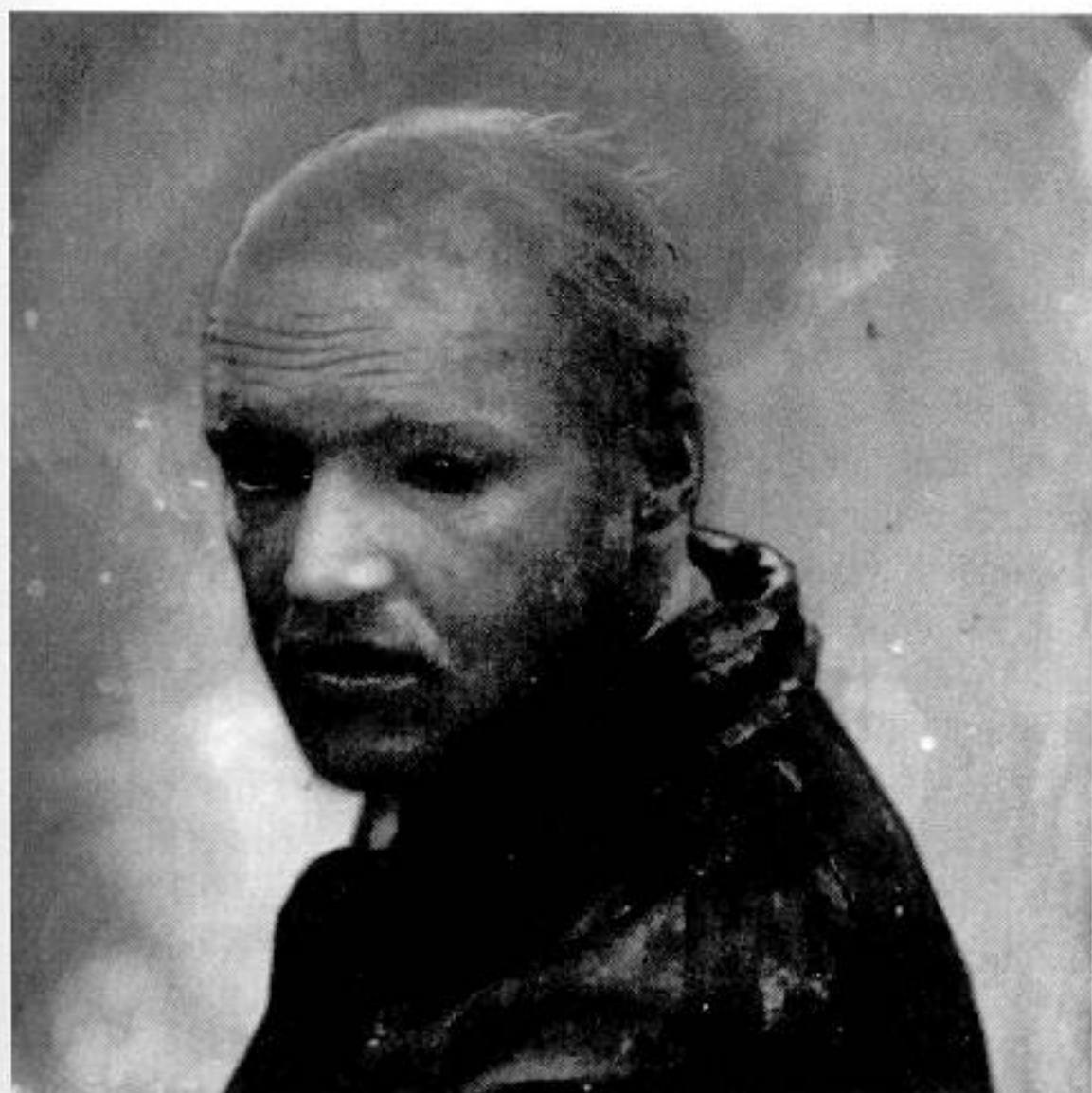
Background: The Tzimisce researcher Dr. de Sancha sought to test mortal piety. He abducted a dozen kine who seemed more than usually religious, and tortured them. One by one his test subjects cursed God, and Dr. de Sancha gave them the release of death. At last only Father Yoel Rosen remained alive. This elderly priest's faith seemed to grow as the torment continued. One night he forgave his torturer, and his forgiveness scalded Dr. de Sancha like fire. Fascinating!

One experiment remained: To pit Rosen's faith against the Curse of Caine directly. Dr. de Sancha Embraced Father Rosen. The priest knew he was damned the first time he fed, and saw the child he had slain in his hunger. He prayed that God might strike him dead. His prayer was not answered.

Father Rosen tried to starve himself, but his hunger always overpowered his will in the end. In the long nights, he prayed unceasingly for forgiveness or destruction. At last, miserable and near torpor, Father Rosen received a vision of Christ on the cross, suffering to take sin from humanity. The priest's dead flesh rippled as wounds appeared on his hands. As Rosen stared at his stigmata, his sire tossed a kidnapped beggar into his cell. Rosen reflexively fell on the poor girl like a starving dog — and his mind broke.

Dr. de Sancha eventually decided that he could learn nothing more from his mad childe. He found Father Rosen a place in a pack that shared the priest's religious devotion... or something like it, anyway. After a few years, the pack's priest fell into Wassail and had to be destroyed. Father Rosen took over as the new pack priest. So far the Machete Cross pack seems satisfied with their eccentric spiritual leader.

Father Rosen now believes that when he feeds, he takes his victim's sins along with their blood. Anyone slain by him dies in a state of grace. Greater love hath no



man than to give up his life for another, the Gospel says, and sacrificing one's life for faith is holy martyrdom. When he hunts, Father Rosen makes himself look like a conventional portrait of a saint. One night he might look like St. Jerome, an old, balding man. Another night he takes the guise of St. Roche, a young man with a sore on his leg. Since people occasionally see Father Rosen and live, the Mexican police receive some highly peculiar crime reports — which they ignore as too ridiculous to investigate. Somebody saw St. Francis of Assisi bite a guy's neck? Obviously they were drunk, on drugs or playing a sick prank.

Image: In his own form, Father Rosen looks like a short, elderly man with a fringe of short, gray hair around his bald pate. He wears the typical sober black of a Catholic priest unless he performs Mass for his pack, in which case he assumes full vestments. When he hunts, he warps his flesh to look like one of the better-known saints and dresses to match. The Machete Cross haven includes a room full of various gowns, habits and props suitable for each saint. For instance, when he dresses up as St. Benedict he wears a black habit and miter, pins on a corsage of thorn bush, and carries a stuffed raven. As St. Clara (he does female saints too), he wears a brown Franciscan habit and black veil, and carries a lily.

Roleplaying Hints: React to what people say with dreamy detachment. Quote or misquote Scripture, if you can think of anything remotely relevant to the topic at hand. (Storytellers: A Bible concordance or online search can give you every line that mentions blood. Write them down and keep them handy.) Pause in your feeding to absolve your victims of their sins. Use your Vicissitude to perform the occasional "miraculous" healing of the wounded, or feed a sick person your blood to make them a ghoul for a month. It's the closest you can come to healing the sick.

Clan: Tzimisce
Sire: Dr. Vermudo de Sancha
Nature: Deviant
Demeanor: Caregiver
Generation: 11th
Embrace: 1987
Apparent Age: late 50s
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Talents: Empathy 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Leadership 2
Skills: Body Crafts 3, Etiquette 2, Performance 3
Knowledges: Academics 3, Expert Knowledge (Catholic Theology) 3, Linguistics 1, Medicine 2
Disciplines: Auspex 1, Presence 1, Vicissitude 3
Backgrounds: Herd 2, Rituals 1, Sabbat Status 1
Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 2, Courage 3
Morality: Humanity 4
Willpower: 7

Derangements: Sanguinary Animism, Fugue. Father Yoel hears "confessions" from his victims. Under extreme stress he produces stigmata and recites the Lord's Prayer and Catholic liturgy.

ESTEBAN DEL AGUA Y TIERRA, KOLDUN OF THE FINAL NIGHTS

Background: Esteban del Agua y Tierra — literally "Esteban of the Water and Earth" — knows an opportunity when he sees one. For centuries, the occult scene in Sabbat Mexico had been dominated by two major factions: Lasombra Abyss mystics and the *antitribu* of the Tremere. Neither group was ever especially influential over the body of the sect, but they had great sway in Mexico — the Lasombra thanks to their presence since the early nights of New Spain, and the Tremere renegades simply because their founder Goratrix chose to place his great chantry there.

Despite the great legacy of Tzimisce mysticism so evident in the Vaulderie and the various other *auctoritas ritae*, however, the Fiends had never been all that numerous in *De Effe*. Most of them have been far more interested in the pursuit of a variety of petty political and personal agendas than in occultism. Koldunism remained the purview of the Old World.

Esteban, however, has always been a scholar, and an ambitious one. He learned much from his great aunt, a withered old witch-woman whose ancestors had once lived in Greece and Spain. Tia Oberta — she never had any other name — told him of the secret world of the night, not only of the monsters, but of the hidden avenues toward power that lay open to those ready to take them. He watched in awe when on his seventh birthday, his seemingly all-powerful father was made to beg — to beg! — for mercy by this withered old woman with but a glance. Esteban knew such power had to be his and he was willing to pay any price

for it. For the simple price of his baby brother's left eye, Tia Oberta taught him of *el Dragón*, the monstrous font of wisdom who blesses his children with power. For the price of his father's flayed scalp, she instructed him in the hidden power of Earth and Water. For the sewn-shut genitalia of his twin sister Angela, he was brought to the capital to feel the power of those elements underpinning the city. Five years later a stranger came to the house and pulled him out of his bed. His life ended that night and his true existence began.

That was 60 years ago. Much of that time has been spent in the business of readying himself for the power to come. Tia Oberta's tales were one thing, but achieving true koldunic understanding is a long and arduous process. He thought physical purity of the Cainite form might be the first step, and Esteban was briefly a member of the Children of the Dracon, rejecting the ways of Vicissitude for a supposedly deeper truth. He honed his mind to see the hidden world and researched all he could.

Later, he thought that understanding must come from the Old World, where the ancient *koldun* still hid. A journey there in the late 1970s taught him only that the old country was just that: old. Clan Tzimisce, he discovered, was too concerned with contemplating its own bleeding anus to be of any real use. The glories of the medieval nights seemed never to have been left behind, despite inquisitions, revolts, diableries, the New World and countless conflicts. Elder Tzimisce, most especially the few remaining authentic *koldun*, pretended nothing had changed. Even the Children of the Dracon ended up being nothing more than a pantomime of some half-remembered Byzantine morality. Pathetic, really.

So Esteban returned to Mexico. There he sought out the places where *koldunic* learning had evolved despite the elders' stasis. He became a scholar of the *Sabbat ritae*, a priest of the Path of Caine and an innovator. With every new *ignoblis ritae* he participated in, with each new perversion he

explored, he came one step closer to a breakthrough. The world itself was changing, and he would change with it. Tia Oberta had always told him that *el Dragón* was a master of the body crafts, so he rejected the austerity of the Methuselah's purported children and learned Vicissitude, though it has only ever been of passing interest to him.

In 1985, the first real breakthrough occurred when his touchstone elements brought the city to its knees. He felt every shift of the great earthquake and learned many secrets from it. Suddenly all the potential of earth and water was made manifest and in the death throes of the buried masses he heard secrets that unlocked the power in his own blood. He acknowledged his estranged sire's destruction in the quake only as a sign of his maturation.

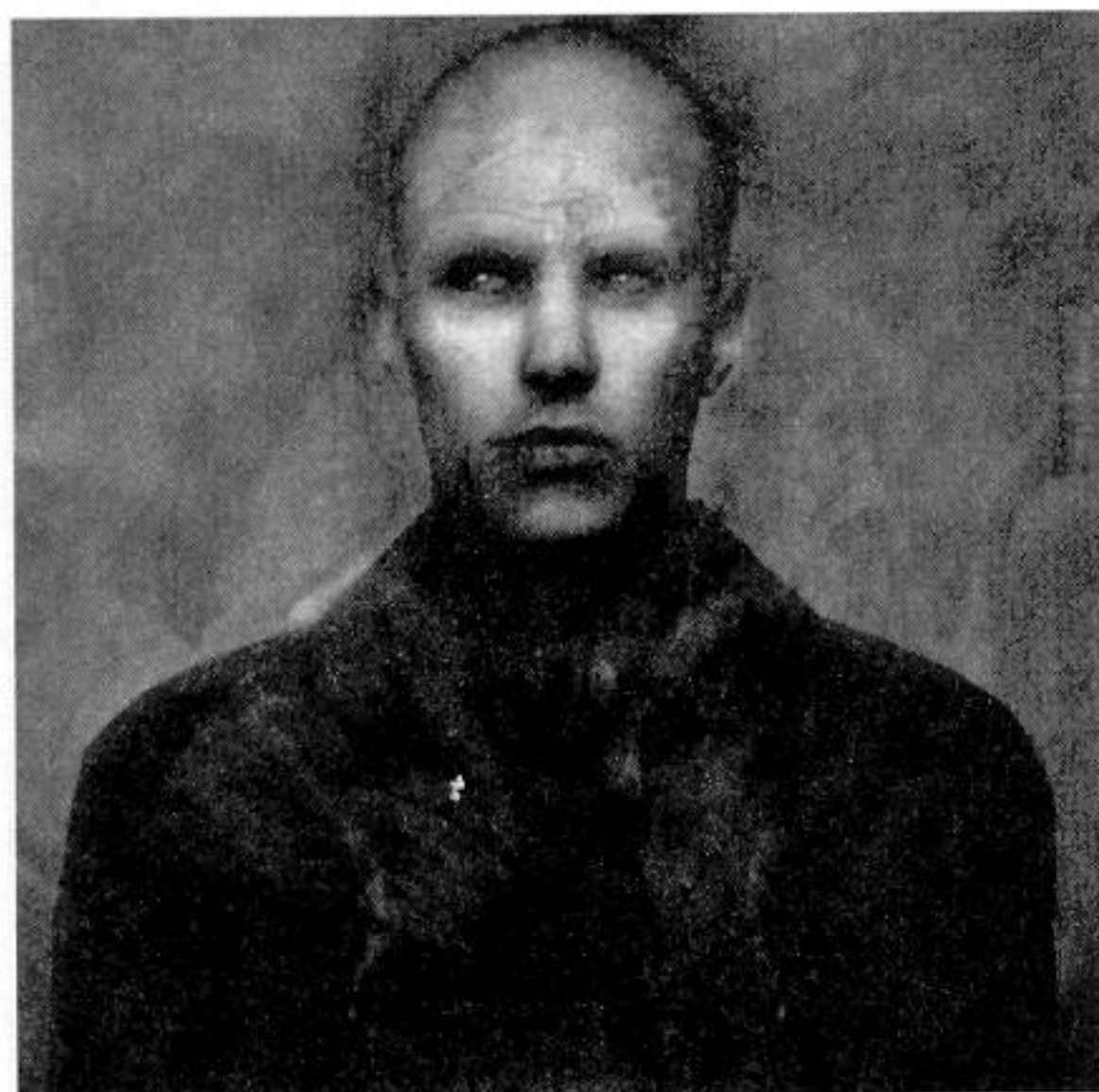
By the late 1990s, he had taken his insights and begun to make them manifest. His koldunic connections with the elements were growing and he had established some useful contacts with elders unhappy with Goratrix and his brood. Between 1985 and 1998, he clashed repeatedly with Elena Vasquez, a Tremere *antitribu* witch who maintained a chantry in the center of the city, which had once been the ritual heart of Aztec culture.

Then the Tremere vanished. Or were destroyed. Or self-destructed. Whatever the truth, it was an opening for other occultists in the Sabbat. Esteban's connections were suddenly very well placed and his status grew, a process that only accelerated when he brought La Viuda Blanca, one of the first Harbingers of Skulls, into the fold of the Sword of Caine. Not only was this a major feather in his political cap, but she possessed a wealth of arcane knowledge and helped him open up Elena Vasquez's chantry, which had remained sealed and warded since her disappearance. From her laboratories and libraries, he has recovered many of the secrets thought lost with Goratrix and gained further prestige. In the aftermath of this coup, several *koldun* from the Old World have undertaken correspondences with him, trading in secrets and lore.

Esteban is one of the best-informed occultists in Mexico. Although his understanding of Tremere Thaumaturgy remains limited, his access to Elena Vasquez's chantry records make him a useful source for others. The portion of the library he has released to others has already helped preserve Thaumaturgy in the sect.

Many Sabbat pay careful attention to Esteban. His time becoming a scholar of the *ritae* has given him contacts among the paragons of the Paths of Enlightenment and with Bishop Natalio, a font of new *ritae*. His connection with La Viuda Blanca and his successes in recovering Tremere secrets have made him very valuable to the sect. Old World *koldun*, cardinals and seraphs act as his patrons, which gives him the freedom to continue his research largely undisturbed. All these patrons expect future services in return, of course, so Esteban plays an ever-more-precarious political balancing act. It remains to be seen if he is as skilled a diplomat as he is a sorcerer.

Esteban maintains several havens, but now spends much of his time in the old Vasquez chantry, which he



shares with La Viuda Blanca. He sleeps in a room filled with the muddy silt of the Lago de Texcoco, the lake that once covered the capital's basin and his elemental touchstone. A series of basements, however, under the tenements of the northern *colonias* serve as his most personal refuge. It is in a small closet there that he keeps Tia Oberta, the withered Obertus revenant who first opened his eyes to the truth. Kept alive by small infusions of his blood and kept in place these last decades by the removal of her limbs, she still occasionally whispers secrets to him through parched lips.

Image: Drawn from aristocratic roots, Esteban is fair-skinned and finely featured. He has made only slight modifications to his body with his arts, the most obvious of which was removing all his body hair. He usually wears very simple, dark clothing. He eschews the ritual robes once used by the Tremere.

Roleplaying Hints: All you have worked for is finally coming to fruition. You understand that great cataclysms are in the offing, but cataclysms have always been good to you. Trade in secrets and lore, but always remember to ensure your own power. Push the limits in all things. Achieve mastery over the secret world of blood, water and earth. Then, perhaps, Tia will be pleased....

Clan: Tzimisce

Sire: Rafaela Lapaz

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Perfectionist

Generation: 8th (Embraced as 10th)

Embrace: 1942

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Expression 1, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Body Crafts 1, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 3, Computer 1, Koldunism 4, Investigation 3, Linguistics 3, Occult 5, Science 3

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Koldunic Sorcery 4, Thaumaturgy 1, Vicissitude 1

Koldunic Paths: Way of Earth 4 (primary), Way of Water 3

Thaumaturgical Paths: Path of the Father's Vengeance 1 (primary)

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Mentor 3, Resources 3, Rituals 5, Sabbat Status 2

Virtues: Conviction 4, Instinct 4, Courage 4

Morality: Path of Caine 7

Willpower: 8

JAIME SANGRIENTO, VOIVODE OF GARBAGE

Background: In life, Jaime was a petty bully with a knack for catching rats. He lived in a garbage dump, and so a wicked chance turned him into a Cainite. He soon established himself as pack leader. He beat up his rivals,



cowed the mortal garbage-pickers into submission, and convinced both mortals and Cainites that the rats of the dump saw everything and told him everything.

Jaime hates what he fears, and he fears all Cainites outside his pack. The Filth Angels terrorize the mortal garbage-pickers through their predation, but Jaime tells the kine that only he can protect them from even worse monsters who prowl beyond the dump's borders.

Ironically, one of Mexico City's mightiest Cainites defends "Bloody Jim." Szechenyi Jolán investigated the new pack and declared Jaime a ductus in good standing. The Mother of Horrors respects Jaime's claim of exclusive domain as an example of their clan's traditional values. When an established Tzimisce ductus scornfully asked why he, a master of *ritae*, should respect this ignorant "voivode of garbage," the Mother of Horrors pithily responded by switching his head and his buttocks. The scornful title stuck, however, among the few Sabbat who know that the Filth Angels exist. Jaime has never heard it.

Jaime sleeps in a 1973 Pontiac station wagon buried beneath a mound of garbage. A three-foot section of corrugated pipe just large enough to crawl through leads from one of the car's windows to the north side of the mound.

Image: "Bloody Jim" is a tall, wiry young man in ragged, too-short jeans, a baggy T-shirt and ripped, stained sneakers. He has swarthy skin and a bony, beaky face marred by acne and knife scars. His hooded, brown eyes constantly dart back and forth, searching for attackers or something he can grab for himself.

Roleplaying Hints: Trust no one outside your pack and your little community of garbage-pickers. Remind them that everyone else is against them. Protect your people — they are *your* people, and yours alone. Stay vigilant. Prepare. Don't let the monsters take you again, even though now you are one of them.

Clan: Tzimisce
Sire: Lita Dumas
Nature: Director
Demeanor: Bravo
Generation: 13th
Embrace: 2000
Apparent Age: late teens
Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2
Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 1, Streetwise 2
Skills: Animal Ken 2, Melee 3, Survival 3
Knowledges: Area Knowledge (Dump) 3, Linguistics 1
Disciplines: Animalism 3, Potence 1
Backgrounds: Herd 3, Retainers 1, Sabbat Status 1
Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 5
Morality: Humanity 5
Willpower: 5

ANA RITA MONTAÑA, THE BARREN VIRGIN

Background: Ana Rita Montaña should have been a typical lady of leisure in turn-of-the-nineteenth century Mexico City, but there was nothing typical about this upper-class *creole* woman. She was a difficult child who became an embarrassment to her parents after growing older and more beautiful. Exasperated with her expensive tastes and frivolous spending, her reckless gambling and her libidinous behavior (especially with other women), her parents sent her to a Carmelite convent, believing God would help her abjure her wickedness. The convent's harsh conditions, however, had a far more deleterious effect on the young woman. Between the cold cells, the daily regimen of self-mortification, and the nightly masses that disrupted a proper night's sleep, Montaña contracted a terrible fever.



During her illness and fever-induced hallucinations, she imagined a ghostlike figure descending upon her and implanting his seed within her loins. She claimed it was the Holy Ghost, but in all likelihood, it was a groundskeeper taking advantage of her condition. The fever left Montaña with brain damage, under the delusion she was the Virgin of the Carmelites. She suffered seizures and visions, and soon after proved very pregnant.

The Carmelite abbess panicked. It wasn't the first time a nun had become pregnant, but the Church was losing the Spanish Crown's support. The Crown had already driven the Jesuits from Spanish domains. It had demanded and received the Church's loan chits and properties to bolster the Spanish Empire's flagging economy. The upper-class *creoles* were among the Church's few remaining supporters. The abbess feared that if the *creoles* discovered Ana Rita Montaña's condition or her poor treatment while supposedly under the care of the Church, they might hesitate to donate lands or send their own daughters to the convents.

To avoid that possibility, the abbess hid Montaña in the dungeons of the Belén women's shelter, an infamous Church establishment that exorcized "possessed women." The abbess then told the Montaña family that Ana Rita had escaped and fled with an Indian lover. The Montaña family, already scandalized by their daughter, let the matter drop and thanked the abbess for her discretion.

Within the deplorable so-called shelter, Montaña went from delusional to psychotic. Her baby was stillborn, with the umbilical cord wrapped around its neck. She suffered from rigorous monthly exorcisms. Then, in 1813, a mysterious fever struck down 20,000 people in Mexico City. Montaña was merely ill, but that didn't stop Belén's priests from mistaking her near-lifeless body for dead and dumping her into a common grave with the shelter's dozen or so deceased. Montaña should have died, but Mexico City was flooded, thanks to garbage buildup that backed up sewage systems and blocked drains. Packs of hungry dogs filled the streets, attacking cattle and humans, invading homes, and digging up corpses.

One hungry mongrel pack dug at Montaña's fresh grave, pulling her from the earth. They bit into her scalp and flesh, but when her wounds bled warm rivulets of blood, the Tzimisce accompanying the dogs realized the woman still lived. Intrigued, Efraín Sortano ordered his hounds back and fed her some of his blood. She awoke, but was still near death. Sortano asked her name, to which she replied: "The Barren Virgin." "Whoever she was," Sortano reasoned before Embracing her, "hers was surely an interesting tale."

Montaña spent her early nights learning from Efraín Sortano before becoming Rodolfo's lover and one of his first allies. In fact, Rodolfo's own madness allowed him to foster and strengthen Montaña's own delusions of divinity. The two Cainites eventually parted company before Rodolfo's rise to bishop, with Montaña still believing herself a barren virgin for the death of her child.

Montaña maintains a haven in the apartment of a defrocked mortal nun named Ursula Zamudio. Zamudio

was already a follower and lover of the Barren Virgin when she was expelled from the Carmelite convent for her indiscretions with other nuns. The apartment is boarded up and in squalid condition, with Zamudio plying an escort's trade for other women. She desperately loves Montaña, but the Barren Virgin has no interest in Zamudio now that she is no longer a nun. Still, Zamudio feeds from Montaña occasionally, which is enough to both satisfy her and provide Montaña with a place to rest during the day.

While Montaña refuses to Embrace, she does still believe herself the Virgin of the Carmelites. She even appears to nuns of that same order as a vision of divinity, fostering cult worship. Unlike the *conquistadores* and their Virgin de los Remedios or Mexico's Lady of Guadalupe, however, Ana Rita Montaña is the Barren Virgin, a shadow of terrible truths. She encourages self-mortification and even whips her worshipers using her flail-like fingers. She teaches her blood-enthralled nuns to await insemination by the Holy Ghost, believing it is her duty to find the next blessed virgin in atonement for losing her own child and messiah. Of course, to attract the Holy Ghost, one must arouse it first, which Montaña attempts to do by seducing and bedding the nuns during their menstruation cycle.

Montaña possesses some influence with the Carmelite order through her followers (which includes the current abbess), and is still on good terms with her sire Sortano and ex-lover Bishop Rodolfo. If she needed, either Cainite would likely come to her side to protect her.

Image: Montaña slowly reworked her countenance to appear as an imperfect Virgin Mary. Her clothing consists of simple and conservative robes, while her face is a sculpted embodiment of serenity, right down to its plaster-like hue, downcast face, and unblinking eyes. Of course, Montaña recognizes her failures as the Barren Virgin, so her facade bears minute cracks like a timeworn statue.

Additionally, Montaña often distends her own fingers to the point where each is three feet in length. The finger joints become fully articulated like a chain, while bone spurs break the skin, turning her hands into mortification flails to use on her devoted sisters or herself. Because visions of the Virgin often manifest to only a handful of select mortals, however, Montaña spends most of her time Obfuscated, unless it serves her better to move among the shadows.

Roleplaying Hints: Despite your critics, you truly believe yourself a manifestation of the Virgin Mary, albeit a failed manifestation. Your baby emerged stillborn, choked by its own divinity; obviously your imperfections as a Virgin Mother ruined the birth of your son, the Prophet. You failed and are now forced to dwell among monsters and beasts. You don't mind, however, for they are like family in the way they share the sacrament of their blood, and you thrill to their touch and company. Besides, your road to absolution doesn't come from refuting your allies, but rather in consecrating the next Virgin host. You serve Her, but until you find Her, you must continue searching and continue fostering her cult of protectors.

Clan: Tzimisce

Sire: Efraín Sortano

Nature: Martyr

Demeanor: Guru

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1813

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 1, Brawl 1, Dodge 3, Empathy 3, Fortune-Telling 2, Intimidation 1, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Crafts 1, Etiquette 2, Survival 3, Vamp 3

Knowledges: Linguistics (Creole, English) 2, Occult 4

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Auspex 3, Dominate 3, Obfuscate 3, Vicissitude 4

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 1, Herd 2, Mentor 2

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 2, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 5

ASSAMITE ANTITRIBU

IKRAAM AL-BIRUNI, REFUGEE SORCERER

Background: Ikraam al-Biruni's sire Embraced him because of the aging scholar's knowledge of obscure Kurdish and Turkic dialects. For more than a century, Ikraam served the Assamite sorcerers' order without great excitement or distinction: He preferred a quiet unlife untroubled by the political rivalries within his clan. He counted his post-Embrace pilgrimage to Mecca as his greatest achievement.

The resurgence of the Methuselah ur-Shulgi, eldest childe of Haqim, forced Ikraam out of comfortable obscurity. Ur-Shulgi demanded that all Assamites renounce young faiths, such as Islam, to follow the most harsh and ardent form of the Path of Blood. Ikraam could not do it, but he lacked the strength to become a martyr. When one of ur-Shulgi's partisans came to demand his submission, the scholar fled to America. His unplanned flight took him to a Sabbat-held city, so perforce he petitioned the Sabbat for protection. He hoped he could join his clanmates in that sect.

Ikraam and the Assamite *antitribu* found little in common. The younger Angels of Caine knew little of their clan's Middle Eastern customs and sorceries. Many of the elders had, ironically, returned to Alamut's fold. Ikraam found himself in Mexico City as a stranger.

More importantly, Ikraam needed a source for the potent *kalif* — cannabis fed on vitae, smoked by mortals and imbibed with their blood — that Assamite sorcerers use in their magic. Eventually he found Caridad de Flores, the only Cainite in town with the skill to produce the occult drug. Ikraam also found, however, that he had to buy the drug (and mortal vessels) with service to Caridad. Ikraam hopes to arrange an alternative source of *kalif* with the help of the



Mexican Mafia. He would also like to find others of his clan — real Assamites, rather than the city's ignorant *antitribu*. Until he can make the necessary contacts for either goal, Ikraam must endure the unequal partnership.

Unfortunately, Mexico City's Cainites scare Ikraam with their hectic unlives and casual brutality. Ikraam defers to other Cainites, which makes many Sabbat think he's a wimp. Neither he nor the neonates who bully him appreciate that Ikraam is older and more powerful than most of Mexico City's Cainites. It takes all Ikraam's courage to treat with other Cainites or with mortal criminals.

Caridad sends Ikraam on missions to spy on, curse or steal from other Cainites, but Ikraam can stay Obfuscated while he does such things. His honor demands that he repay Caridad for his *kalif*, no matter how shameful or frightening the task.

Image: Ikraam al-Biruni is an elderly man with swarthy skin and gray hair, a short gray beard and a neatly trimmed mustache. He usually looks uncomfortable in his Western-style gray business suit. In his haven he changes into a caftan and turban of white linen. This also forms his working garb for sorcerous rituals.

Roleplaying Hints: As a sorcerer, you can face down angry djinn... but Mexico City overwhelms you. You want out. Unfortunately, you also want *kalif*. If only you could find someone you can trust! Culture shock and anxiety over your occult drug supply gut your nerve and obscure your formidable intellect. If you can neither run nor fight, stand on your dignity and demand a hearing with your attackers' superiors. Never, ever be rude. If anyone tracks you to your haven, a cheap hotel room just outside Coyoacán, offer whatever hospitality you can: You won't break the laws of hospitality just because someone breaks down your door. If anyone calls you an Arab, gently but firmly tell them that you are a Kurd.

Clan: Assamite (sorcerer caste, now *antitribu*)

Sire: 'Umr Siraj

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Child

Generation: 11th

Embrace: 1878

Apparent Age: early 50s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Empathy 2, Expression 3

Skills: Crafts (calligraphy) 4, Etiquette 3, Performance 2, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Academics 4, Investigation 2, Linguistics 4 (English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Turkish, Farsi and related dialects), Medicine 2, Occult 4, Science 1

Disciplines: Celerity 1, Obfuscate 2, Quietus 1, Thaumaturgy (Assamite Sorcery) 4

Thaumaturgical Paths: Path of Blood 4, Evil Eye 3, Spirit Manipulation 3

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Resources 1

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 3, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 7

Note: See **Blood Sacrifice** for the Path of the Evil Eye. If you don't have that book, the Path of Curses from **Blood Magic: Secrets of Thaumaturgy** or the Path of the Father's Vengeance from **Guide to the Sabbat** make adequate substitutes as "cursing" magic.

MATIAS CAZIMIRSKI, THE BIKER OF BLOOD

Background: Matias Cazimirsky came from a middle class Jewish family in Polanco. That didn't stop him from falling in with a street gang. Matias worked hard to prove he was as tough and brave and bad as the kids from rougher neighborhoods. That's why he took a bet to spy on some older gangsters who had a reputation as *real* badasses. They were actually Sabbat, and they caught Matias. His bluster amused them, so one of them Embraced him instead of merely killing him. That night Matias ate most of his former gang.

Matias' sire, Juan Brazos, was in the Black Hand, so he gave Matias a chance to make it in the world's toughest gang. Once again, Matias worked hard to prove himself. Brazos recently decided that his protégé needed exposure to the Sabbat beyond Mexico City, so they took a trip to New York — right in time for the Camarilla's recent attack. Brazos met Final Death in the battle, leaving Matias to find his own way home (with the help of another neonate, Clova Haines). His sire's colleagues did not treat Matias kindly; some flatly accused him of cowardice because he survived.

Matias was crushed. Becoming a Cainite cut him off from everything he'd known before; he invested his identity and soul in the Black Hand. Rejection cut him adrift. He compensates by pursuing other identities. The Institutional Devolutionary Party took him in, and in return he set out to prove himself as

the coven's most enthusiastic soldier. Matias hopes that glorious deeds will win him a second chance to join the Black Hand.

His sire also taught Matias to feel pride in his lineage as one of the Assamite *antitribu*, the Unconquered. The young Cainite now wants to understand his heritage more fully... but since so many of the older Angels of Caine left the Sabbat to rejoin their parent clan, Matias can't find anyone to tell him what being an Assamite *means*. He collects every scrap of information he can find about his clan. He knows a few fragments of clan history, a few *ritae* that other Cainites think draw upon old Assamite practices, and the names and deeds of several famous Black Hand members. He would very much like to meet a "real" Assamite (such as Ikraam) who could impart the traditions he desires.

The Cainites of the PDI would rather have Matias stay with them. General Perfidio particularly values Matias' skill with his motorcycle and brutal efficiency. Matias was an excellent biker before his Embrace, and he keeps getting better because he can risk stunts that would kill a mortal. If Matias fails a jump or his bike spins out of control, he just closes the wounds and tries again. Matias is at his best on the streets, but on occasion he's roared into buildings to chase his prey. Although he carries a pistol and a bowie knife, his favorite tactic is a drive-by slash with a chainsaw — and thanks to his Quietus, victims don't hear him coming.

Image: Matias is a muscular young man with crewcut brown hair, gray eyes and high Slavic cheekbones. He wears biker leathers with lots of studs and — of course — incredibly cool mirrorshades. The ensemble looks a bit less street-chic when Matias is drenched in blood, which is often. His motorcycle is jet-black with blood-red racing stripes and the spiky Sabbat ankh on the front fairing.

Roleplaying Hints: Never let anyone think you fear anything. Be first in any attack (not that anyone can keep up with you on your bike). Swagger, but try to look stern and impassive, like a great Assamite warrior should. Talk



a lot about the Lessons of Caine (which you don't know), pursuing the Amaranth, the Great Jihad, and any other capitalized Cainite buzzwords you've heard.

Clan: Assamite *antitribu*

Sire: Juan Brazos

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Bravo

Generation: 13th

Embrace: 1989

Apparent Age: late teens

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Intimidation 1, Streetwise 3

Skills: Crafts (mechanics) 3, Drive 4, Firearms 1, Melee 3

Knowledges: Academics 1, Black Hand Lore 1, Linguistics 2 (English, Polish)

Disciplines: Celerity 3, Quietus 1

Backgrounds: Rituals 1

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 4

BLOOD BROTHERS

LAS HERMANAS HAMBRIENTAS (THE HUNGRY SISTERS)

Background: The sudden disappearance of the Tremere *antitribu* in the late 1990s was hardly a clean break. Although Goratrix's house itself seems to have been swallowed up in some sudden reckoning, it left behind it countless experiments and thaumaturgical workings. Many of these have come to naught, but a few have grown unchecked. The Hungry Sisters are one such experiment.

The pseudo-Cainite shock troops known as Blood Brothers were the product of Tremere *antitribu* experimentation in the Old World, undertaken in cooperation with a few especially twisted Tzimisce sorcerers. For most Sabbat, these "Frankensteins" were little more than a sometimes-useful tool. They worked well to undermine stability in a city being targeted for crusade or to enforce the archbishop's dominance at home if need be.

A few of Goratrix's followers, however, hoped to improve on the design. One such *antitribu*, Elena Mendoza Vasquez, created a single Blood Brother capable of reproducing itself. Vasquez developed this variation on the Embrace from Tremere research on altering blood potency. In it, this Frankenstein (a female) locks herself in a mutual feeding with her victim, allowing their blood to flow from one to the other and back again in a perverse circuit. Both sire and childe become immobilized as their common blood supply mixes and distills itself to a concentrate of vampiric vitae. Between three to 10 nights later, if all goes well, the feeding ends and sire and childe rise. This



artificial Embrace utterly transforms the childe, remaking it into a physical duplicate of its sire and erasing most of its memories to integrate it into the hive mind of the brood. Innate and learned capacities shift, so that the only thing that truly distinguishes the childe is her higher generation.

This process is hardly universally successful. Elena's work was very much in progress when she vanished, and only about one in 10 such Embraces result in a viable, properly integrated new brood-mate. Most fledglings simply never rise from their death, while a small minority awake in a frenzied state similar to Wassail, from which they never recover. Even when the transformative Embrace is successful, there's a heavy price to pay, as both sire and childe awake starved for blood. Not only do they rise with only a hint of vitae distillate left in their systems, but their vampiric metabolisms are so charged that they burn blood at a phenomenal rate. It is not uncommon for freshly risen Frankensteins to consume the blood of a dozen mortals before feeling sated. They earn their "hungry" moniker with ease — all the more since this post-Embrace feeding is highly ecstatic for the vampires and makes them crave further reproduction.

Elena Vasquez never intended to let the three "brothers" she had created loose in Mexico. According to some of the notes she left behind in her chantry, she was working toward a thaumaturgical ritual with which she could grant and withdraw the ability to Embrace to other Blood Brothers, presumably as a way to make them personally loyal to her as a sort of "hive mother" of their kind. She died with the rest of the *antitribu* before her research progressed any further, and her three "prototypes" remained in torpor in her subterranean chantry until November of 2000, when the *koldun* Esteban del Agua y Tierra and the Harbinger of Skulls known as La Viuda Blanca broke in to exhume Vasquez's research. They freed one of the Frankensteins in the process, who escaped into the shantytowns of the eastern fringe, where she has gone to ground.

In her two years of freedom, the escapee has spawned again and again. Whole neighborhoods of the poor have been slaughtered to feed the ravenous hunger of first one, then two, then 10 and now 20 Hungry Sisters. They have only the sketchiest memories of the nights before the escape from the chantry, but the Sisters have established a sort of petty domain of fear among some of the city's poor. The locals do not know exactly what they are — theories include ghosts seeking vengeance and saints come down to exact holy justice — but a small cadre of men now serve as their eyes and ears in the day and choose victims to feed to the brood. They are rewarded with sips of their mistresses' blood, which gives them strength and a hint of the sisters' bottomless hunger.

The entire brood of Hungry Sisters nests in the basement of a disused hacienda that has seen the shantytowns grow up around it. Most of the above ground part of the building is gone, destroyed in the 1985 earthquake, but the large basement now crawls with the Sisters and is littered with the bones of their victims. The Sisters aren't privy to any deep secrets beyond their own existence. The brood, which shares thoughts as well as blood, is aware that their hunger grows ever stronger. With every reproduction, their need to consume and burn blood grows. Soon, the shanty will not be enough to sate them.

The Sisters keep a clutch of a dozen or so ghouls, who help them to keep much of the surrounding shantytown paralyzed by fear. Unbeknownst to them, the Sisters are also under observation by Esteban del Agua y Tierra and others in the local Sabbat. The young *koldun* hopes to learn the secret of creating more sisters as a weapon against both the Camarilla and his own rivals. He is well aware that they are on the edge of Wassail, but is unsure what to do about it. Bishop Natalio, meanwhile, sees them as a threat to his own herd in the shantytowns and is readying a purge of the creatures.

Image: All the Hungry Sisters end up looking identical, much like broods of more traditional Blood Brothers. They do not, however, go in for the skinhead motif many Frankensteins do. Instead, the sisters have long luxurious black hair and swarthy skin; it is likely that the first sister was *mestizo* in background. Much of the time, the Sisters are very beautiful, either glowing with vitality when sated on blood or infused with a predatory beauty when hunting. When their hunger goes unsated for more than a few hours, however, the Sisters become horrific shrews, all pretense of humanity giving way to long fangs and animalistic rage.

Roleplaying Hints: You wake famished every night and the hunger never goes away. Only the orgiastic feeding after having made another can sate you, and even that contentment is fleeting. You have dim memories of an existence before this one, of torture in a lab of some sort, of others who feed on the living, but it's very hard to remain focused on that. Those concerns are just shadows before the fire of hunger.

Clan: Blood Brothers

Sire: None (artificial Embrace)

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Monster

Generation: varies (first sister was 10th, youngest is 14th)

Embrace: 1997

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 1

Skills: Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: None

Disciplines: Potence 1, Sanguinus 3

Backgrounds: Herd 4, Retainers 5

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 2, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 2

Willpower: 5

BRUJAH ANTITRIBU

BISHOP NATALIO, EL INSURGENTE

Background: Natalio is one of the fervent Sabbat bishops, a true believer. Others may use *ritae* and stories of the Antediluvians primarily to secure their own power, but Natalio is entirely convinced that the Final Nights are here at last and that something must be done. He is desperate to see the Sword of Caine finally live up to its true calling of staving off Gehenna, or at least the consumption of the young by their elders. Natalio is well aware that many of his colleagues in the sect do not share his zeal, and he has seen too many abortive coups and civil wars to think challenging the cardinals to Monomacy or any such foolishness has any hope of changing the sect. No, Natalio believes the key is in the young.

The neonates and ancillae are likely to be the first casualties in any great upheaval, and thus are a more receptive audience. More importantly, because their betters often see them as something of a disposable resource, Natalio can organize and reeducate these masses without arousing a great deal of suspicion. After all, once outside the city proper and the domains of the luminaries, very little detailed intelligence exists on the young Sabbat. With the population explosion of the last century, Mexico City is a teeming cauldron of mortal sheep and young wolves who exist on the periphery of the sect proper. Nomadic packs come and go, covens break apart and reform, using the *ritae* only sporadically, and countless Cainites flock to the city for the annual *Palla Grande*. Many of the poor *colonias* and shantytowns around the capital are terra incognita even for most Sabbat. Natalio builds his revolution in this shattered landscape.

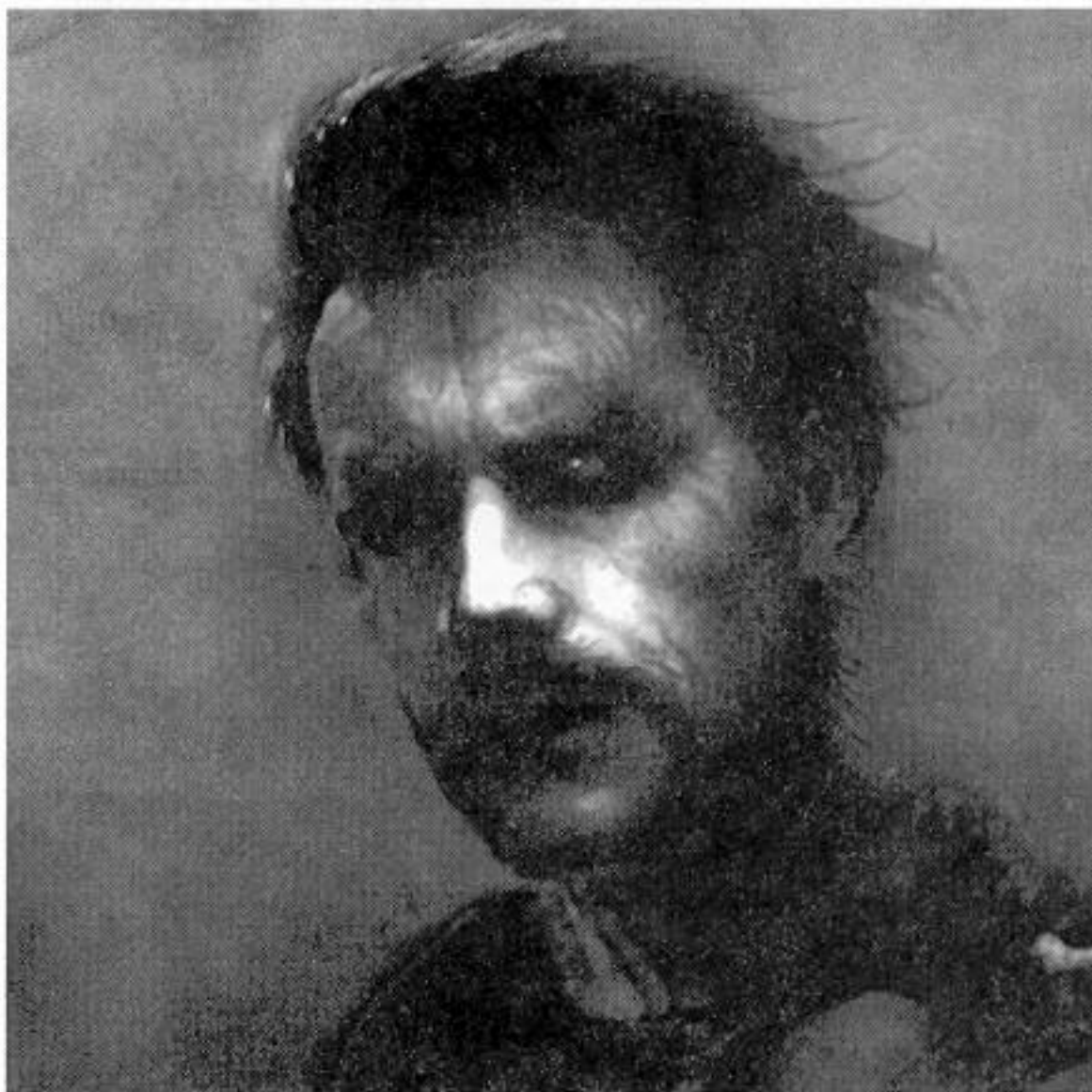
Mimicking the early development of the Sabbat itself, Natalio finds neonates and the occasional autarkis and brings them together in covens and packs. He doesn't preach the Paths of Enlightenment or other dogmas of "true vampirism," though. As far as he is concerned, inhumanity for inhumanity's sake is pointless if it doesn't help anyone survive. He uses some of the *auctoritas ritae*, most importantly the *Vaulderie*, to forge unity among the packs, and has created some of his own *ignoblis ritae*.

Embraced at the time of revolutionary fervor, Natalio strongly believes that the only part of mortal society worth paying any attention to is the popular sector, and he constantly derives practices and rites from their behavior. These include ritual killing of enemies with ice picks in emulation of the murder of Leon Trotsky (in Mexico City) and the designation of deserving victims as representations of despised or honored figures from Mexican folklore. A favorite practice is the Embrace of a woman to play the role of La Malinche, the hated Indian woman who aided Cortés, who is then released to feed on choice victims. Many other Sabbat find Natalio's penchant for Mexican nationalism to be a pathetic mortal attachment, but he pays them no heed.

Natalio's great strength is his ability to keep his ear to the ground and feel the pulse of young packs of Cainites. Through his contacts and confederates, he picks up a mass of intelligence about the agendas of various Sabbat luminaries. The regent has revealed herself to be a weakling, for example, and that has many of the elders of the sect scurrying for power. He also knows of the Hungry Sisters and considers them a threat to his dominion over the shantytowns, but is as yet unaware of where they originated.

As many as a dozen packs and covens look to Natalio for something akin to leadership. El Grito de Dolor, his own large coven, is firmly dedicated to his vision. Of the others, only the three most loyal could truly be called followers of his, and the rest are more akin to fellow-travelers. Concern about the coming of Gehenna continues to grow, and with every neonate who realizes he'll be the first to be swallowed up, Natalio gains another potential recruit. One of the more interesting recent candidates is the Freak Eliza Villanova, a student of Bishop Rodolfo's. Unbeknownst to him, the Black Hand also has its eyes on the bishop.

Natalio maintains several havens across the shantytowns he uses as recruitment grounds. As a bishop, he also has quarters within the communal haven and often



meets there with sympathetic packs from across Mexico and other Sabbat holdings.

Image: Natalio's body is a testament to a long road traveled. A framing accident in his mortal days left his face scarred and his right arm mangled and he has never sought out a Fiend's touch to repair the damage in a century of unlife. A large mustache and a mop of black hair give him the look of a peasant from the north, an image that his choice of simple clothing does nothing to dilute. He sometimes wears a pistol or other weapon, in emulation of the *insurgentes* of the Revolution, but it is mostly for show.

Roleplaying Hints: You're the only one who seems to really understand the situation. The seraphs and archbishops just scoff and follow their own agendas. Many neonates chomp at the bit to fight the Camarilla or just have their own fun and you're left to pick up the pieces. Such is the burden of a man of vision, dead or not.

Clan: Brujah *antitribu*

Sire: Eva la Prima

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Pedagogue

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1899

Apparent Age: late 30s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Firearms 2, Fire Dancing 3, Melee 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 2, Investigation 1, Linguistics 3, Occult 1, Politics 3

Disciplines: Celerity 3, Fortitude 1, Presence 3, Potence 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Herd 3, Retainers 3, Rituals 4, Sabbat Status 3

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 3, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 6

LA MALINCHE

Background: Rosa had an unpleasant life and an even worse death. Escaping poverty and civil war in El Salvador, she fled toward *el norte*. American border guards turned her back, however, and a few unscrupulous "coyotes," the men who run refugees like her across the Mexican-American border, used her as a plaything.

After a couple years of turning tricks in Tijuana, Rosa was traded for a couple dime bags to a dealer from the capital who thought she'd be fun for a few nights while he was in Baja. She didn't cry much and reminded him of a schoolgirl who'd mocked his manhood 20 years before, so he brought her home with him as a souvenir. The next few months she spent under the limp-dicked wonder in a dirty apartment off Avenida Cinco de Mayo. Having long since

hit rock bottom, Rosa eventually shed her fear and realized she had nothing left to lose. The next night she stabbed her captor through the eye with a screwdriver.

She ran, clutching her dead captor's worldly possessions: 28 American dollars, 4,000 pesos, a knock-off Rolex and a .38 caliber revolver with three bullets. She made it precisely six blocks before a gang of *vatos* came out of the shadows. They smiled and one of them smacked her across the jaw with a baseball bat. After that it was pain, darkness and hunger, in that order.

She woke up dead and pissed all to hell. She was naked and tied to a pseudo-altar made from the half-rusted carcass of an early 80s Ford pickup. Some *cabrón* was dripping chicken blood into her mouth, and what's worse, she was gulping the thin gruel down. She wanted more, and if that meant tearing these *pendejos* to bits, so much the better. Especially the lead one who was reciting some sort of bullshit ritual, calling her "La Malinche," whom she dimly remembered was some native whore who'd sold out the Aztecs for a Spanish lay. When they let her loose, all she wanted to do was rip into the assembled idiots, but they had makeshift torches, and fire, she somehow knew, was not her friend. She ran, with the others chasing after her and harrying her toward who knew what.

Fat Americans, as it happened. A tour bus full of them. She ripped out the first one's throat without even thinking about it and his blood tasted much better than the chickens' had. The screaming *gringa* with the "I Heart El Paso" sweatshirt was next, followed by her bleating child. The *vatos* chasing her joined in the fun and painted the bus red with gore. One of them got so distracted, he let her take his torch. The look on his blood-smeared face when she stuffed the flaming stick into it was priceless. His screams were even better. After that she ran again, but they weren't chasing anymore.

That was only a few weeks ago. Much of the intervening time has been spent hiding. She's learned some of the basics of unlife: Fire and sunlight are altogether unwelcome. Blood



makes her strong and fast, very fast. And there are others like her out there. La Malinche ended up in the shanties east of the airport, and has had several run-ins with a long-haired *mestiza* who is, if anything, more murderous than her. The *mestiza* keeps on muttering about her “sisters” and Rosa has been trying to find out where she nests. Maybe she needs another sister.

A woman, dressed all in white and wearing a death’s head, visits Rosa in her daytime dreams. She attempts to speak, but Rosa cannot hear the words. She is sure that following the *mestiza* is part of the ghost’s plan, however.

La Malinche is a political nonentity in Mexico, but that gives her some unwitting influence. Bishop Natalio is anxious to deal with her before the story of her escape from his *ritus* spreads. Others see her as a useful pawn and work to draw her into their schemes.

Image: La Malinche’s broad features and chocolate skin mark her as a descendent of Mayan Indians, but her dress is a modern patchwork of items taken from her victims. One night a sundress, the next a pair of jeans and a rough cotton shirt. She wears these as trophies, testaments not only to her ability to kill, but to survive night to night.

Roleplaying Hints: First, you must survive. That means killing, which is not a problem anymore. But survival is starting to take on a larger meaning than night-to-night existence. The *vatos* are still out there; you’ve seen them, and that means you need to either get away or find out where they are and kill them too. You’ve done enough running, so that means finding some help, starting with the *mestiza*’s sisters.

Clan: Brujah *antitribu*

Sire: Natalio

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Rebel

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 2002

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Streetwise 2

Skills: Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: None

Disciplines: Celerity 3

Backgrounds: Mentor 3 (despite her not yet recognizing it)

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 3

MARIANO POMPOSO, BLACK HAND CENSUS TAKER

Background: Most Cainites are speechless when they initially encounter a Black Hand census taker, but few mistake these zealous Sabbat for run-of-the-mill bean counters. In simplest terms, the informal census is the Black Hand’s domestic information-gathering arm in

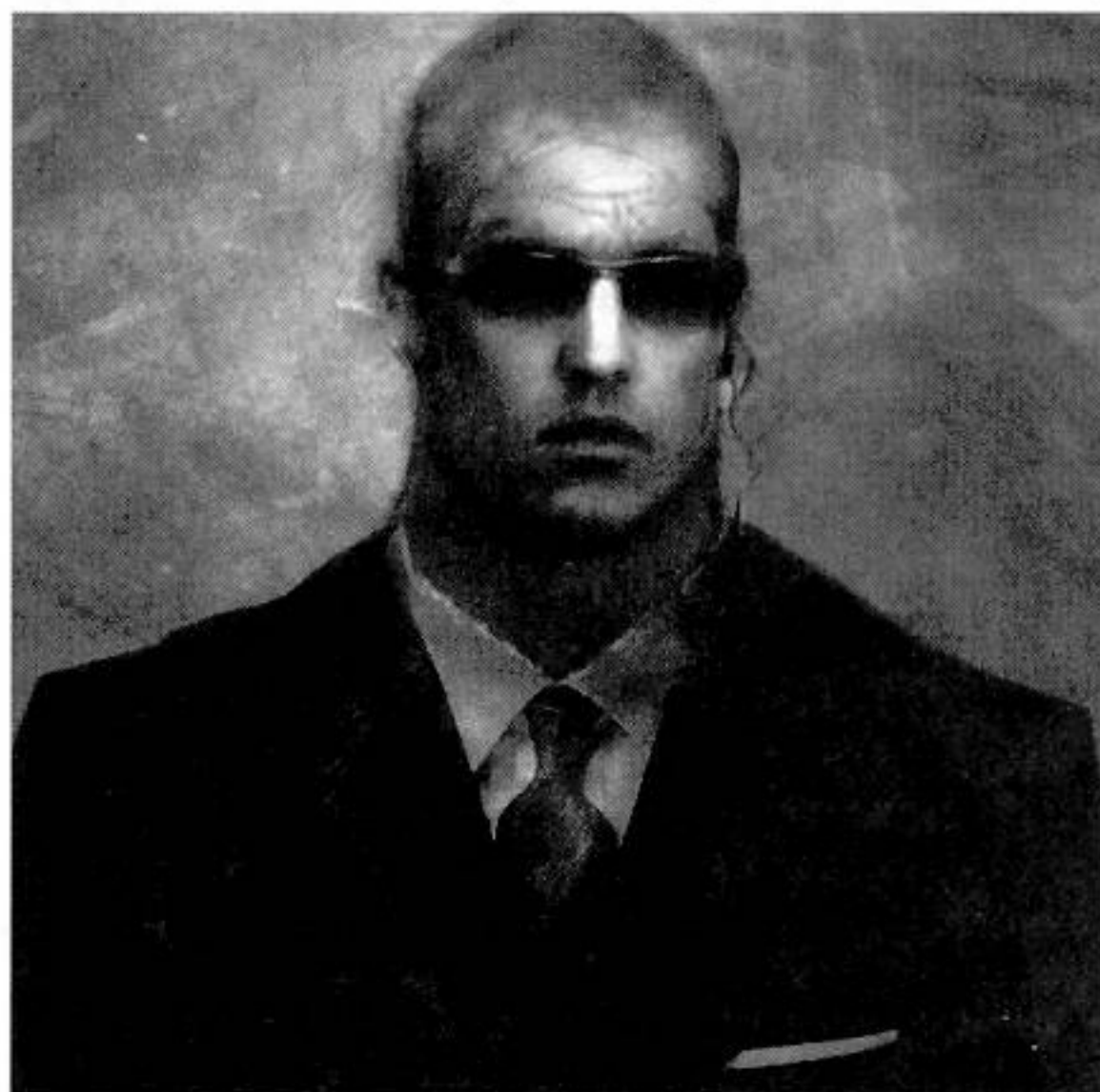
Mexico City. Given the extraordinarily large Cainite contingent, keeping track of packs, much less individuals, is paramount to Mexico City’s security and continued existence as a Sabbat stronghold. This simple truth inspired the formation of the census as a means of tracking the various packs and loners running around Mexico City, as well as determining their loyalties and abilities should the Sabbat ever need to mobilize its Cainites *en masse*.

When a pack appears at a Blood Feast after prolonged absence or for the first time, a Sabbat census taker may interview them. When Cainites Embrace someone, the census taker might appear soon afterward to classify the new Lick. When a pack disappears or moves on, the census taker tries to uncover where they went and when they might return. To be certain, given Mexico City’s size, it’s impossible to keep track of everyone, but damn if the census won’t bust some stubborn Thwack’s skull to uncover the information they need.

Mariano Pomposo was a real badass in life. Although born to a good family, he enjoyed the fear and so-called respect people paid him as a gang member. Eventually, however, it wasn’t his family that rescued him from street life, but Pomposo who pulled himself out. Mariano didn’t want to be a petty gang thug or working for the cartels, because it meant he would always answer to a boss or be stuck pulling penny-ante crimes.

Instead, Pomposo studied and worked out, eventually becoming an independent *los chombos*, a mercenary fixer hired by companies to deal with labor disputes and union members. Pomposo quickly developed a nasty reputation for his efficiency, especially following one incident when he picked up a labor leader’s daughter from school and took her to a traveling carnival for the evening. The girl was unharmed, but the message to her parents was clear enough: “I could have killed her just as easily.”

Unlike other *los chombos*, Pomposo was known for coercing his targets into acquiescing, turning intimidation into a fine art and only resorting to bone-shattering



brutality when all else failed. That's what attracted the Sabbat to him. His soon-to-be-sire, Maria de Zumárraga, believed the Sabbat had lost the finer arts of coercion and persuasion. Freedom somehow equated with brute force, and if the Sabbat couldn't beat it to a pulp, it fled and hid until the next opportunity arose. Pomposo, however, was astute enough to recognize weakness in its many guises, whether physical or emotional, and capitalize on them. That's why Maria de Zumárraga Embraced the young man.

Pomposo adapted fairly easily to the Sabbat, though he preferred his methods over those of the Shovelheads'. Maria agreed, and trained Pomposo in the art of intimidating and threatening Cainites without resorting to violence immediately. She taught him the Sabbat's weak points, from deficiencies in certain Paths of Enlightenment to the merits of vitae and how to use the familial connections established through the Vaulderie. Then she sent Pomposo out to learn for himself.

As in life, Pomposo proved a stone badass in death. Once he understood how a Cainite's needs and priorities differed from a mortal's, it made manipulation simpler because a Cainite's needs were far more visceral and immediate. Black-mail, intimidation, stings and framejobs were all perfectly legitimate tools in Pomposo's repertoire, but if it came to violence, well, then Pomposo was equally as capable. Amusingly, the Black Hand liked Pomposo's tactics and appreciated his skill. That's when they offered him the position with the census... if he passed their indoctrination requirements.

For the last few years, Pomposo has been the census's most efficient and capable agent. This isn't surprising, since his job requires a deft touch with encouraging information from Cainites, remembering the Licks he's encountered and not accepting no for an answer. It's a dangerous duty in some respects, but few Cainites are willing to make enemies of the Black Hand or its agents. His main influence rests with the Black Hand, though he deliberately keeps some information about certain packs quiet, thus earning their gratitude and support. How or when he calls upon this assistance depends, but Pomposo is currently "saving" the favors owed him for whatever unforeseen circumstances may arise in the future.

Pomposo still maintains his mortal residence, a *hacienda* under a false name with state-of-the-art security, and four ghoulish bodyguards. While he maintains his property using his saved earnings as an independent *los chombos*, Pomposo has extended his finances by blackmailing former clients and targets with the information he's uncovered over the years. He has enough money to finance his *hacienda* for another seven years before seeking an alternate cash flow.

Image: Pomposo has a bodybuilder's physique, which is hard to hide despite the conservative black suits he wears. He also dons sunglasses when interviewing Cainites, keeping them off balance. Pomposo looks like the consummate bodyguard or security agent, with his brush-cut, clean-shaven square jaw, and unflinching demeanor. He also carries a PDA to record his information and a holstered gun beneath his black jacket. If the police ever stop him, he also has a consular firearms certificate, permitting him

to carry a weapon. Everything with Pomposo is above board until the situation dictates otherwise.

Roleplaying Hints: "Mr. Freeze" — that's what some packs call you, and for good reason. Nobody's ever seen you lose your cool, even in a fight. Your demeanor is five degrees colder than your dead heart, but that's the mantle of a professional like yourself. When you speak with Licks, you're always studying them, trying to figure out their psychological weak points. Sure, they may be cooperating with you now, but that doesn't mean they won't turn on you eventually. When that happens, you need to know their agenda before they do, and you need a contingency plan to cripple them before they can act. That's why the Black Hand uses you. Your files on Cainites go beyond just keeping track of their movements. Your reports are damn near psychological profiles, with astute observations and a fair share of hidden dirt.

Clan: Brujah *antitribu*

Sire: Maria de Zumárraga

Nature: Competitor

Demeanor: Perfectionist

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1972

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Empathy 1, Intimidation 4, Leadership 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Drive 3, Firearms 3, Melee 2, Security 2, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Academics 1, Black Hand Lore 3, Computer 1, Investigation 3, Politics 1, Science 1

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 2, Potence 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Black Hand Membership 2, Contacts 2, Mentor 1, Resources 4, Retainers 4, Sabbat Status 1

Virtues: Conviction 2, Instinct 4, Courage 5

Morality: Path of Power and the Inner Voice 5

Willpower: 8

GANGREL ANTITRIBU

JESÚS ALCALÁ, EL LOBO DE CANTO

Background: Jesús Alcalá supported his family by playing the accordion and singing songs. A Mexican Mafia thug liked his performances and recommended Jesús to his associates, and so Jesús and his band often played for gangland figures. Jesús obligingly wrote *narcocorridos* about his patrons. He won a small reputation as a musician who could write a song about anyone on short notice.

His gangland connections drew the attention of Venere Carboni, a powerful Cainite musician who had associated with criminals back when he was alive. Jesús reminded Venere of himself from his breathing days — and so the elder spitefully decided to ruin his life. Such is the favor of the Toreador



antitribu. Venere used his supernatural powers to send Jesús into a spiral of jealousy, despair and rage that climaxed with the musician murdering his wife. The Toreador smiled. Now his fellow musician had material for an eternity's worth of songs.

Venere was not the only Cainite interested in Jesús. A City Gangrel Embraced the musician mere hours before Venere planned to do it himself. Hartmann Strauss, a Cainite in El Grito de Dolor, thought that the coven needed someone to write Loyalist protest songs. The Gangrel knew nothing of Venere's manipulation, and picked Jesús because he had heard him play in a bar. Venere destroyed Strauss for his impudence, but had to leave Mexico City on a month-long embassy before he could execute a really fiendish punishment on Jesús. When Venere returned the moment had passed and the elder set aside vengeance for the time being.

Jesús fulfilled all of Strauss' hopes. Sabbat neonates love his *vampirocorridos* about Lupine hunts, murders of Camarilla elders, Monomacy and sect festivals. The musician has become the Loyalists' greatest propagandist: His songs extol the rugged independence of Loyalist packs and mock the elders who try to impose discipline on the Sabbat. Jesús can sing a song at a Blood Feast or fire dance and within a month, half the Sabbat in Mexico City have heard the song and sing it themselves. A satiric song from Jesús can inflict a short-term loss of prestige upon another Cainite.

The musician looked up three colleagues from when he was alive and forced blood bonds on them, so he could have a proper band to accompany his songs. This group calls itself *Los Lobos de Canto* — the Wolves of Song. The ghouls rent apartments in Barrio de Tepito, while Jesús sleeps at the El Grito de Dolor communal haven. Jesús and his band often hang out at Garibaldi Square, where Sabbat packs can hire them for a night's entertainment. Mortals also hire Los Lobos de Canto. Jesús retains his Mexican Mafia contacts and plays the occasional gangland gig. He hears a great deal about who does what in the city's underworld.

Jesús keeps one great secret from the rest of El Grito de Dolor. He lost track of his young son and daughters during his Sabbat indoctrination. For all that Jesús talks the talk about abandoning mortal connections, he worries about what happened to his children, who would now be teenagers. He seeks them through his gangland connections. If he finds them, he plans to find them a new home with a prosperous drug dealer. If necessary, he will subject the dealer to a blood bond in order to make him agree. Such concern for mortal relatives could hurt Jesús' own prestige within El Grito de Dolor if it became known. It would also give other Cainites a powerful hold over Jesús if they could find his children first.

Image: Jesús is a tall, wiry man with swarthy skin, black hair and mustache, and a long, hound-dog face. He defies the Sabbat's stereotype about Gangrel *antitribu* by dressing in a natty mariachi uniform, with boots polished mirror-bright. He wears sunglasses to conceal his pale-green, wolflike eyes, while his sombrero and carefully curled and pomaded hair conceals the canine points of his ears. He plays the guitar and uses his supernatural speed to pick with amazing dexterity.

Roleplaying Hints: Smile and give the people what they want. Courting couples, drug dealers or bloodsucking monsters, it's all the same to you — just customers who want entertainment, whom you must please to win your fee. You see the poor, and you see what happens to Sabbat who make too many enemies and too few friends. Don't let that happen to you — or your children, if only you could find them!

Clan: Gangrel *antitribu* (City)

Sire: Hartmann Strauss

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Gallant

Generation: 13th

Embrace: 1995

Apparent Age: 33

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 2, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Streetwise 3

Skills: Crafts 2, Firearms 2, Etiquette 2, Performance 3, Professional Skill (mariachi) 4, Survival 1

Knowledges: Finance 1, Sabbat Lore 2, Underworld Lore 2

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Protean 2, Presence 1

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Resources 2, Sabbat Status 1

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 3, Courage 2

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 4

HARBINGERS OF SKULLS

LA VIUDA BLANCA (THE WHITE WIDOW)

Background: Centuries ago, there was life and obsession, a terrible hunger to understand the secrets of the universe hidden from man. From pagan witches hiding in the seeming of washer-women and priests in need of physical sating, the woman who would become the White



Widow learned a few of the whispered truths of the hidden world. She saw the spirit of her husband leave his diseased body one cold night, and she lay with the cooling corpse to learn its mysteries. Sometime after that came the Blood and with it an altogether different hunger. Then, not so much later, she was drawn into the ravaged lands of the dead. The petty secrets of ghosts and decay she had longed to understand were finally laid bare, but they paled before the great storm there. Here was death in its most primal form — not a quiet rest, not a reward or punishment for living acts, not a state of higher being, but a final end to all things.

Innumerable years later, the storm swept her back onto the shores of the living. With the sound of ripping skin and crying mothers, the shroud between lands tore open and the White Widow slipped out. Her girlish faith had long since eroded away, but in that moment she knew God had a sense of irony. For why else would the dead spit her out into a birthing ward? Why else would the fresh-born blood of babes be laid out to sate her hunger? Her skin, ash-white and wrinkled from the rigors of walking among the shades, flushed for a sweet second as the hot vitae of the first infant passed her lips. The screaming of children, mothers, nurses and others was like sweet music to her dry and cracked ears. But the hunger never ended.

She stumbled through the night, lurking in shadows, hoping against hope to find some sort of peace. Semi-delirious, reeling from the cacophony of the strange city, she found herself drawn to an archeological site in the midst of this modern megalopolis, the Templo Mayor. There, she collapsed before a carved wall of skulls, hoping against hope that they would lead her back to the lands of the dead. That is where the *koldun* Esteban del Agua y Tierra found her. He sheltered her and brought her blood — that of infants, which she now found sweetest — and introduced her to the Final Nights. He helped her piece together not only the realities of modern life and unlife, but the reality of dawning Gehenna. What had been mere myths in her early nights were now true

and the reality of her current situation was clear: Death was coming on an unprecedented scale, and she was here to witness it. This belief, and the circumstances of her discovery in front of the wall of skulls known as the *tzompantli*, helped baptize her bloodline as the Harbinger of Skulls.

Since then, she and the Tzimisce Esteban have grown closer, bonded as a pack of two by a ritual he calls the *Vaulderie*. In 2000, they cooperated to unseal the chantry of the vanished Tremere *antitribu* Elena Vasquez, which laid open to them a vast array of thaumaturgical research and other secrets. Esteban's interests lie in power in the face of the apocalypse, and she is glad to help him along, despite such a gambit's futility. In the end, everything will meet death.

La Viuda Blanca nests in the chantry that once sheltered the Tremere *antitribu* Elena Vasquez. Essentially a series of subterranean vaults under a gentlemen's club in the *teocalli*, the chantry is a warren of libraries and laboratories, dissection tables and blood distilleries. The Widow has transformed much of the space to suit her mortuary needs, including starting her own *tzompantli* made of the skulls of her infant victims.

One of Mexico's greatest unliving occultists, the White Widow is privy to many arcane secrets. The most critical come from her analysis of the research of Elena Vasquez, a brilliant thaumaturge obsessed with the End Times. The warlock herself seems to have been convinced she was working to prevent or forestall Gehenna, but the Widow suspects Elena was a dupe. It's entirely possible her experimentation was part of the lead up to these Final Nights.

As a prominent Harbinger of Skulls in the sect's epicenter, the White Widow has significant influence in the Sabbat's occult circles. Ever since she and Esteban opened up Vasquez's thaumaturgical libraries, the two have received the shadowy support of several Old World *koldun* as well. Unre is said to keep a close eye on their research as well, though the two Harbingers have different agendas. All this attention, paired with the fact that she chooses not to play political games, means that the Widow has leave from the cardinals and seraphs to pursue her research. Unknown to them, she is also recruiting a variety of neonates she believes will play a role in the coming apocalypse.

NARCOCORRIDOS

Corridos are Mexican ballads, often accompanied by guitar, accordion, trumpet or other music, with a waltz or polka beat. Every sort of folk hero or current event becomes the subject of *corridos*. Ballads about drug traffickers began in the 1970s, if not earlier. Mexican poor folk admire drug smugglers as people from their class who became rich through courage, cunning and defiance of the government — and who spread their money around by, among other things, paying musicians to write ballads about them. *Narcocorridos* are most popular in northwestern Mexico, along the main drug-running route to the United States, but the genre has spread throughout the country and even to *el Norte*.

Image: Like all Lazarenes, La Viuda Blanca is a desiccated wreck of a Cainite. Seventy pounds of dried, pale leather hanging off a wiry skeleton of ancient bones, she is a horror to behold. She dresses in long white robes and drapes a hood over her drawn face, so that she resembles nothing so much as the grim reaper on her wedding night. Eyes blacker than pitch and a maw of needle-pointed fangs are all her victims see of her when she feeds.

Roleplaying Hints: Your nights are spent in this cacophonous world of bright lights and belching industry, but you remember the centuries in the lands of the dead. There is a terrible storm there, and it is only growing fiercer. It is only a matter of time, you're convinced, before it swallows life and unlife whole. The secret is to be ready to receive the final insight before all is consumed. You plan on being front and center when the end truly comes, even if that means helping it along.

Clan: Harbinger of Skulls

Sire: unknown

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Visionary

Generation: 8th

Embrace: unknown

Apparent Age: indeterminate

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Leadership 1, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Crafts 3, Etiquette 2, Melee 1, Performance 1, Stealth 4, Survival 2

Knowledges: Academics 4, Investigation 4, Law 2, Linguistics 4, Medicine 3, Occult 5, Science 2

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Fortitude 2, Necromancy 5, Obfuscate 2

Necromantic Paths: Mortuus Path 5 (primary), Ash Path 5, Bone Path 3

Backgrounds: Rituals 2, Sabbat Status 3

Virtues: Conviction 4, Self-Control 3, Courage 3

Morality: Path of Death and the Soul 7

Willpower: 6

Merit/Flaws: Prey Exclusion (The White Widow feeds only from children and infants).

MALKAVIAN ANTITRIBU

**BISHOP RODOLFO,
WITNESS TO THE END TIMES**

6th generation, childe of Tryphosa

Nature: Guru

Demeanor: Deviant

Embrace: circa AD 150

Apparent Age: late 50s

It has been a long wait for the ancient Freak known in these nights as Bishop Rodolfo. Born among Phoenician traders and initiated into mystery cults among them, he came face to face with his godhead in the person of the Methuselah

Tryphosa, an unliving oracle of unparalleled might. He served as his sire's acolyte and herald, traveling the ancient world to deliver her dire warnings of doom and destruction. Regrettably, the Brujah of Carthage did not heed the warnings he delivered. Neither did the Ventrue of Rome some time later.

As his own oracular gifts grew, he and Tryphosa shared their insights. As they did, a slow rift grew between childe and sire. The elder Malkavian believed that, as beings removed from life and death, they were in a unique position to rewrite destiny — to avert or engineer great disasters as they saw fit. The younger Cainite was more fatalistic, believing that a great cataclysm (what some call Gehenna) would eventually consume everyone and everything. In his view, the best one could do was decide on one's own place in the greater devastation.

What started as a philosophical debate became distrust, anger and eventually outright hostility, even hatred. By the time of the so-called War of Princes, he had mastered the art of adopting other identities and vanished into the chaos of Europe. He spent some of this time with groups of Roman Inconnu, even representing their interests with certain Byzantine clanmates, but soon tired of their vacillation between vengeance for the end of their imperial heyday and endless navel-gazing.

During the Anarch Revolt, he flitted from identity to identity, shaping some of the chaos but simply observing most of it. He was Stephen of Kent, who rode with the Brujah Tyler into Castle Hardestadt. He was Melchis of Crete, an attendant to the Methuselah Unmada at the Convention of Thorns. The formation of the Camarilla and the subsequent birthing of the Sabbat was of relatively little import to him until his sire became involved. Along with some of her fellow ancients, she agreed to deny her clan its right by blood to the curse of Dementation for the sake of Camarilla stability. This was one more futile attempt to forestall the inevitable, and one that robbed much of the clan of its ability to determine its own fate. In that instant he became Sabbat, and plunged into the act of keeping Dementation vital.

He toyed with power in the new sect, serving as the purported Archbishop of Athens under the name George the Red in the 18th century, but it was nothing but a distraction. His interest was with those willing to learn the arts of Dementation, so George vanished and the simple Rodolfo arrived in Mexico in 1848. Supposedly a young Freak of little import, Rodolfo was largely left alone. He cultivated repulsive personal habits involving the purposeful ingestion of miscellaneous foodstuffs, which he promptly vomited to augment his aura as a Cainite worth ignoring.

After 50 years of isolation (punctuated by the occasional outbreak of sect warfare), Rodolfo realized that to advance his studies of the Discipline, he would need students and aids, people who understood his endeavors and might provide additional insights. Throughout the twentieth century, he headed an informal symposium of the mad, with students, colleagues and rivals trickling in from across the globe to debate, challenge and learn.

In the midst of the great *Palla Grande* of 1949, he conducted an experiment into the effects of spreading

dementia. He and his acolytes spread the madness of the Cainites to the mortal population of the city, and it sparked a night of riots and debauchery unlike any seen up to that point. Goratrix is said to have called for Rodolfo's head for the "prank," which ruined a thaumaturgical working. The regent, however, toasted the Malkavian for his "artistry" and elevated him to bishop. Rodolfo looked on the results as confirmation that once Dementation escaped the limits imposed on it by Tryphosa and her Camarilla allies, events would spiral out of control for Cainites.

In 1997, the bishop felt the knot in the Madness Network give way and watched his own students leave for Camarilla cities to gift their estranged clanmates with Dementation. Rodolfo braced himself for the inevitable — without the structure provided by teachers or cults, the return of the Discipline to the body of the clan could only lead to devastation. Two years later, during the Week of Nightmares, he saw his predictions of doom come true and sat back to watch the end.

But the end didn't come. Instead of consuming the world, the single raised Antediluvian fell, not even quite wiping out his own clan. Rodolfo also received reports that the Camarilla's Lunatics were taking very well to the return of their birthright. He suspects that Tryphosa and her allies have something to do with that, but to what end he is as yet unsure. Regardless, this turn of events has awakened hope in a monster who hadn't felt it in many centuries. His clanmates can once again make their own fates, and perhaps — just perhaps — the apocalypse can be averted.

All this has led Rodolfo to a flurry of activity in Mexico, centered on uncovering signs of the Final Nights. He has returned to his oracular ways, looking to predict the signs of the End Times so that he can intervene. This has meant establishing ties with various other occultists and prophets of Gehenna, the so-called Hechiceros del Teocalli, and seeking out other Freaks gifted in the arts of prophecy.

Last year, a Camarilla turncoat named Eliza Villanova came to him seeking instruction. She has proven an apt pupil and oracular aid. Together, they have undertaken the task of recovering some of the more obscure applications of Dementation once used by the sryers of the ancient Malkavian orders destroyed during the Anarch Revolt.

He has seen several signs that his own diablerie is in the offing, possibly at the hands of Eliza. He is as yet unsure what role, if any, this plays in the larger course of the Final Nights, but has taken the precaution of isolating his student from his bloodier tasks. These include, of late, studying and eliminating the aberrant Cainites who are hallmarks of the so-called Time of Thin Blood. He has already destroyed a score of 14th and 15th generation whelps and is now pursuing rumors of a pack of feral Caitiff in the eastern shantytowns. Several recent auguries point to a brood of vampiric "sisters" playing an important role, possibly by eliminating Sabbat who could help defeat the Antediluvians.

ELIZA VILLANOVA, THE SEARCHER

Background: Eliza was just another of the beautiful monsters of Camarilla Atlanta until 1997. Then, like a

spike driven straight into her brain, the madness returned. She'd heard whispered stories of course, about how once upon a time the manias that plagued her clan's blood had been infectious, that Malkavian oracles and witches could reduce living and unliving kings to drooling lunatics with a glance. She'd never really believed, however, just like she'd never believed in the trite stories of Caine and Abel, of Nod and the Second City. It was all so much unsubstantiated bullshit to frighten gullible feebs.

Then it all came true. A clanmate came to Elysium from one city or another to introduce himself. He looked at Eliza, smiled once and her world exploded. The ability to inflict madness, the lost art of the clan, bubbled up from within her blood. For an instant, she felt the entirety of what she's come to recognize as the Madness Network, an ephemeral bond between all Malkavians. In it she saw glimpses of other places and other times, of a night not far off when ancients would rise to feed on their young. That split-second past, Eliza's bond with the web faded, but she remembered her own prophecy of Gehenna and it destroyed any faith she had in the ways of the Camarilla.

Over the next few years, Eliza felt the seed of Dementation grow, but at a frustratingly slow pace. If she was to be ready for the Final Nights she knew were coming, she had to know more. The clanmate who had infected — no, *liberated* — her was gone. She drove mortal after mortal mad with her experimentation and it gained her precious little.

Finally, in 1999, the Sabbat took Atlanta. Many locals were terrified, some died, most fled. She joined up. The *antitribu*, it seemed, had never lost the gift of Dementation and she had to know all its secrets. When some shovelhead cornered her, she stripped the Sabbat's mind of his appropriate memories and took her place among the mass-Embraced canon fodder. For a few months, it was a wild ride with the packs of Sabbat rampaging up and down the East Coast of the US.

By the time some petty priest told Eliza she'd earned the right to become True Sabbat, she was more than ready for the Creation Rites. After watching her hunt down a Camarilla renegade (once upon a time, Eliza's coterie-mate), that same priest applied a flaming brand to Eliza's forehead and dubbed her a full member of the Sword of Caine. That title meant little to her, but the freedom of action it gave her did. To understand her vision of the coming apocalypse, Eliza needed to hone her skills at Dementation, and that meant finding a mentor. The search brought her to Mexico.

She arrived at the Terminal Norte bus station two years to the night after the Sabbat attack on Atlanta. One of the city's countless homeless shuffled by and smiled at her, with the same smile as that which had infected her. She followed the soiled man and he brought her to a colonial era mansion in the Zona Rosa. There, among the desiccated corpses of the family that legally owned the building, she found a corpulent vampire shoveling a cold gruel of coagulated blood and mashed roaches into his



maw. He grunted, vomited bug juice into a silver spittoon and said, "Ah, you're here. Finally."

This, she soon discovered, was Bishop Rodolfo, and he had been expecting her. He made her his student and began instructing her in Dementation and the shadow history of the Sabbat Malkavians. She learned to see patterns and oracles in the spatter of blood and dance of flames, to look with what Rodolfo called the "Eyes of Chaos." She learned of the ancient mystery cults that once unified the clan and of the Madness Network that still bound them together. Using it, she has touched the minds of the mad across Mexico and even — in a heady moment — a madman in Gdansk and another in Montevideo. With the bishop's help she has met others concerned by the dawning of the End Times and shared blood with them.

Study and prophecy, however, cannot avert disaster. Eliza knows that Gehenna is coming and she is determined to be ready for the battle. Rodolfo and the Lazarene Viuda Blanca (his most influential ally) are more fascinated than concerned by the coming end, and are thus unlikely to make useful allies when the time comes. Eliza is not wholly comfortable with adding more betrayals to her resume, but she doesn't have much choice.

Eliza has an immaculate suite in the coach house of Bishop Rodolfo's mansion. She allows in none of the dust, gore and muck in which he revels, and often changes all her clothing after visiting her mentor. As a relative newcomer, Eliza has no direct influence in Mexico. Her association with Rodolfo and the occultists known as Los Hechiceros del Teocalli, however, give her a certain prestige.

Unbeknownst to her mentor and coven-mates, Eliza is seeking allies beyond the circle of End Time occultists. The Brute Natalio is the most promising candidate. While something of a hooligan, he understands the stakes at hand and is very wary of complacency. Eliza has also had

some discussions with the Keeper Don Polanco, who seems concerned with a rot at the core of the Sabbat itself.

Image: In sharp contrast to her mentor, Eliza is fastidious about her appearance and has a cold, sharp beauty. Her skin is a perfect pearl in color, which allows her auburn hair and bright blue eyes to stand out in sharp relief. She dresses for the occasion, but always on the serious side of things: formal suits and cocktail dresses rather than casual clothing. Her wardrobe tends toward whites and blacks, and is perfectly tailored.

Roleplaying Hints: Close your eyes and you see that one, terrifying image of the ancients rising to consume you and your kind. That vision is what has guided you for the past five years, leading you to abandon old ways, betray old compatriots, and sacrifice shred after shred of your soul. If that's the cost of survival, however, you'll pay it willingly. If Rodolfo has to be added to the tally, so be it.

Clan: Malkavian *antitribu*

Sire: Rebecca Belmont

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Perfectionist

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1912

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 2

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Knowledges: Academics 3, Finance 1, Investigation 3, Linguistics 3, Occult 3

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Dominate 3, Dementation 4

Backgrounds: Mentor 4, Rituals 1

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 6

GENERAL PERFIDIO DÍOS, THE MOCKER

Background: In the 1890s, General Porfirio Díaz was at the height of his power, and making fun of him was not safe. That did not stop Andrés de Hojeto, a political science graduate student with a taste for comedy, from using the persona of "General Perfidio" to mock the cronyism and repression of the Díaz regime. The police regularly arrested Andrés for minor, imaginary infractions of the law and the University expelled him. Andrés responded with even harsher satire. Finally a gang of cops grabbed Andrés off the street, beat him and left him in an alley with several bones broken.

That was when his sire noticed Andrés. The young satirist, dressed in his medallion-spangled "General Perfidio" coat, obscurely reminded Diego Diego of his mortal father, whom he had devoured at his own Embrace. Diego Diego felt that he somehow redressed this crime by rescuing Andrés, feeding him vitae until he healed, and then Embracing him.



The deadly beating, mortal death and the blood of Malkav unhinged Andrés' mind, and the Creation Rites sent him into the full-blown madness of the Malkavian *antitribu*. Andrés completely abandoned his former self. He became General Perfidio Díos, betrayer of all the laws of God and man.

Over the decades, General Perfidio distinguished himself through his skills of satire, street theater and political sabotage. The Malkavian *antitribu* first waged a one-Cainite war on the Díaz regime. His methods ranged from forging strange and contradictory government directives to murdering and dismembering bureaucrats. When the Mexican Revolution began, Perfidio decided that he was satisfied and turned his attention to the Camarilla. Another decade of "revolutionary activities" against Camarilla princes won Perfidio leadership of a pack. After another fighting the Jyhad another 20 years, Perfidio and his pack settled down in Mexico City to train the next generation of warriors. Perfidio's pack grew into a large coven, the Institutional Devolutionary Party, and the General himself received a promotion to bishop.

General Perfidio enjoys a reputation as one of the Sabbat's youngest masters of political subversion. He has made a systematic study of how governments crumble into incompetence and civil war, and advises other packs in how to attack Camarilla princes politically. Perfidio argues that invading a Camarilla-held city with guns blazing should be the last stage of a Jyhad, when the city's "Kindred" are so fractured by suspicion, discontent and personal ambition that they cannot mount a meaningful defense. Sabbat coalitions that recruit the General as their political consultant win their Jyhads more often than not.

The General lacks the rank to wield real power in the politics of Mexico City's Sabbat, but quite a few neonates listen to him. Perfidio makes his rhetorical points through slapstick and satire: He leaves his audience laughing with

scorn at the Camarilla and its dupes, and confident of victory against the Antediluvians.

Not all of Perfidio's ideas find wide acceptance, though. For 30 years, the General has warned about the sect's dependence on revenants and argued that the Sabbat should not scorn to dirty its talons with business and politics. The minions of the Antediluvians use these tools; the Sabbat must take those tools away and claim them for its own ends. He puts his words into practice through business investments.

Perfidio also meddles in city politics to protect communal havens, or simply to keep in practice by destroying a minor ministry. Cainites who listen to his political and economic arguments agree that Perfidio makes a lot of sense. On the other hand, the General argues with equal passion that the Ventrue Antediluvian wrote NAFTA and that snake-men from the Hollow Earth infiltrate the Institutional Revolutionary Party. Perfidio's tendency to see conspiratorial hands in everything hurts his credibility with some Cainites.

Image: General Perfidio has fluffy sideburns and handlebar mustache like his namesake General Porfirio Díaz, but is a youngish man with brown hair. He wears a black velvet greatcoat slathered with gold braid and costume-jewelry medals, in a parody of a Latin *generalissimo*. The General can deftly mimic the pompous oratory of an old-time politician, or lay out an argument with the logic and precision of a professor. He often performs comical imitations of other well-known Sabbat when he criticizes their positions.

Roleplaying Hints: Keep the others laughing, so they listen to the rest of what you say — the part that matters. You've felt the hand of tyranny break your bones. How can you not fight back? But there are so many tyrants — layers and layers of them, heading back to... who? The Antediluvians, surely, but other powers as well. Play the fool when you must, but you have to warn them. They have to know. They need the tools to fight, the tools you can give them, the tools of politics and economics. Didn't New York show you were right? Whoops, too intense — do your imitation of Bishop Natalio exhorting the masses to revolution. Keep the others laughing....

Clan: Malkavian *antitribu*

Sire: Diego Diego

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Trickster

Generation: 11th

Embrace: 1900

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Empathy 2, Expression 3, Instruction 2, Leadership 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Firearms 1, Performance 3, Professional Skill (comedy) 2, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Academics 2, Economics 2, Expert Knowledge (conspiracy theory) 3, Law 2, Occult 1, Politics 4, Sabbat Lore 3

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Dementation 3, Obfuscate 3

Backgrounds: Influence 2, Resources 3, Sabbat Status 3

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 2

Willpower: 4

NOSFERATU ANTITRIBU

TERESITA, GODMOTHER TO THE DAMNED

Background: The female Creep called Teresita does not admit to any surname, or speak of her mortal past. She says that her true existence began when Gerhardt the Lizard took her from life, an event she calls an improvement in every way but one: Gerhardt belonged to the Camarilla. He was an archon, and he used Teresita as his assistant... a *disposable* assistant, he let her know. He Embraced her only because he needed someone small to pass through narrow pipes. If she wanted to survive, she would have to work very hard to please him and his master, and avoid the notice of the Kindred they hunted.

Teresita worked very hard indeed, and Gerhardt never found an excuse to force her into a blood bond. After a few decades, he granted his midget assistant a measure of trust. He learned his folly when Teresita led a Sabbat pack to their haven.

Joining the Sabbat meant further decades of hard work to gain trust. In time, Teresita not only earned a place in the Black Hand, she became a dominion. She won great respect for her cunning schemes to infiltrate Black Hand agents into Camarilla-held cities. When no seraph is in Mexico City, Teresita is the city's ranking member of the Black Hand. She regularly interacts with prisci, archbishops and cardinals. She deals with outside contractors such as Caridad de Flores and Efraín Sortano. The Sabbat entrusts the tiny dominion with a great variety of secrets.

Since the ancient Assamite seraph Izhim ur-Baal abandoned the Sabbat, the Black Hand has needed a new seraph. Teresita lobbies for the spot. Has she not proved herself enough times, both as a strategist and in the field? While attending *ritae*, she wonders aloud if the "egalitarian" Sabbat intends the Black Hand to have a glass ceiling for female Cainites, or for Nosferatu. Appointing a new seraph remains fairly low on the Consistory's agenda. Gossiping Sabbat say, however, that Teresita is the leading contender for the post, if only because she spends more time in Mexico City than any of the older and putatively stronger dominions.

Teresita carefully hides that she still has long-distance contact with the Nosferatu information network, including access to SchreckNet. With the help of computer-savvy Black Hand members, she created a fairly detailed online persona as a Nosferatu anarchist in Los Angeles. Through this persona, she gathers clan gossip and trades information about Sabbat whom she dislikes in return for information



about Camarilla Kindred. She has never sold out any Sabbat of higher rank than a ductus, and can present plausible evidence that each victim failed or betrayed the Sabbat in some way. Nevertheless, the revelation would destroy any chance of Teresita becoming a seraph.

Image: Teresita stands 3'8" tall, with a slender figure. She dresses in frilly petticoats with lots of lace. A lace mobcap on her head hides her few tufts of short, gray hair. Like her long-dead sire, scales and warts cover much of Teresita's mottled, bluish skin.

Roleplaying Hints: You are not angry, you are *very disappointed*, and your reprimands do not mean that you love the childer in your care any less. (Compared to you, most Sabbat are childer.) Ask them to tell you their problems, and tell them how proud you will be after they crush their enemies and the foes of the Sabbat. When one of your Black Hand soldiers or cadets performs well, give him a treat by abducting some tasty mortal child from the streets. You adopt a winsome manner, like a cheerful nanny. You call neonates and your Black Hand soldiers "darling child" (*niño querido*) and similar endearments as you pinch cheeks, tidy their clothes, and crush the bones of anyone who fails you.

Although the Black Hand remains officially apolitical, you support the Ultra-Conservative faction. You know that the Sabbat cannot defeat the Camarilla without absolute unity, discipline and strong leadership.

Clan: Nosferatu *antitribu*

Sire: Gerhardt the Lizard

Nature: Creep Show

Demeanor: Caretaker

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1672

Apparent Age: unpleasantly indeterminate

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 5
Talents: Brawl 3, Empathy 2, Instruction 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4
Skills: Animal Ken 3, Etiquette 2, Security 4, Stealth 3, Survival 3
Knowledges: Black Hand Lore 4, Camarilla Lore 2, Computer 1, Investigation 2, Linguistics 1 (French), Sabbat Lore 4
Disciplines: Animalism 4, Auspex 3, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 4, Potence 4, Presence 2
Backgrounds: Alternate Identity 2, Black Hand Membership 3, Rituals 2
Virtues: Conviction 3, Instinct 2, Courage 3
Morality: Path of Power and the Inner Voice 5
Willpower: 6

ICARUS, THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE

Background: Douglas Portillo was an Atlanta Nosferatu when the city still belonged to the Camarilla. In fact Portillo was card-carrying Kindred, participating in the nightly Jyhad as an information broker for the highest bidder. He was good enough that he earned the nickname "Pawnshop," as in a pawnshop of secrets. In the weeks before the Camarilla found the Sword of Caine thrust into its bosom, however, several Kindred met with Final Death. The Camarilla launched an investigation, not realizing the seemingly random murders were a decoy for the Sabbat's invasion. Kindred agents under the sheriff and prince swept through the city, using Auspex to detect the telltale black lines of diablerie in a vampire's aura. They found those fractured webs in Portillo's aura.

Douglas Portillo was as bewildered as his associates. He even spoke with the conviction of truth and innocence, leading the primogen to wonder if Portillo was a

Manchurian Candidate (someone conditioned into believing his false identity, but acting on the enemy's behalf in moments of lucidity). That's when the Sabbat launched its initiative. The primogen, rushed by the assault, tore through Portillo's thoughts, leaving shredded memories and torn identities behind. They were hoping Portillo's real persona had some clue as to the Sabbat's strategy, but their efforts left him traumatized and frightened out of his wits. The Sabbat was now sweeping through the city like a flood, leaving the primogen little time to escape. They ordered Portillo's destruction before departing for safety, but a moment of confusion allowed the Sabbat spy to invoke one of the gifts of Caine and slip away.

Portillo realized his memories were too fragmented to be real, but his real identity as Vicente Loizillon was equally broken by the primogen's heavy-handed attempt to breach his secrets. Portillo was no longer sure which scrap of memory belonged to the conditioning and which was actually his. Worse yet, when the Sabbat finally found him, their halfhearted attempt at restoring his real identity met with failure. Portillo/Loizillon knew the reason why; Sabbat didn't fix what was broken — they replaced it. Again, Portillo/Loizillon vanished, though the Sabbat was less concerned with tracking down a basket case. They simply reported him as a casualty of the Atlanta struggle and went about securing the city.

Portillo/Loizillon realized he was now a pariah to the Camarilla and beneath the Sabbat's notice. Yet his only hope rested with the Sabbat who conditioned him in the first place, and with Mexico City, which seemed integral to some of his memories. Because he was neither Portillo nor Loizillon, the fractured spy renamed himself Icarus Falling and made his way south, to where he believed was once home.

Icarus has been in Mexico City for the last two years now, trying to unearth his real identity. He remembers enough about the Sabbat to participate in sect activities, but he also retains some of Portillo's values, like maintaining the Masquerade. Icarus is particularly uncomfortable with the sect's violent nature, but is finding allies in like-minded individuals such as Joseph O'Grady. Unfortunately, the information-gathering portion of his existence is very slow going since he has little information to bargain with just yet. None of the younger Cainites recognize him, and he is afraid of approaching elder sect members for fear of their reaction if they *do* know him. It's the same reason he avoids the local Nosferatu. To worsen matters, Icarus saw a glimmer of recognition when he encountered Teresita, and has the vaguest recollection of being part of the Black Hand. If he was, however, he's at a loss to explain why he's missing their brand on his right hand.

Icarus shifts around from cemetery to cemetery using his Obfuscate and squatting in windowless mausoleums and crypts. Occasionally, when the desire for a real bed or clean clothing proves overwhelming, Icarus spends a couple of days resting at the El Calpulli Rojo compound as O'Grady's guest.

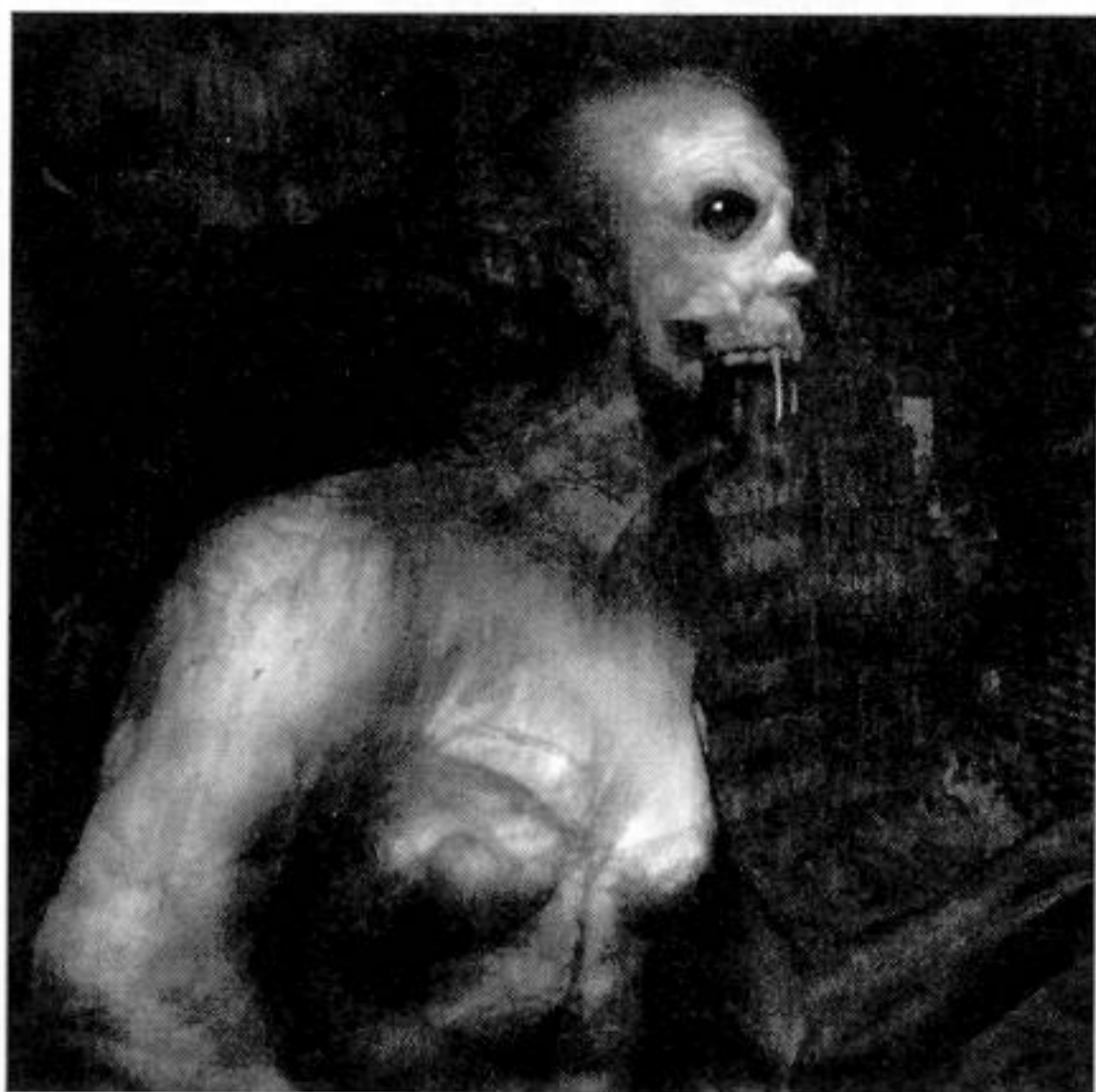


Image: Icarus wears a filthy and dark-colored poncho and wide-brimmed sombrero to hide his face and frame. Otherwise, he has a fish-like head, compacted at the sides with an almost pucker mouth and bulging eyes. His almost non-existent chin accentuates the two fangs jutting down from under his upper lips.

Roleplaying Hints: How do you know who to trust when your own damn memories are a shattered parade of non-sequiturs? You've managed to separate many of your thoughts into those belonging to Portillo and those of Loizillon. Because neither seems any more real to you than the other, however, you've managed only to pick and chose your preferences instead of sticking to one identity. That's the problem. Portillo is every bit a part of you as Loizillon, so when the time comes to really discover yourself, can you destroy one identity in favor of the other? You don't know, but at the very least, you want the option. Hopefully you'll have one soon, because after coming in contact with Teresita of the Black Hand, you suspect someone's watching you.

Clan: *Nosferatu antitribu*

Sire: Unknown

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Enigma

Generation: 8th (apparently through diablerie)

Embrace: Unknown

Apparent Age: indeterminate

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Panhandling 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Firearms 2, Fire Dancing 1, Melee 2, Performance 2, Security 1, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Knowledges: Black Hand Lore 2, Camarilla Lore 1, Computer 2, Investigation 1, Occult 1, Sabbat Lore 1

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Fortitude 3, Obfuscate 5, Potence 4, Protean 2

Backgrounds: Alternate Identity 1, Contacts 1

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 4

PANDERS

FEO RAMOS, THE CAINITE CABBIE

Background: Young Feo Ramos came from a poor family in Chalco. He spent much of his time at the Aeropuerto Internacional Benito Juárez. He asked rich American tourists if he could carry their bags, find them a cab, help them any way he could — for a small fee. Some of the money went to his parents. Feo spent the rest on American magazines, music and clothes. He desperately wanted to go to the United States, where everyone was rich. He himself would become rich, and fly in jets with beautiful women on his arm....



The Sabbat who plucked Feo off the street knew nothing of this. They simply wanted a few shovelheads to draw out a Lupine they had vowed to kill. Feo survived the plan through sheer good luck, instinctive Celerity and American running shoes. He does not know which Cainite sired him — half the pack met Final Death anyway. Left to his own devices, Feo returned to the airport and resumed as much of his old life as he could.

Twenty years later, Feo still waits in the terminal for tourists in need of, well, anything. Feo owns his own cab and boasts that he can find anything or anyone in Mexico City, for the lowest price. He can deliver on that boast, too. As he drives, Feo quizzes his fares about life in their country. A tourist who tips generously and answers Feo's questions with good humor finds him the best darn cabby and all-around arranger they ever saw — though he can drive them only at night. He seems to know what they want before they speak.

Feo eagerly flirts with pretty American women, who sometimes fall for his puppy-love charm (and lose a bit of blood as a result). A surly or high-handed tourist finds Feo less useful, and one who travels alone may find Feo drinking him dry and dumping his body in a shantytown alley.

Thanks to his well-developed Auspex, Feo spots many vampires who fly into AIBJ. He makes a special effort to meet foreign Cainites. Scare-stories about fiendish Camarilla elders and their diabolical manipulations dissuade Feo from actually moving to the United States, but he still loves hearing the stories of American Sabbat. In return Feo guides visitors to temporary havens, open hunting grounds, cultural attractions and other Sabbat. If Feo cannot arrange a meeting with a Sabbat, he knows someone who can.

Feo tries to be every Cainite's confidant, but he never forgets that some Licks make better company than others. If

a visiting character makes an influential enemy in Mexico City, Feo will cheerfully deliver that character into that enemy's grip (though he personally eschews violence). A local bishop's favor matters more than the enmity of more distant Cainites. Sometimes this comes as a pleasant surprise to a Cainite who did not know that his enemy was in town....

The Cainite Cabbie sleeps in a basement room in Venustiano Carranza district, not far from the airport. He pays his rent on time, so his landlord asks no questions. Feo associates with El Grito de Dolor because they are the most powerful coven nearby, but until a few years ago he rarely attended *ritae*.

Image: Feo Ramos looks like a gawky young man with pomaded black hair, a wide-eyed smile and clothes from trendy, moderately upscale American stores such as Nordstrom's. Most of these clothes, however, are actually pirated imitations. He keeps up with the myriad fads in American male clothing and ornament. His fares endure a near-constant chatter about clothes, music, TV and other light topics, with the occasional leading question to draw out the other person's interests and opinions. Feo seems nice, and well worth a generous tip. Everybody knows Feo, and seems to like him.

Roleplaying Hints: You can't be too helpful. Whatever someone wants, from Siamese twin hookers to a meeting with an archbishop (and not the Sabbat kind), you eagerly do your best to arrange. Use *Auspex* to read the minds of mortals and gauge the emotions of your fares. Spend that *Willpower* point to hear the thoughts of Cainite fares; you may find something of advantage to you or to someone you can please. If you find yourself disagreeing with someone, change the subject. If someone asks about your past, say something vague and then change the subject. If you sell someone out, smile, say it was nothing personal and be grateful that you still wear the best running shoes that money can buy. Never get into a fight if you can possibly help it; talk your way out of a situation, or run away.

Clan: They say you're a Pander. Isn't being a Sabbat enough?

Sire: Don't know, don't care

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Capitalist

Generation: 13th

Embrace: 1977

Apparent Age: late teens

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Hobby Talent (pop culture) 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 3, Firearms 1, Melee 1, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Investigation 2, Area Knowledge (Mexico City) 4, City Secrets (Mexico City) 4, Linguistics 1 (English)

Disciplines: *Auspex* 4, *Celerity* 1

Backgrounds: Contacts 5, Resources 1

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 3

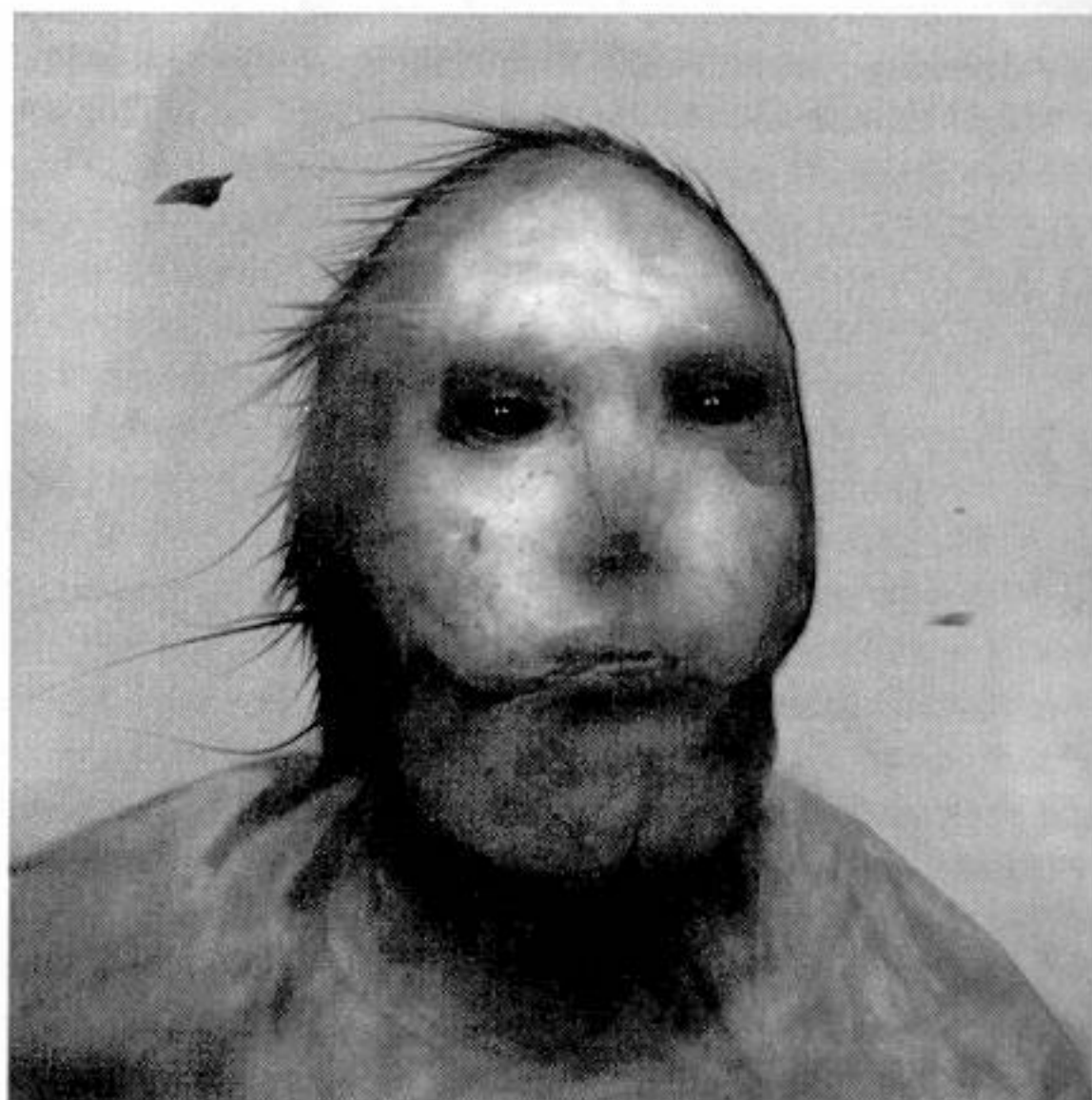
JAGGEDY ANDY, FILTH ANGEL

Background: It's an odd distinction to say "Sascha Vykos tried to kill me." Actually, most Sabbat know that Sascha Vykos rarely tries killing a mortal. If it wanted you dead, you'd be dead; otherwise Sascha is just torturing you. In fact, in Andy's case, Sascha did kill him. Andy just can't admit it yet.

Andy Jeffries was a typical *gringo* tourist stereotype in Mexico City on a group excursion with friends. He'd heard about the high crime rate and dangerous streets, but his badge of invulnerability was his citizenship. He was an American, and nobody fucked with Americans, especially a group of them. Andy and friends acted invulnerable as well, laughing loudly at all the "jobless, lazy spics," shouldering their way through crowds and being obnoxious wherever they went.

On the tail-end of their Mexico City excursion, Andy and his four friends piled into Feo Ramos' cab, demanding he take them to a strip club so they could watch "some Mexican whores dance." Ramos smiled with the gratuitous *si, senor* that the five *gringos* expected from all Mexicans, and deposited them at the communal haven where a hunting party was gathering mortals for an upcoming Blood Feast. Andy and friends remained caged guests of the Sabbat for a week, an ordeal horrifying enough to frighten and cow Andy's entourage—but not Andy. He howled protests and expletives at these "cultist freaks," and demanded his release as an American. The hunting party might have drained him on the spot, but they wanted to savor his death.

Finally, on the night of the feast, the Sabbat hung all its mortal sacrifices upside-down before slitting their throats one by one. Each victim died at the hands of Sabbat notables in town for the feast, and Andy earned Sascha's knife. Frightened and at wits end, however, Andy executed his last act of mortal defiance.



Andy spit in Sascha's face.

The gathered Sabbat howled and descended upon Andy, but Sascha held them back with a gesture. It then passed its hand over Andy's face, burying his mouth, eyes, ears, and nose behind a shield of skull-bone and flesh. While Andy twitched and convulsed, suffocating to death, Sascha told the closest Cainite, "Embrace him."

Andy awoke on a garbage pile, his world dark, silent, and in raging torment. Jaime and his Filth Angels found Andy thrashing about and realized his predicament. Like them, he was a throwaway victim; like them, he was garbage to the outsiders. The Filth Angels held Andy down, then took a lead pipe and cracked open his mouth and eyes. Weak and drained of *vitalae*, Andy had little fight left in him. He simply accepted the blood they poured down his throat, and wept bloody streaks at his fate.

A year has passed since Andy suffered Sascha's ministrations, and while he doesn't believe he's dead, he knows he isn't living either. Andy has also learned to crack his own face open with a hammer and chisel when he rises at dusk and his shield of bone and flesh is rejuvenated. His Vinculi with the Filth Angels prevents him from leaving their landfill despite his contempt for them. Still, that night with Sascha taught Andy something about fear, and he now keeps his opinions to himself lest someone commit a greater atrocity against him. Besides, looking the way he does, Andy knows he has no existence left back home; he's a freak, and Mexico City is his prison. Eventually, however, when he learns more about himself and the sect, the former bully will reemerge, and Jaime, ductus of the Filth Angels, may have a threat to his leadership.

Andy is willing to ingratiate himself to any "white" Cainite. Despite Jaime's edict against outsiders, Andy has been sneaking out at night, tentatively exploring his surroundings. That makes him a tool or scapegoat for anyone seeking a dupe, or a potential footman/enforcer if someone recognizes his potential for grunt work.

Image: Andy's face is a normally a curved plate of skin over featureless underlying bone. Every night, however, Andy goes through the miserable torture of chiseling open holes for his eyes and ears (he ignores his flat nose). To open his mouth, however, Andy cracks and breaks open a ragged slash where his lips once were, past the jaw's hinges to the edge of the skull's facial plate. This allows him to bite victims, perforating their skin with the jagged and broken bone around his maw, and giving him a wide, ear-to-ear gash. He dresses like a derelict with soiled clothing and filth-matted hair. Most people, however, can't look past the face.

Roleplaying Hints: This is a nightmare... it must be. Nothing can be this horrible, this vivid, right? The nightly pain of breaking open your face, the jitters and clawing anxiety that screams for blood every evening... none of it real. Wake up, Goddammit! These spics treat you like family and you can't stand them... wait... did you just say that out loud? It's hard to tell anymore. Gotta be more careful... there are other nightmares out there worse than this one, or at least that's what they say. Can't be, but

you're not taking the risk. Just shut up and don't say anything and maybe you'll wake up... please....

Clan: Panders

Sire: Unknown

Nature: Bravo

Demeanor: Conformist (recent change)

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 2001

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 1, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Intimidation 3

Skills: Crafts 2, Drive 2, Survival 2

Knowledges: Academics 1, Law 2

Disciplines: Celerity 1, Fortitude 1, Potence 2

Backgrounds: None

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 2

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 3

Note: Because Andy deliberately hurts himself every evening to see, hear, and feed, he suffers one level of lethal damage automatically. Should he heal that damage by expending blood, the bone and caul return, as it does anyway every dusk. Should he attempt to soak the damage, he cannot break through the bone.

RAVNOS ANTITRIBU

JOSEFA, VOICE OF APOCALYPSE

Background: As a mortal, Josefa Teotalco joined the Church as a nun. She was not pious, but Mexico held few other escapes from grinding poverty. As Josefa mouthed



the worlds and went through the motions, however, her faith grew with practice.

Her sire's pack wanted an all-nun auxiliary for some bizarre scheme now long forgotten. Josefa received the Embrace and a shovel to the head. Her damnation horrified her at first, but she adapted with her usual practicality. How could she advance herself in this society of monsters? Especially when, at 14th generation, she was significantly weaker than the other Cainites in her pack?

Once again, Josefa chose religion. The Path of Caine's faith and practices seemed at least a little like the Church she already knew. She mouthed the words of the *Book of Nod* and went through the motions of the *ritae*. What she lacked in Cainite power, she strove to remedy with a show of devotion. It helped that Josefa sometimes showed uncannily shrewd insight into the hidden motives of the sect's elders. Once again, her faith became genuine with practice. Josefa joined the Little Sisters of Zillah, a pack of other female Sabbat who honored Caine.

Her unlife changed in 1999 as a terrible Week of Nightmares and fratricidal frenzy swept over the *Ravnos antitribu*. Josefa's packmates held her in chains, defended her from other *Ravnos antitribu* who sought her vitae, and marveled as strange, apocalyptic visions played out above Josefa as she screamed and thrashed.

Josefa emerged from her frenzy a changed Cainite. She had seen Gehenna, and survived the judgment of God and Caine upon her clan. The other clans would receive their trials before long. The Sabbat must prepare itself for the last judgment, *now*. The priest for the Little Sisters of Zillah doubted her; Josefa challenged her to Monomacy on the spot, and diablerized her.

The Little Sisters of Zillah now exhort Mexico City's Sabbat to revive their faith in Caine as sole prophet and redeemer of the Cainite race. They say that the Sabbat must make a final, great push to overthrow the Antediluvians' conspiracy of elders. No more strategizing, Josefa says; no more husbanding of forces. The Sabbat must fight like there's no tomorrow, because there isn't.

Josefa's new fervor and apocalyptic charisma make her a rising star in the Sabbat. Dozens of common Sabbat regularly attend her revival meetings and chant her slogans. Josefa's prestige now exceeds her actual Status as a pack priest; consistory members speak of promoting her to a bishopric or guiding her into the Sabbat Inquisition. Not a few bishops see her as an emerging rival they should co-opt or destroy.

Although her Noddist fervor is entirely sincere, Josefa does not actually know much Noddist lore. An influential elder noticed her fanaticism and charisma, and now mentors her. The elder vampire supplies Josefa with Noddist information and rhetorical points to use in her sermons and revival meetings. This elder is not a devout Noddist, but Josefa's gratitude for the help — and her limited knowledge — blinds her to the distortions and outright lies that her mentor plants in the Noddist lore. When Josefa lowered her generation, she lost her intuitive sense

for the plots of fellow Cainites. The elder uses Josefa as an unwitting mouthpiece for his or her own agenda. We leave the identity of the elder for Storytellers to choose for themselves, but any of the three senior *prisci* described in this chapter would suffice.

Image: Josefa looks like a short, middle-aged Indian woman in a nun's habit. Her black wimple frames a broad, dark-skinned face. Sometimes her eyes wildly dart back and forth, and she speaks slowly and softly. When Josefa speaks of Caine and Gehenna, however, her gaze locks at middle distance. She ignores what's actually in front of her as she speaks louder and louder, harder and faster, until the words tumble out like a hail of bullets.

Roleplaying Hints: Turn conversations to the wisdom of Caine or preparing for Gehenna. Tell your fellow Cainites what they must do to survive the terrible judgment to come. They must slay all the elders who serve the vile Antediluvians, destroy the Camarilla, and follow proper Cainite Paths of Enlightenment. You express strong opinions on which Sabbat leaders you consider properly zealous, and which are lax or misguided.

You still feel some connection to your mortal faith. The kine also need to revive their faith in these End Times. When you hear mortals express doubt about the Church, you feel a powerful urge to give them a "religious experience" using your Chimerstry. You feel an equally strong compulsion to provide "visions of Caine" to Sabbat who scoff at your devotions.

Clan: *Ravnos antitribu*

Sire: Luisa Montoya

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Fanatic

Generation: 13th

Embrace: 1974

Apparent Age: 46

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Leadership 3, Streetwise 3

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Etiquette 2, Fire Dancing 4, Melee 2

Knowledges: Academics 1, Law 2, Linguistics (Latin, Zapotec) 2, Occult 1, Sabbat Lore 2

Disciplines: Chimerstry 2, Fortitude 2, Presence 1

Backgrounds: Mentor 4, Rituals 2, Sabbat Status 1

Virtues: Conviction 4, Instinct 2, Courage 5

Morality: Path of Caine 3

Willpower: 5

Merits/Flaws: Face the Flames (see note below, or *Time of Thin Blood*, p. 81)

Note: Josefa does not fear fire as much as other Cainites do. In her nightmare frenzy she saw angels of God's wrath walk the earth as pillars of fire, and the sun multiplied in the heavens. A mere bonfire is nothing: She receives two

extra dice for rolls to resist Röttschreck, on top of her high Courage and Fire Dancing Traits.

SERPENTS OF THE LIGHT

ABBIE NORBERG, FAILED TEMPLAR

Background: Abbie married her high school sweetheart Jack immediately after graduation, and proudly changed her surname to Norberg. A month later her husband was drafted for the Great War, leaving her alone in New Orleans. Abbie promised to stay faithful, while Jack promised to come home alive. After two years, however, Abbie weakened, just once, with a handsome grocer. Abbie kept herself from completing her infidelity, but she had *wanted*... and a few days later, she received the letter telling her that Jack had died Over There.

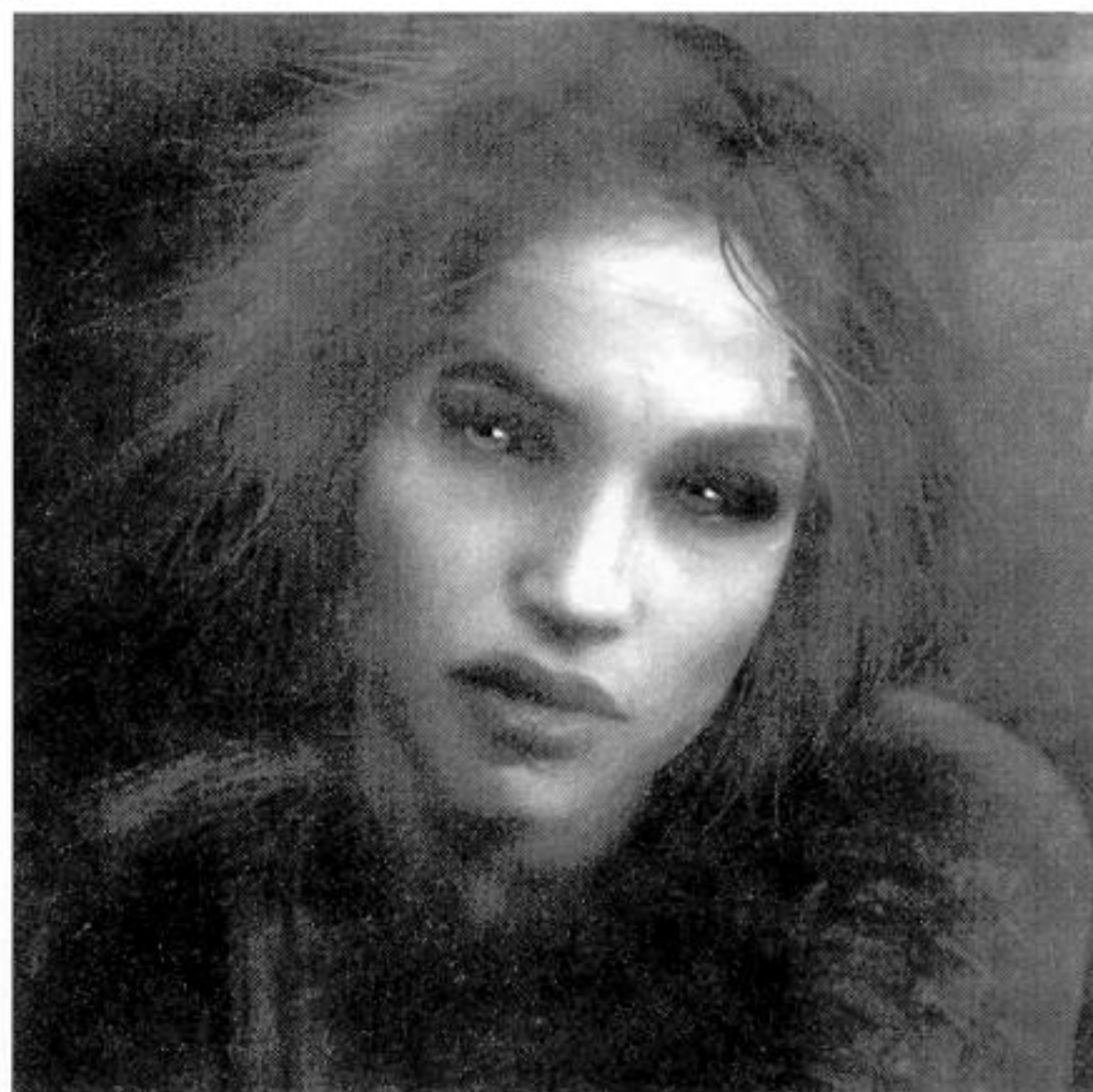
Abbie blamed herself. Crushed with grief and shame, she became an alcoholic. Jack's military pension was not enough for food, booze and a roof over her head, but men offered her money if she would break faith with Jack one more time. Prohibition made alcohol harder to obtain and of a lower quality. A tainted bottle of homebrew hooch nearly killed Abbie and left her blind. By that point she did not much care what happened to her.

That's when a Setite coterie found Abbie. She was a perfect specimen of self-degradation and self-loathing... a perfect recruit. The Setites pulled Abbie out of the gutter, gave her the death she sought, and pulled her back through the Embrace. They trained her to compensate for her blindness, and Abbie excelled. She found her advancement in the cult limited, however, by her secular temperament.

Decades later, a religious struggle within the Followers of Set drove Abbie's cult to seek refuge in the Sabbat. The cult became part of the Serpents of the Light. Abbie's blindness and hyper-developed other senses fascinated scientific Tzimisce and Toreador *antitribu*. They gave Abbie more respect than her clanmates ever had. Efraín Sortano (then merely a dominion) made Abbie his templar so he could study her, and she strove to excel in this new role. After a few decades Efraín retired from active warfare to become a priscus, and he decided that he did not need a templar anymore. Abbie feared that she had failed, but soon found an even better position — as one of the templars who guarded the regent herself! Abbie served Melinda Galbraith to the utmost of her abilities. Melinda trusted Abbie enough to have her guard her door at the 2001 Palla Grande.

Ever since then, however, the regent has shunned her faithful paladin. Abbie does not know why. She drives herself to distraction worrying that she has displeased the regent in some way.

Image: Abbie Norberg was a notable beauty once, but a decade of alcoholism and self-abasement left her faded and worn. The Embrace did not entirely heal her broken veins and jaundiced yellow skin. She has straight, shoulder-length blond hair and a narrow face with strong cheekbones. As a templar, she wears ballistic armor be-



neath a tailored business suit and carries a silver-plated bowie knife, nightstick and taser.

Roleplaying Hints: You were so happy. You had a duty and you did it well. You *know* you did it well. You were someone special. Now... How did it all go so wrong? How did you not *notice*? You know where this cycle of brooding and drinking leads, but you don't care anymore. You don't know what to do. You knew what to do as Jack's wife. You knew what to do as a whore. You knew what to do as a Serpent of the Light and as a templar. Won't someone tell you what to do again?

Clan: Serpents of the Light

Sire: Missy Shillingford

Nature: Perfectionist

Demeanor: Soldier

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1927

Apparent Age: early 30s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 3, Streetwise 3

Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 1, Firearms 1, Melee 4, Vamp 1

Knowledges: Linguistics 3 (Braille, Creole, English, French), Occult 2, Setite Lore 1, Sabbat Lore 1

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Obfuscate 2, Serpents 3

Backgrounds: Sabbat Status 2

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 4

Morality: Path of Honorable Accord 3 and dropping

Willpower: 4

Merits/Flaws: Alternate Sense (see Chapter Five).

Note: What follows deals with Abbie's future — how she reacts when the regent is exposed as an impostor. The

revelation crushes Abbie all over again. She failed. She was not good enough and someone died because of it. Even worse, some Cainites think she may have betrayed the regent in some way. Abbie withdraws from Sabbat society to seek solace in the blood of alcoholics. She can be roused from her misery, however, if someone offers her a chance to find the real murderer of Melinda Galbraith, or some other way that she can redeem her honor.

TOREADOR ANTITRIBU

VENERE CARBONI, THE DEMON MAESTRO

7th generation, childe of Malabranca

Clan: Toreador *antitribu*

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Gallant

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1530s

Apparent Age: mid-20s

The priscus Venere Carboni was Embraced not long after the Anarch Revolt, in the decades when scattered bands of anarchs swore blood-pacts to each other and defined themselves as the Sabbat. As a mortal, Venere wandered through central Italy as a troubador. Bandit attacks followed wherever he wandered, for as he sang and played his lute, Venere watched and learned when merchants were due to travel. The small company of brigands met their match, however, in one of the new Sabbat packs. The Cainites decided that they wanted music after dining on the rest of the bandits, and so they spared the minstrel. Venere played for his life, and played a little too well: A Toreador *antitribu* in the pack Embraced him. The troubador continued to scout out victims, but now for the Sabbat.

Over the centuries Venere rose through the Sabbat's ranks until he became a priscus in the late nineteenth century. He moved from Italy to Mexico so he could watch the revolution. Venere spent much of his time in Mexico City after that, but made occasional short sojourns abroad on sect diplomatic missions or junkets to watch civil wars and make them worse.

Centuries of practice make Venere one of the greatest musicians in the world. If it has strings to strum, pluck or bow, Venere can play it, and likely better than any mortal. He learned how to interweave the Toreador's emotion-twisting power into his songs and music. Venere amuses himself by playing the guitar in mariachi bands and trendy Condesa bars and nightclubs. He reweaves the emotions of the mortals around him to create playlets of lust, jealousy, hate, folly, ambition, rage and fear. His current haven is the back room of one such café. Venere also owns a derelict factory that he converted into a sports arena for Cainites — or rather, his Grimaldi retainer owns it for him.

The Toreador *antitribu* appears as a pale young man with mouse-brown hair, a sparse mustache and fringe of beard and a narrow, mobile face. He usually dresses in jeans and a t-shirt or in his mariachi costume. Venere stands 5'8" tall.

Venere joined the coalition that placed Melinda Galbraith in power. During her regime, Venere served as "party whip" by charming, persuading and negotiating with the coalition's supporters to keep them loyal. He became the consistory's most visible advocate for the Status Quo viewpoint. He also possesses excellent connections among prominent *antitribu* and presents himself as the consistory's advocate for these smaller lineages against the Lasombra-Tzimisce duopoly. Some *antitribu* even believe him.

Venere regards himself as Melinda Galbraith's natural successor as regent. Few Sabbat in Mexico City, and none within the Galbraith coalition, can match his connections among the city's bishops, ducti and priests who form the backbone of the sect. Rank and file Sabbat know him as the impresario responsible for popular Cainite bullfights and *lucha libre* spectacles. His many embassies from Galbraith to cardinals and archbishops around the world give Venere a network of boons and connections beyond Mexico City as well. As a true Status Quo follower, Venere fully supports the war against the Camarilla and the Antediluvians. He believes that the Sabbat's best strategy, however, is to stalk and kill the Methuselahs who serve as the chief agents of the Ancients.

MIGUEL OROZCO

Background: Miguel Orozco remembers poverty too well. He remembers his family's dilapidated shack in the slums and he recalls hating his father for begging and scavenging for money to feed his alcoholism. When Orozco was 12, he approached a local drug dealer and asked him for work. He became a lookout, then a courier, but his father stole most of whatever money Orozco earned for himself. When his father beat him within an inch of his life for withholding pesos, Miguel ran away.

By the time he was in his late teens, Orozco had become an enforcer for a Tijuana Cartel drug dealer of some standing. Orozco, in turn, wasn't magnificently bright or sharp-witted, but his distaste for the pauper's life turned him into a brutal and efficient enforcer. He was destined for underworld respectability as someone's bodyguard. That's when Los Muertos Alegres Embraced him, and that's when Orozco met Carlos Díaz, another enforcer working for a Tijuana Cartel brothel. The two became fast allies.

To Díaz and Orozco, the Sabbat seemed like nothing more than infants playing in the mud. The Sabbat wielded tremendous power and it acted like a lion among men, but it wasn't investing or using its abilities lucratively. In fact, it dwelled like a pauper in many instances, relying on petty theft to bankroll its activities for one more evening of partying. Díaz and Orozco wanted more than a hand-to-mouth existence, and they convinced their pack of the same. They ran small prostitution rings, sold drugs, and kidnapped rich locals for cash. They bought expensive clothes and jewelry, and the members enjoyed a standard of existence unknown to them previously. Unfortunately, Orozco and his materialistic agenda was also responsible for driving two members from the pack. The two complained to Bishop Natalio, who secretly investigated Orozco's activities.

Orozco used his contacts within the Tijuana Cartel to help his pack work as enforcers, couriers, and even distributors. The money was good, and the cartel, which was already known for its violent measures, welcomed the brutality of Orozco and his pack without realizing their curse as Cainites. Díaz and Orozco hoped to rise within the cartel's echelons, eventually assuming positions of power and importance, but Bishop Natalio exposed them and punished them with combined sanctions from the other bishops, stopping their activities cold. Since the Sabbat's interdiction, Orozco has been looking for profit he could disguise as beneficial to the Sabbat. Relying on his contacts and underworld connections, he's hoping to usurp one of the cartel's distribution pipelines into San Diego or Los Angeles, giving the Sabbat a stronger foothold in the region while netting him profit.

Unfortunately, the Tijuana cartel is armed to the teeth. Orozco has yet to win one fight against them. If he assassinates one lieutenant, the Tijuana cartel kills off a handful of his contacts trying to find him. Because of this, Díaz and Orozco have decided to switch tactics and go after the beleaguered Gulf Cartel and its cocaine network. Instead of attacking personnel, Orozco now embraces cartel members to obtain their loyalty through the *Vaulderie*. Alternatively, he approaches ex-cartel members and young thugs within the Sabbat. This has proved to be a more successful gambit, though Orozco still has much to learn about the fine art of balancing personal self-interest with that of the Sabbat.

Orozco and Díaz maintain strong ties to Mexico's underworld, and their influence grows steadily. With each person they embrace, turn into a ghoul or torture, they gain more crucial information and more power to create ripples in Mexico City's criminal counterculture. Unfortunately, their influence also translates as roads leading back to them, and if the major cartels ever discover the would-be drug monarchs trying to claim a kingdom in the heart of established territory, Orozco and the *Encapuchados* will have a cartel war they cannot win. Unfortunately, whether Orozco understands the risks or not, he's never been one for patience or prolonged subtlety.

Orozco is a *contrabandista* to the core, and still measures his successes against that of the cartels. He hopes to pick up the pieces of what he believes is the Gulf Cartel's impending collapse. To facilitate this, Orozco has made ghouls of several dealers working for the Gulf syndicate, and uses their knowledge to feed the Sonora and Juárez Cartels crucial information. He's hoping to spark a feeding frenzy over Gulf interests, then secure men and contacts in the chaotic fallout. With that, he plans on building an Orozco Cartel... for the Sabbat, of course.

Image: Orozco's appearance betrays strong Indian blood in his veins. His skin is dark, though not so much as when he was living, and his lips are full and thick. Otherwise, his wavy black hair falls to his shoulders and he wears imported silk suits when the occasion permits. He is tall, fit and handsome, and his penetrating black eyes draw their share of women, especially single tourists.



Roleplaying Hints: The Sabbat's single-minded devotion to certain principles is maddening. You believe in the sect's principles just as you believed in Catholicism when you attended church regularly as a mortal. At least the Catholic Church permitted you your extravagances on the side, as long as you donated money and offered confession. The Sabbat, however, is even more heavy-handed, blind to the fortunes it could be reaping. You like being rich and well dressed, and you see little contradiction in playing the faithful and pious Cainite while pursuing your indulgences. After all, if the sect advocates personal independence, then why the hell are the bishops riding you so hard?

Clan: Toreador *antitribu*

Sire: Conchita Morales

Nature: Capitalist

Demeanor: Autocrat

Generation: 11th

Embrace: 1993

Apparent Age: mid-20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Dodge 2,

Intimidation 4, Leadership 1, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Drive 3, Etiquette 1, Firearms 3, Security 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2

Knowledges: Finance 1, Underworld Lore 3

Disciplines: Celerity 3, Presence 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 4, Resources 3

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 1, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 5

VENTRUE ANTIRIBU

JOSEPH O'GRADY,
DUCTUS OF EL CALPULLI ROJO

Background: Despite his name, fair skin and strawberry blond hair, Joseph O'Grady is as much a *chilango* (Mexican City denizen) as his swarthier brethren are. Five generations of O'Gradys have lived in Mexico City, and they are not the only Irish-Mexicans in the region. In fact, the Patricios — or "Patricks" — maintain a sizable community, since many fought in every significant skirmish in contemporary Mexican history. Their contribution during the Mexican-American War was enough to earn them a statue dedication in Mexico City.

Joseph O'Grady never felt different from other *chilangos*, and was thus shocked when a gang of Patricios attacked him specifically because of his Irish heritage. They wanted more "green-blooded kinsmen" in the pack, and forced the Embrace upon O'Grady before subjecting him to the even more dubious Creation Rite called "pitching" (as in pitching someone off a high building to see if he survives). That was all the violence O'Grady could handle, though he didn't realize it at the time.

Forced into an existence of brutality, O'Grady tried convincing himself he was a fiend and a monster. After all, his pack of Patricios, the Bean-Sidhe (banshees), acted like beasts, and he was now supposedly no different from them. Despite his rationale, however, each murder and act of brutality sickened Joseph and eroded his already waning spirit through attrition. Still he felt no other recourse available, especially since he knew the Bean-Sidhe would end his existence if he rebelled or questioned their principles.

Fortunately, O'Grady eventually discovered more about the Sabbat and the options available to him. He realized he wasn't relegated to an unlife of brutality nor to the Path of the Feral Heart like the Cainite Patricios who

Embraced him; he also learned about packs like El Calpulli Rojo and Cainites like Frances Derossi. Exasperated with the mindless carnage of his kin, O'Grady fled to El Calpulli Rojo's communal haven and asked for asylum. Derossi accepted the young *vato* into his care, then asked Bishop Natalio to intervene with the Bean-Sidhe on his behalf to forestall any actions against O'Grady.

Although the Bean-Sidhe proved a constant thorn in O'Grady's side, nearly destroying him on a couple of occasions, they eventually drifted north and fell with New York. During those latter years, O'Grady discovered the Path of Honorable Accord and even succeeded Derossi as ductus of El Calpulli Rojo. Since assuming the pack's leadership, O'Grady has been far more active than his predecessor, actually meeting with packs and locating Cainites trapped by circumstance and ignorance as he once was. Unfortunately, some packs barely tolerate O'Grady's evangelical efforts. A few Cainites challenged him to Monomacy, but O'Grady's time with the Bean-Sidhe instilled him with a surprisingly strong fighting spirit. Few opponents properly account for O'Grady's hidden ferocity.

The El Calpulli Rojo compound is the only "home" O'Grady has known since the Embrace. O'Grady is privy to many minor secrets, thanks to those seeking asylum or sanctuary from him. He has become a confessor of sorts, discovering tidbits of information about the various packs from their expatriated members. Most of his bits of info are embarrassing foibles more than gritty secrets, but it does offer O'Grady some leverage over his adversaries. His principle influence lies with Regent Galbraith and Bishop Natalio, though the Regent has been distracted of late. Otherwise, O'Grady knows many of Mexico City's Founded Packs, and is on cordial terms with some of them. A few Cainites owe O'Grady thanks for helping them in personal matters, which O'Grady capitalizes on when the need arises.

Image: Whatever tan O'Grady earned beneath the Mexican sun is long gone, leaving him with his pale, white, Irish complexion. Strawberry blond hair tops his head while his smirk disarms most mortals. People are generally surprised to hear him speak Spanish fluently. O'Grady is also lanky and tops six feet in height. He dresses casually with loose-fitting cotton shirts and jeans.

Roleplaying Hints: Cainites call you a coward because you avoid conflict when possible. They don't know the truth. You killed and murdered with the Bean-Sidhe, eventually fighting that pack off as well. You are tough in any arena, but you see no need to waste that strength battling your sect brethren and sisters... unless it's necessary to keep the jackals off your back. Your prime concerns right now are finding money to maintain the communal haven, as well as rescuing Sabbat who've been deluded into believing violence is their only recourse. The Sabbat needs fighters as much as they need spies, administrative assistants, teachers and even counselors. You're here to help Cainites serve the sect with whatever talents they possess.



Clan: Ventrue *antitribu*
Sire: Angel Shaunessy
Nature: Guru
Demeanor: Architect
Generation: 7th
Embrace: 1949
Apparent Age: early 20s
Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4
Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5
Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Leadership 4, Streetwise 2
Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 3, Melee 1, Survival 2
Knowledges: Finance 2, Investigation 1, Linguistics 1, Politics 2, Underworld Lore 1
Disciplines: Celerity 2, Dominate 2, Fortitude 3, Presence 2
Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Herd 4, Sabbat Status 2
Virtues: Conviction 4, Instinct 2, Courage 4
Morality: Path of Honorable Accord 7
Willpower: 6

RICO LOCO, THE MAD BOMBER

Background: Ricardo Alvarez came from a middle-class family in Guadalajara. He was frail and needed braces and glasses; he got picked on a lot, until he discovered the joys of homemade fireworks. Things that went boom brought him the admiration of the other kids and set the course of his life and undeath.

College brought Ricardo to Mexico City, and like many students, he fell in with a radical leftist crowd. Having a real live bomb-maker in their group made Ricardo's new friends feel wonderfully dangerous. Once in a while they made a statement by blowing up a billboard belonging to a corporation they disliked.

The Tlatelolco massacre changed Ricardo into a more genuine radical. He did not attend the rally but some of his friends did, and one died. Ricardo decided to retaliate by bombing a police station... and his friends decided that they were not quite *that* radical. Ricardo found himself all alone and on the run.

The Sabbat found him. His sire, a member of El Grito de Dolor, thought that the coven could use a bomb-throwing revolutionary. Ricardo fell in love with Rosa-Maria Obregón the moment they met, though he knew nothing about her, and her causes became his. Rosa-Maria told Ricardo about the Camarilla, the secret masters behind all the oppression in the world. As Rosa-Maria's ghoul, Ricardo demolished or burned the havens of several Camarilla "Kindred" and a few of the coven's enemies in other packs. That was *fun*, and it pleased Rosa-Maria, the most entirely wonderful creature in the universe.

Eventually, Ricardo earned the Embrace and Creation Rites. Ricardo found that his Cainite existence carried blessings with its curses. The subtle shrinking and tightening of his undead body fixed his myopia just fine.

He could toughen his frail body with vitae, and it kept growing tougher and tougher. Vaulderie with his packmates convinced him that he finally had companions who would never abandon him. He lost sex, but then he'd never had that much anyway, and gained the Kiss instead. He fought the power and got to blow shit up. Being Sabbat fucking *rocked*! A few years later, Ricardo received an even greater honor when the Black Hand dominion Teresita invited him to become a cadet. She honed his skills and sharpened his obsessions to make Ricardo the laughing fanatic he is tonight.

Most Sabbat think that Ricardo is out of his mind, hence his common nickname. That doesn't prevent some Sabbat from admiring him. El Grito de Dolor is proud to have him as a member, though Bishop Natalio insists that he keep his workshop far from the communal haven. Like Natalio, Rico Loco sees the Jyhad against the Antediluvians as part and parcel with Mexico's revolutionary struggle for freedom and justice. If the Black Hand has one complaint about Rico, it's that when he kills an enemy he generally leaves nothing to diablerize.

Rico doesn't care. He freely joins any faction or plot that promises him a chance to make a big boom. Camarilla, independent, Sabbat, mortal, other — the target makes no difference. Rico justifies attacks on other Sabbat on the grounds that anyone who would become an enemy of El Grito de Dolor must have fallen from true loyalty to Sabbat ideals, but he really just likes the thrill of power he gets from destruction. Rico is highly skilled at making and planting bombs and incendiary devices. He can build a variety of remotely controlled, timed or booby-trapped devices, but prefers to watch his explosions.

Image: Rico Loco looks like a pale, skinny and unshaven young man with unkempt black hair. He wears inexpensive jeans and shirts and a scorched, chemical-stained leather jacket. He never wears synthetic fibers: They melt and stick when they burn. He smells of gasoline.



and chemicals. He often asks people to speak up and talks loudly himself, because his explosive experiments in his mortal days left him slightly deaf.

Roleplaying Hints: Laugh as you toss around sticks of dynamite and Molotov cocktails, or when you leap from a tall building to belly-flop on the street. You're tough, so flaunt it. Laugh even more if someone warns that "tough" does not mean "indestructible" and you're likely to blow yourself up. Instant death in a massive, fiery explosion? Yeah, that's the way you want to go. Rico feeds only on service station attendants: He likes the hint of oil and gasoline in their blood.

Clan: Ventrue *antitribu*

Sire: Rosa-Maria Obregón

Nature: Celebrant

Demeanor: Complete Fucking Maniac (okay, Deviant)

Generation: 13th

Embrace: 1972

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 3

Skills: Crafts (electronics) 3, Demolitions 4, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Fire Dancing 2, Security 3, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Black Hand Lore 2, Linguistics 1 (English), Science 3

Disciplines: Fortitude 4, Potence 1

Backgrounds: Black Hand Membership 2

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 3

Willpower: 5

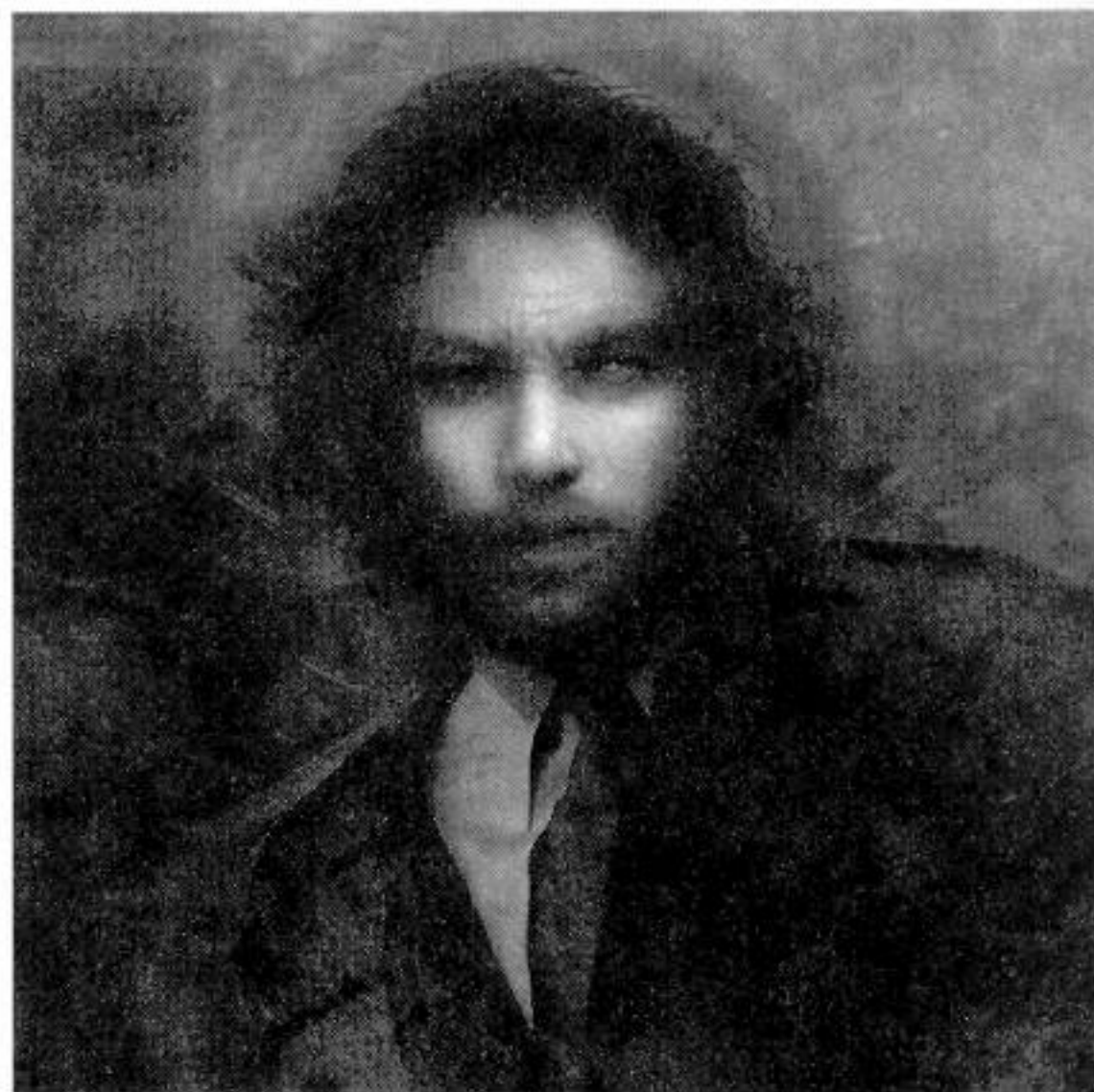
Merits/Flaws: Daredevil, Hard of Hearing

OTHERS

DABLO SALAMANCA Y GRIMALDI, REVENANT IN THE KNOW

Background: The Salamanca branch of the Grimaldi revenant family has served the Sabbat of Mexico with distinction since before Independence. Bankers, financiers, diplomats and majordomos to their Cainite betters, they help maintain the coffers of the Sword of Caine and turn prying mortal eyes aside lest they offend those who have abandoned the concerns of the day. Or at least, so goes the official family history.

In actuality, the Salamancas are — like revenants and ghouls across the globe — the Sabbat's bitches. They tend to some purse-strings, keep key politicians too busy with bribes, whores and smack to care much about stories of nasty shit in the shadows, and have to deal with the after-effects of every wannabe bishop's new and oh-so-disturbing *ritus*. Of course, the Salamancas enjoy the benefits of being one of the richest families in Latin America — they have the best cars, the best drugs, the best homes and suffer the



least grave consequences for their indiscretions. But ultimately, the Salamancas are a family of slaves, and somewhat tawdry ones at that.

Pablo Salamanca y Grimaldi has spent almost two decades trying, very carefully, to change all that. He is the only son of the family patriarch Ernesto Rivera Salamanca and his eighth wife (and third cousin) Francesca Grimaldi. Francesca was brought over from the Grimaldi homeland around Florence to reinvigorate the Salamanca breeding stock, but Ernesto kept her for himself. She complained of course, but plucking out her tongue and eyes solved all that. Her only revenge was to die during childbirth.

Pablo was born during the Revolution. He grew up watching his father and uncles gain concessions and build the family's wealth on the backs of every petty general and president who came along. When he became a man, he drank the blood of Rafaela Lapaz, one of the Tzimisce who tended the Salamanca line. He spent 60 years as her loyal thrall, and she blessed him with several fleshcraftings and other marks of her favor. Then, in 1985, came the earthquake.

When the ground split open, he rushed to his beloved mistress's lair only to find her cowering in a corner in a small patch of shade — the rest of her haven exposed to the sun. He saw the last bit of masonry crumble and the flesh of his undead mistress bubble, tear and crack. She screamed, collapsed and burst into flame. Within a few minutes, the perfect monster Pablo had worshipped for six decades was exposed as nothing but a terrified weakling. The bond of blood that had kept him enslaved was broken.

Pablo's father also died in the earthquake. Pablo quickly rose to a leadership role and now serves as president of El Grupo Salamanca, the family's diversified financial and legal services company. From his offices high in the Torre Latinamericana, he manages the numerous accounts, properties and holding companies needed to

assist the Sabbat as a functional entity. Most Cainites take his services for granted, and that's what he wants — for the time being. While they see him as the powerless fool, he uses his influence to goad key members into dangerous situations — be it raids into Los Angeles or ill-advised Monomacy duels and fire dances. None have noticed just how much of the natural Sabbat attrition over the last couple decades has come from the ranks of those who serve as domitors for Grimaldi revenants. Or just how many of these revenants are now free of the blood bond imposed to keep them loyal.

For his own part, Pablo does his best to hide the fact that he is now dependent on vampiric blood. Approaching a century in age, he needs vitae to keep himself capable, but is all too aware of the emotional effects of drinking vampire blood. Even were he to avoid the all out blood bond, but a single sip creates loyalties and emotions to which he is not anxious to subject himself. To solve this problem, Pablo has created a network designed to bring neonates and other weaklings (mostly American refugees from the chaos in California) to Mexico, where his relatives exsanguinate and destroy them. Although the blood loses its potency quickly, he and many other Salamancas can restore their inhuman reserves by drinking on the spot. The few Cainites who have escaped from the Salamancas met their fate at the hands of Mexican Sabbat.

Pablo maintains a variety of properties, including his high rise offices on Eje Central and a large home in San Angel. He is most proud, however, of the family holdings in the town of Guanajuato. Once the site of the richest silver vein in the Americas, Guanajuato was quite literally carved into a ravine. It includes such strange sights as city streets dug entirely underground and others sunk into crevices with overlooking balconies blocking out sunlight. Guanajuato was once the haven of a clutch of Nosferatu *antitribu*, most of whom met their ends during the earthquake of 1985. Those who didn't ended up on the sharp end of Salamanca stakes.

Pablo was to meet with Regent Galbraith during the *Palla Grande* of 2000, both to discuss some financial matters and to satisfy her hobby of parodying mortal sex-acts. When he arrived, she simply ignored him and proceeded to the ball. He investigated and found signs of a struggle. Over the following months, he came to understand that the current regent was an impostor, and a less-than-brilliant one at that. Pablo has since expended a great deal of resources to keep this secret, both because a weak leader suits his needs and because he suspects the true Galbraith is still out there.

Many members of the so-called Sword of Caine never even wonder about the resources required to maintain the sect's presence in the city. They think such things are quaint mortal concerns. Pablo is constantly amused by just how panicked his targets become when they can no longer access the resources they once took for granted. This advantage is now very much under threat from the newly arrived Eleiser de Polanco, one of the rare Sabbat who pays attention to mortal affairs. An accident, it would seem, is once more in order.

Image: Pablo is the image of the sophisticated Mexican executive. Slightly more relaxed and significantly more suave than his Anglo counterparts on Wall Street, Pablo wears his wavy hair a little long and his suits are cut on an Italian instead of British model. His eyes, a deep sea green, are often hidden behind slightly tinted sunglasses. Under his haute couture attire, Pablo bears the signs of other, less human designers. His former domitor used her fleshcrafting arts to make him more to her liking, most notably transforming his nipples into small fanged mouths with long probing tongues.

Roleplaying Hints: You are very good at playing a very dangerous game. Were the Sabbat — any Sabbat — to uncover your plans to liberate the family, your life would be forfeit. Maintain a façade of calm whenever dealing with the unbreathing things and find ways to vent your rage safely. The city is full of people who won't be missed, whose screams won't ever be heard.

Revenant Family: Grimaldi

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Conformist

First Thrall: 1920

Apparent Age: early 40s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Expression 4, Intimidation 2, Leadership 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 3

Knowledges: Academics 2, Finance 4, Law 3, Linguistics 3, Politics 3

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Potence 1, Presence 1

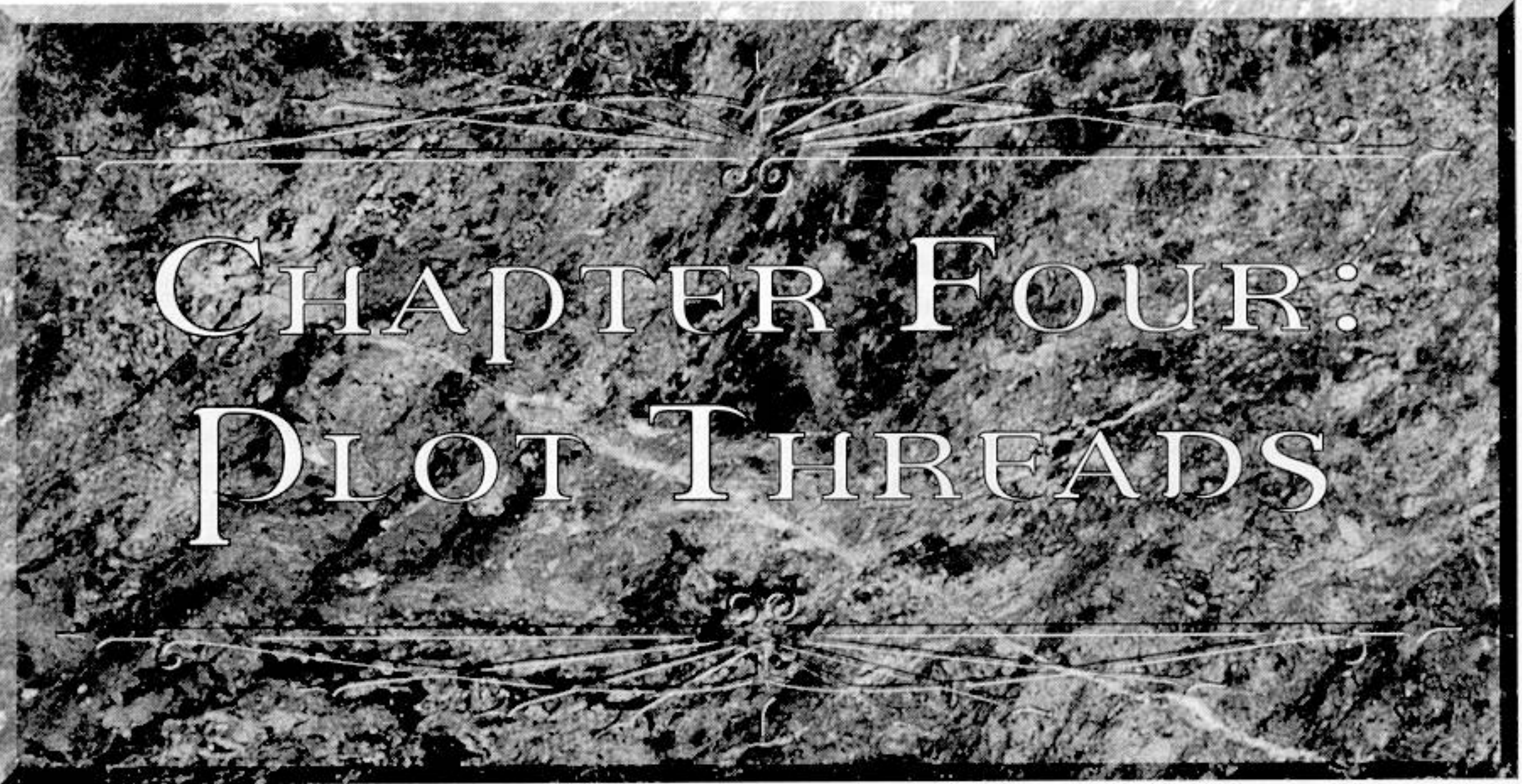
Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 5, Influence 4, Resources 5, Retainers 4

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 6





CHAPTER FOUR: PLOT THREADS

A setting and a bunch of characters do not, by themselves, make a story. This chapter suggests ways to make Mexico City come alive — or undead — through plotlines. Some are large and splashy, with the potential to change the Sabbat forever. Others are more personal, but could affect the characters just as deeply. The chapter describes three plotlines in detail, and concludes with a few other plots that a Storyteller can develop on her own. Each plot thread comes with suggestions about how to involve the players' characters, so a troupe should have no trouble making its characters part of the story.

Before starting a Mexico City chronicle, the Storyteller should decide which plot threads to use. Trying to work in too many plot threads at once can make a chronicle too busy and confusing — everything's happening at once and the players do not know which potential story to follow. Giving the troupe just one plot thread, however, can make a chronicle too narrow and forced.

The length of a chronicle affects how many plot threads it can accommodate. If the troupe decides to play a short chronicle with a single story arc, one plot thread is quite sufficient. The Storyteller can hold the other threads in reserve for some later chronicle. In the course of a long, open-ended chronicle, however, a Storyteller might visit every one of the plot threads — just not every plot at once. For instance, a long chronicle might open with a few stories that introduce a new pack to Mexico City and foreshadow the defection of the Grimaldi revenants. Pablo Salamanca-Grimaldi reveals that the regent is an impostor, so his family can escape the Sabbat in the confusion. By the time the troupe deals with the

consequences of the Grimaldi defection, the leadership crisis storyline is in full swing. As the characters play their part in Sabbat politics, however, the menace of the Nagual War slowly appears. All the while, characters may grow disgusted with the treachery and hypocrisy in the Sabbat and seek meaning for their unlives in a religious subplot.

Storytellers should also consider the style of their chronicle. The leadership crisis and Grimaldi defection plot threads work well for heavily political chronicles. For a splatterpunk chronicle, however, the Grimaldi defection hardly merits more than a single brief story and the subplot of faith in the Sabbat probably does not fit at all. The leadership crisis, the Nagual War and vendettas with other Sabbat packs afford better opportunities for the *Sword of Caine*'s hallmark violence. A mystical chronicle might turn the religious subplot into the main plot and reduce the political struggles to sidelines.

See Chapter Five for more advice on the craft of Storytelling.

LEADERSHIP CRISIS

Ever since the 2001 *Palla Grande*, the Sabbat's Regent Melinda Galbraith has concealed a terrible secret: She is not Melinda Galbraith. She is actually Zachary Sikorsky, a Tzimisce impostor of great skill and relative youth. When Zachary found the regent's crumbling body at the *Palla Grande*, he feared that the elders would accuse him of her murder. He took her place in an effort to save his own life. Zachary intended his deception to last just long enough to finish the festival, and then he would slip away to resume his

unlife. Nights turned to weeks, and then to months, and he never found his chance to escape from the regent's retinue of bodyguards, aides, supplicants and cronies.

The fraud cannot last forever, though. When the sect's regent is revealed as an impostor, the resulting struggle for power shakes the Sabbath from the mightiest consistory elder to the youngest fledglings running on the streets of Mexico City.

Three candidates vie to become the Sabbath's new regent. Each candidate represents a different Sabbath faction and a different view of the sect's purpose. The candidates gather pledges of support from leaders of every rank, while undercutting the Cainites who support their rivals. Eventually one candidate builds a coalition large enough to win a vote in the consistory... or the Sabbath falls apart into a fourth civil war. The sect's fate is in each troupe's hands.

CRITICAL PERSONALITIES

This plot thread can draw in any Cainite in Mexico City, or beyond it. The most immediately important character is Zachary Sikorsky himself, but he soon drops from the plot unless the player's characters take action to save his unlife. Three elders then emerge as prime movers of the story. The players' characters can find their role as the action moves from the consistory to the streets and they choose which candidate to support. The characters cannot force the choice of regent, but they can find plenty to do amid the high politics and low skullduggery of the leadership crisis.

THE CANDIDATES

In the nights immediately after the exposure of the impostor, several *prisci* in Mexico City declare their wish to become regent. Within two weeks, however, the field narrows to three *prisci*. Each elder commands impressive raw force, though none of them are in the top tier of age or power. Each candidate can draw the support of an important ideological faction in the sect, as well as a major demographic.

- **Charles VI**, a Lasombra, voices the Ultra-Conservative viewpoint. He sees the Sabbath as an army caught in a desperate struggle against the Antediluvians and their minions. Charles draws support from other Ultra-Conservative elders, Jyhad fanatics such as Josefa and Teresita, as well as a fair number of Lasombra who want a fellow Keeper as head of their sect.

- **Szechenyi Jolán**, a Tzimisce, supports Moderate reforms. She believes that the Sabbath's strength lies in diversity and the self-cultivation of its members. Jolán draws support from clanmates who chafe at Lasombra pretensions of leadership, Path mystics such as Zadkiel, and some of the less extreme Loyalists.

- **Venere Carboni**, a Toreador *antitribu*, represents the Status Quo. He sees the Sabbath as a ladder, and he has one rung yet to climb. Venere likes the Sabbath as it is, or at least he does not care how it might change. He draws support from Melinda Galbraith's coalition, Cainites comfortable with their positions, and *antitribu* who seek a greater role for themselves and a breach in the traditional Lasombra-Tzimisce duopoly.

THE FACTS IN THE CASE OF MELINDA GALBRAITH

The 2001 *Palla Grande* was the most magnificent festival the Sabbath had thrown in decades. After the previous year's losses and setbacks, the sect's leaders felt they needed to raise everyone's spirits with a good show, and the new millennium made a good excuse (the Storyteller can replace the millennium celebration with some other year if that suits her chronicle better).

Regent Melinda Galbraith took a few hours before the celebration to meet with a number of other Cainites who wanted to present reports or petitions. Her last guest was Zachary Sikorsky, a very young Tzimisce with a great knack for impersonation. Galbraith wanted Sikorsky's help with her fleshcrafted "costume" for the ball. Like every other visitor, Sikorsky first presented himself to Galbraith's templar Abbie Norberg. The templar had a list of Cainites who were allowed to meet the regent. The paladin also checked off each visitor as they left.

When Sikorsky entered Galbraith's room, however, he found the regent's crumbling body and a strange sign painted on the wall in blood. Sikorsky realized that the Sabbath's elders would accuse him of murdering the regent and execute him for the crime. Never mind that mind-reading, mesmeric commands and any of several other truth-forcing powers could prove his innocence; Sikorsky was young but not stupid. He knew that the elders would want a scapegoat, not the truth.

In desperation, Sikorsky altered his own appearance to Galbraith's. He had often impersonated the regent to amuse other Sabbath. Now he had to fool Cainites who had known her for decades. He intended to finish the *Palla Grande* in her guise, then slip away. Everyone knew that the regent sometimes slept in torpor for weeks at a time; Sikorsky hoped to be far away before anyone realized that the regent was missing, not asleep.

Sikorsky never got the opportunity. The regent is never without her aides, or fellow consistory members presenting their views, or couriers delivering reports, or Cainites who simply want to tell the packs back home that they shook the regent's hand. The hapless Tzimisce's imposture continued for nights, then weeks, then months....

EXPOSURE

The power struggle cannot begin until circumstances expose the regent as a fake. Storytellers can do this in several ways, depending on how dramatic they want to make the revelation, and how much they want to involve the players' characters.

Some Sabbath know already, but they keep the secret for their own purposes. For instance, Pablo Salamanca-Grimaldi noticed slight changes in the regent's mannerisms and larger gaps in her knowledge. Discreet investigation quickly suggested who replaced the regent. Pablo does not care about the reasons.

He wants a regent who leaves him to his own devices. Some *prisci* saw the changes in the regent's aura; others possessed Holmesian perception and deduction. Some elders assumed that Galbraith herself arranged for a body double while she did something else. A few held off revealing the imposture while they sought to discover who had murdered Galbraith and installed Sikorsky in her place. They assumed that the impersonator was part of a cunning plan instead of a random factor. One elder might know that Galbraith is a fake because he killed Galbraith himself. . . . Each Storyteller must decide who knows about the imposture and what they do about it.

COVERT EXPOSURE?

At the Storyteller's option, the player's characters might learn about the imposture before the rest of the Sabbat. This becomes easier if Zachary already knows the characters. Unless the chronicle actually starts with the characters' Embrace, they could have met quite a few of their fellow neonates, and the Storyteller can say that Zachary traveled more than his background currently suggests. Perhaps they even met at the fateful *Palla Grande* where Zachary replaced the regent. If the Storyteller simply cannot arrange a past relationship, the false regent might have heard about any noteworthy deeds the characters have done.

Whatever the reason, Zachary finds a way to be alone with the characters and entrusts them with his secret. He needs their help to escape from his situation. He knows he cannot maintain the fraud forever, and if discovering the body looks bad, taking the regent's place for months looks even worse!

If the characters betray Zachary, the Storyteller can proceed to Public Exposure stories. The characters' treachery may win a few boons from influential elders.

If the characters merely threaten to expose Zachary and try to exploit his faux-regency for their own benefit, they become co-conspirators. When public exposure comes, the Storyteller can judge who knows of their collusion, and what those persons will do with their knowledge. Perhaps an elder uses his knowledge to extort service from the characters.

If the characters agree to help Zachary escape, the players take over most of the storytelling work as they come up with a plan. The storyteller merely has to look for flaws in the plan, and define who customarily associates with the regent. If the characters fail, Zachary is publicly exposed; if the characters succeed, the Sabbat is left with a mysterious disappearance and the leadership crisis begins anyway.

PUBLIC EXPOSURE

Whether or not the Storyteller has Zachary contact the characters, the imposture fails — preferably in some spectacularly public way. This is most dramatic if the characters are present to see the great event. Here are some options that Storytellers can use:

- **Accident.** Melinda Galbraith attends *coven ritae* the way presidents attend rotary clubs, veterans' groups and high-school graduations: It's a way to stay in the public eye and butter up constituents. The regent was an excellent fire dancer; Zachary is not. He cannot always talk his way out of

WHODUNNIT?

Storytellers must decide for themselves who murdered Regent Galbraith and why. The killer's identity may become important if the players want to run an investigative story, or if the killer strikes again. Most members of the consistory do not care who destroyed Galbraith, except insofar as the murderer might present a threat to them too, or that they might want to destroy a rival using the same method.

Some possibilities include:

- **The South American enemy.** The unknown foe who murders Sabbat in South and Central America has struck in the very heart of the sect — a blow meant to terrorize all Sabbat and send the sect into chaos. The killer escaped and reported his success. The enemy is greatly puzzled that their victim still walks around. The bloody symbol is a way of signing the work, to give a focus to anxiety.

- **The Tremere.** A symbol drawn in blood suggests magic — perhaps a getaway ritual. The Tremere certainly have no monopoly on blood magic, but they are better at it than anyone else and could mount the resources for such a sorcerous assassination. In the aftermath of the Camarilla's triumph in New York, highly placed Tremere might try assassinating Sabbat leaders. The Camarilla's leaders would gain further victories. . . . and owe boons to the Warlocks.

- **Internal Enemies.** Someone in the Sabbat did the deed, or possibly a conspiracy of several someones. Galbraith led a coalition of Status Quo *prisci*. Any elder in a rival coalition — Ultra-Conservatives, Moderates or other Status Quo who simply want someone else in charge — could murder the regent and try to pin the blame on a convenient neonate. Alternatively, the killer might have hated Galbraith for entirely personal reasons. In either case, the bloody symbol could be a bit of misdirection.

Devious Storytellers can think of other possibilities, too.

jumping through a few bonfires. He trips, burns himself and suffers *Rötschreck*. His fleshcrafted disguise slips and he resumes his true form in front of numerous Cainites.

- **J'Accuse!** One of the elders who figured out the fraud confronts "Galbraith" at a Blood Feast or other sect function. This elder believes that exposing the fraud is the only way to draw out the neonate's puppet-master. . . . or he has figured out that there is no puppet-master, and deliberately provokes the leadership crisis.

- **Confession.** The clever elder might herself try to become Zachary's puppet-master by threatening to expose him. In this plotline, the regent suddenly favors a new faction and supports their policies and partisans. The elder tries for too much, though, and Zachary exposes his own fraud in the course of a nervous breakdown.

- **Aaaack!** The regent has enemies. Someone killed Galbraith once already. Someone does it again. Maybe it's the

same someone, or maybe it's a different enemy. Zachary reverts to his normal appearance before suffering torpor or Final Death.

• **I Can Explain....** Zachary attempts to flee, perhaps with the help of the players' characters. He is caught and forced to admit to his imposture.

However Zachary is exposed, his unlife is over. Elder Cainites hate to be fooled. It does not matter that the city's elders can wring the truth from Zachary in half a dozen different ways: They need a scapegoat. A consistory of elders sentences the neonate to Final Death within a week, unless someone helps Zachary escape.

CONSISTORIES

Mexico City's Sabbat receive a singular honor. They can see their sect's consistory in action and present their pleas and grievances to that mighty assemblage of Cainites.

Well, actually they cannot. The Sabbat's elders do not like curious neonates seeing how they really do business, any more than Camarilla elders do. The elders do not advertise consistory meetings to the rank and file. Lesser Sabbat see the consistory if a priscus summons them to give evidence, present grievances or submit to punishment. Sabbat see consistory members quite often, though, at the major *ritae*.

The Sabbat consistory consists of all the sect's prisci and Seraphs, plus the regent and the occasional cardinal. A Consistory, capitalized, is a formal meeting of these worthies. The consistory has no fixed meeting place. A priscus,

cardinal or seraph sends out word that he wants to call a meeting, and suggests a time and place. Other members show up or not, as they choose. A feared and respected member can call a Consistory at a garbage dump and her fellow prisci will attend. Such calculated humiliations remind the others of the priscus' power. A less powerful Cainite must exercise more discretion if he wants other members to respect his call. No-shows demonstrate their lack of respect for the Cainite who ordered the Consistory.

Colonial-era palaces and churches, museums, public monuments and private mansions are unlikely to offend any consistory members. Government ministry offices or the boardrooms of major corporations carry some cachet as well: The priscus can show off his influence by how he arranged access to such a place and kept the kine away. Any Cainite can rent a Polanco hotel. Holding a Consistory and Blood Feast in the National Palace without leaving a trace the next morning — now *that's* an achievement. Outdoor meetings are a bit too safe to win any respect, unless the host pulls off some superior stage-managing. A Consistory held during a raging thunderstorm on the barren heights of the Pedregal honors the assembled Cainites as lords of the night; a rainy hillside in Chapultepec Park does not.

A few locations combine sufficient grandeur and discretion that they see many Consistories. The most fantastical is probably a subterranean Aztec temple built in the shape of a hollow step pyramid. The walls of this large, rectangular

POLICE PROCEDURE

Once the Sabbat knows that Melinda Galbraith is destroyed, the question of who killed her naturally arises. The consistory orders Isidro to investigate the regent's murder. If the players' characters are on amenable terms with the Sabbat's investigator, they can assist Isidro in his inquiries. If the characters care about Zachary, they may investigate on their own, or ask Isidro to let them help. Otherwise, this merely plays out in the background of other stories.

Isidro interviews everyone he can find who attended the last *Palla Grande*. He takes statements about who saw Galbraith and Zachary, and at what times. Everyone must say where they were through the night and to whom they talked. Isidro pays special attention to Abbie Norberg, the templar who stood outside Galbraith's door and screened her visitors. If Zachary talked to the characters, Isidro grills them about what he said.

The Sabbat's investigator compares everyone's statements, then announces that Zachary Sikorsky murdered Regent Melinda Galbraith. Infernal forces may have influenced him. If Zachary still exists, Isidro executes him the next night.

If the players' characters become part of the investigation, they see that the investigation is a sham. Isidro does not follow up inconsistencies in the testimony of prisci, cardinals or other luminaries. Neither is he a member of the Inquisition, to whom matters of infernalism

would defer the case. One inconsistency appears particularly suspicious: Abbie Norberg heard and smelled each visitor enter and leave Galbraith's chamber. She remembers that the visitor before Zachary exchanged a few final words with Galbraith as they stood in the doorway. No other Cainite who was nearby remembers that scene. Instead, at least one Cainite remembers that the visitor — a known master of mesmeric mind-control — spoke to the blind templar. The visitor has high rank, however, and loyal Isidro protects his masters.

The characters can try to pursue this lead if they want. No one in the consistory supports them. If the characters persevere, perhaps they can show that their suspect had the means, motive and opportunity to murder the regent; their suspect might even confess to them. It will not matter. The characters find that no one in the Sabbat hierarchy really cares who murdered Galbraith — they are all too busy taking advantage of her Final Death. The consistory simply wants a show of retribution against a scapegoat (though they may quietly support the "removal" of the confessor, should one appear). On the other hand, the characters receive several offers of boons in return for accusing rival prisci, or for confirming Zachary's guilt through their independent investigation. The point of this story is not to find whodunnit. It is to see how much hypocrisy and deceit the characters can stomach from their leaders.

vault stair-step inward. The walls of the steps bear accounts of notable Sabbat victories and consistory decisions, written in Nahuatl pictographs. Native Mexicans who did not want to abandon their old gods dug out this strange temple in the decades after the Spanish conquest. The Sabbat seized it a few decades after that.

The Monument to the Revolution in the Centro Histórico is another safe choice for consistories. This monument (not to be confused with the angelic monument to independence) is a grim, heavy dome of black volcanic stone. Its basement holds a museum devoted to the 1910 revolution.

Once a meeting begins, the Cainites follow very simple rules of order. The Cainite who ordered the meeting speaks first, to give her reasons. In addition to electing regents, consistories may appoint archbishops and other esteemed leaders of the sect. Fairly regular meetings discuss new developments in the eternal war against the Camarilla, as well as local conflicts. Members often call Consistories to present grievances against other members, or do so on behalf of clanmates, followers of their Paths or other Cainites whom they patronize. In these cases, the Consistory serves as a rudimentary Supreme Court for the Sabbat. It makes decisions based on a mixture of precedent, raw power politics, favor-trading and face-saving rather than a detailed code of laws. The Sabbat's "constitution," the Code of Milan, is so vaguely worded that a clever elder can twist it to support any action.

No custom says how many prisci make up a quorum, and the consistory has no way to censure elders who defy its rulings

—at least, no way except the threat of Monomacy, the Black Hand or reciprocal snubs from other elders. If a few prisci gather and announce that their Consistory decided such-and-such—but if the other elders ignore their proclamation, the presumptuous prisci only embarrass themselves.

POWER STRUGGLE

Now the real fun begins, as the various factions try to force the election of their candidate. To become regent, a candidate must convince more than half the consistory's members to vote for her. Some prisci, cardinals and Seraphs support candidates because they agree with their plans for the Sabbat—but that is not enough to win the regency. Most members give their vote because of favor-trading, blackmail, deception or outright fear. Let the dirty politics begin!

RECRUITMENT

Only the consistory members vote for the regent, but the opinions of other Sabbat still matter. A regent who lacks credibility with the rank-and-file Sabbat cannot lead the sect and will not stay regent for long. No one wants to be remembered as voting for a failure. By the same token, no one wants to be remembered for opposing a popular regent too strongly. Endorsements from Sabbat officers—all the way down to pack priests and ducti—influence an elector's vote.

Each candidate, therefore, seeks to gain endorsements from the coven leaders. Some Sabbat officers make up their minds right away and leave no doubt about which candidate they prefer.



They choose for ideological reasons, to expunge lingering boons or from clan loyalty. Most officers, however, must be wooed. Either their interests pull them in different directions, or they just want to extort favors from the candidates.

In the weeks following the false regent's exposure, each candidate visits the major undecided covens in Mexico City. Minor packs are invited as well, or show up on their own. The candidates sponsor Blood Feasts or other *ritae* to show their piety and generosity. They make speeches about what they would do as regent, for the Sabbat as a whole and for the coven. They meet privately with the ductus and priest to tender more specific offers of boons, promotions and other opportunities. Coven leaders seldom announce their endorsement right away: The coven waits to hear what the other candidates offer.

Such campaign festivals give the players' characters a chance to rub elbows with the sect's most exalted members. If the characters play some important, visible role in making the party come off well, they may attract the notice of someone who can help them advance in the sect. Conversely, if something goes horribly wrong, they may leave quite a bad impression. Even a losing candidate remains a *priscus* of great influence. Characters can also try to make deals of their own with the candidate or some other sect officer who attends the party.

DIRTY TRICKS

The process of endorsements and election does not proceed honestly. The candidates and their coalitions do everything in their power to extort endorsements and undercut their rivals. The players' characters can work to perpetrate dirty tricks, or they can become victims. Either approach can generate stories.

Each coalition seeks intelligence on its rivals and on prominent Sabbat who have not declared for one side or another. The players' characters can involve themselves in the political struggle by spying on senior Cainites or other packs. An elder might even demand that the characters spy on their allies, if the elder thinks he can bribe the characters or frighten them enough. The faction leaders want to know the plans of their rivals, as well as any potential blackmail information.

One faction can counter an endorsement for another faction by completely humiliating the endorsing Cainite. It does not matter if the humiliation has nothing to do with the victim's beliefs or basic competence. Simply making a Sabbat look ridiculous reduces the importance that other Sabbat place on his opinions — at least for a while.

Of course it is not rational for Cainites to discount someone's opinion because he tripped and fell on his face. It is not rational for mortals either, but it happens. The sect's elders may see through crude, slapstick humiliations, but they calculate how much the victim's reputation suffers with the less sophisticated neonates. A more serious *faux pas*, such as an indiscretion that Isidro must cover up, could provoke a Monomacy challenge within a pack... especially if the challenger receives covert help from a rival faction's elders. On the other hand, the players' characters might become the victims of a plot to ruin their prestige.

Quite a few Cainites might initially pretend to support one candidate while actually working for another. Most simply, a Cainite might try to win favors from more than one candidate, or change his endorsement when she receives a bigger bribe. More subtle Cainites might try to spy on nominal allies and pass along disinformation, then reveal her true allegiance when it can most humiliate the Cainites whom she deceived.

The most cunning Cainites try to deceive Sabbat leaders into endorsing their chosen candidate. Such plots typically involve making an unaligned Cainite believe that someone connected to a particular candidate is out to get her. The duped Cainite throws her support to a different candidate. The deceiver further tries to make his candidate look more attractive, but even a 50 percent chance of support is better than the previous 33 percent or complete abstention. Cainite manipulators can deceive their targets using forged documents, mesmerized mortal agents, Vicissitude-produced look-alikes, Chimerstry illusions or a wide range of other techniques. The hoax has only to stand up until the election, and maybe not even then: A proud Sabbat might not want to admit that someone fooled her.

Even if a dirty trick does not fool anyone for long, it still serves its purpose. A successful fraud, humiliation or treachery establishes that a candidate is a slick and dangerous operator, supported by other slick and dangerous operators whom other Cainites would be wise not to cross. That matters at least as much as an endorsement gained or negated.

KNOCKING OFF THE COMPETITION

Assassination is the ultimate dirty trick. A ductus or bishop who has met Final Death cannot tender an endorsement, and a destroyed candidate no longer competes for the regency. When the three candidates emerge from the pack of contenders, their factions begin plotting how to murder their rivals.

On the street level, such murders tend to be blatant. A pack of hotheads will try to ambush the leader of a pack that supports a different candidate. Even if the assassins cannot destroy the rival ductus or priest, they can render her endorsement meaningless: A torpid leader cannot muster a pack to defy an unwanted regent, or to fight for a desired one. The new priest or ductus might also think twice about repeating the endorsement.

Some Cainites seek more subtle murders or incapacitations of their rivals. They hope to prevent anyone from tracing the attack back to them, so as to avoid becoming the target of revenge attacks. Assassinations may involve arson, snipers or a wide variety of staged accidents.

The candidates themselves also try to murder each other, or at least the other *prisci* in a rival faction. Szechenyi Jolán wields one of the most potent weapons in the Sabbat's arsenal, the *vozhd*. If she can surprise a gathering of rival *prisci* with this rampaging ghoulish monster, she can thin her competition a great deal — or provoke an alliance of fear against her. Charles VI and his Lasombra supporters can hypnotically condition any number of mortal agents to serve

as assassins. Venere, meanwhile, has the best connections beyond Mexico City. If any priscus can hire top-notch Assamite killers or foul sorceries from unaligned Cainites, it is him. Each candidate knows, however, that such flagrant campaigns of murder must succeed quickly, or they could provoke enough bitterness to tear the Sabbat apart.

Then again, some Cainites might want exactly that. A fourth Sabbat civil war would certainly achieve the Loyalists' aim in spades. No regent and a dissolved consistory means no restraint on Sabbat packs — total freedom. An ambitious and confident Cainite such as Bishop Natalio might even believe that he could direct such anarchy into a revolution that reshapes the Sabbat.

RESOLUTION: THE NEW REGENCY

This plot thread cannot go on forever. You have to bring the leadership crisis to a conclusion — or at least to a resting-place. Of course, how long you prolong the intrigue and infighting depends on the interest of your players.

Most simply, a coalition of elders can gather enough votes to secure their candidate's election, and the new regent has enough raw power to dissuade challengers. That, however, is only one possibility.

JUNTA OPTION

Whoever becomes regent does so with the support of other powerful Cainites. They expect promotions for their partisans, advocacy for their pet projects, and other special privileges. Thus, the new regime could take the form of a junta with the regent as its public face. The other elders in the clique wield nearly as much real power in the sect, and the regent cannot afford to displease them too much. Mortal history shows that juntas tend to fall apart after a few years, as the members try to grab more power for themselves. The Sabbat could face a new leadership crisis at any time. The regent can prevent such a collapse by marginalizing or murdering his partners in the junta before any of them do the same thing to him.

PRAETORIAN OPTION

In the later centuries of the Roman Empire, the Praetorian Guard meant to protect the Emperor often murdered their charges and installed emperors of their own. This could happen to the Sabbat. The Black Hand stayed neutral in past internal conflicts. This time, the Seraphs might force a regent upon the Sabbat. The sect's most skilled fighters belong to the Black Hand and the Hand's soldiers feel great loyalty to their commanders. The Seraphs might feel especially tempted to install their own regent if no clearly dominant faction emerges from the prisci — and by extension, no strong and organized force that could oppose the Hand.

It should be obvious that such a regent could never feel safe. She would lead the sect only at the sufferance of the Seraphs, who would become the true leaders of the Sabbat.

PERONIST OPTION

Argentina's dictator Juan Perón gained power by promising every significant power-bloc in the country that

he was on their side. His supporters knew that Perón could not keep all of his promises — but he could not keep any promises if he fell from power. Priscus Charles VI follows this strategy. Other Cainites might attempt the same strategy. A Peronist regent then faces the challenge of stringing along all the Cainites to whom he made promises. Some of the promises inevitably contradict. For instance, the regent cannot centralize the Sabbat to please the Ultra-Conservatives while decentralizing it to please the Loyalists. Instead, the regent must grant smaller boons to minimize the discontents. If that means betraying minor allies to please major allies, so be it.

BOLSHEVIK OPTION

Then there is *force majeure*. The Bolsheviks gained power by holding the Russian Duma hostage in its chambers until it voted the Bolsheviks into power. Other radical groups have attempted to seize power in the same way. A would-be regent could extort her election by revealing some force that could destroy any elder who stood against her. If the Storyteller decides that Szechenyi Jolán can turn loose a controllable *vozh* using her dozens of "children," the Mother of Horrors could attempt such a coup. Just to be safe, she has her monsters eat all the other candidates.

NO RESOLUTION: THE FOURTH SABBAT CIVIL WAR

For a grimmer chronicle and a longer-term plot thread, the consistory could split into two (or more...) factions that each elect a regent. Instead of compromising, the most powerful elders within the Sabbat attempt to crush their rivals as part of naked grabs for power. None of them completely succeed — and the Sabbat collapses into its Fourth Civil War.

The war can last as long as the Storyteller wants, and affect rank-and-file Sabbat as much or as little as she wants. The Second Sabbat Civil War lasted decades and affected the entire sect, while the third war lasted about 100 nights and chiefly involved elders. A fourth civil war could take place largely out of sight from the packs on the street... but it's more interesting if the fighting spills out to engulf the entire sect.

In this case, Mexico City becomes even more violent and chaotic than it is already, as partisans of each faction attack their rivals. Once again, the Black Hand retreats into neutrality... or bides its time to let the factions exhaust themselves. Cardinals and archbishops send their own soldiers and assassins to Mexico City to slay the leaders of opposing factions. The fighting can spread to other Sabbat cities as well, so that characters cannot easily escape it. The Camarilla and the independent clans can hardly ignore the opportunity to seize territory and influence from the Sabbat. The Sabbat itself does not die as long as a single Cainite espouses its cause, but the sect could lose a great deal of its power.

Storytellers, don't entertain this possibility lightly — throwing one of the two great sects into crippling turmoil can change the face of the setting as you know it with unforeseen circumstances later.

EXODUS

For centuries, the Grimaldi revenants have served the Sabbat's leaders as their financial managers, major-domos, chiefs of staff and agents in the sunlit world. The revenant family collectively amassed one of the world's great private fortunes, but none could truly claim to own the clothes on their backs. All that they own, even to their lives, they own at the pleasure of their Cainite masters — and the Grimaldi love their masters, thanks to the power of the blood bond.

At least, they used to.

First, a quirk of fate freed Pablo Salamanca y Grimaldi from his domitor. He helped other Mexico City revenants free themselves by murdering their domitors. Through years of such efforts, more than two dozen Grimaldis — a hefty fraction of the extended family — now operate in Mexico City without anyone in the Sabbat realizing that they lack domitors. If anyone asks, the revenants say that they are bound to a master in another city. These Grimaldis also believe they have located Cainites willing and able to protect them from the Sabbat's wrath: a select group of Ventrue elders in Europe and the United States who can appreciate the talents and resources that the Grimaldis bring.

In this plot thread, the Grimaldis attempt their flight to freedom — and the Sabbat learns the consequences of depending on slaves.

CRITICAL PERSONALITIES

The prime mover of this storyline is Pablo Salamanca y Grimaldi himself. Pablo fosters the sort of hatred that only grows from love betrayed. The blood bond made him an eager slave. He understood the violation of his soul only when his Cainite mistress burned in the sun. The prospect of freedom and revenge enabled him to swallow his hate and smile at his overlords through the long years of patient labor and seeming loyalty, but he can wait no longer. Succeed or fail, he will be free — and the Sabbat will feel the fire of his vengeance.

Szechenyi Jolán also plays an important role. Since the Sabbat's inception, some Cainites have advocated the destruction of all revenants. The hereditary ghouls know a great deal about the Cainite race and the Sabbat, and that makes them a security risk, as Pablo is about to prove. Jolán and a few other Tzimisce elders blocked plans to exterminate the revenants, on the grounds that the hereditary ghouls were useful servants and part of the clan's heritage besides. The Grimaldi defection makes the revenants' defenders look like trusting fools — a humiliation that mars these elders' reputations for all time to come. Jolán suffers a special embarrassment, since her mortal lineage comes from a long-deceased ghoul family that opposed the nascent Sabbat. Her rivals in the consistory can use the Grimaldi scandal to destroy her influence in the sect.

For this story, however, drawing in the players' characters demands a little extra work from the Storyteller.

FORESHADOWING

For this plot thread to mean anything, first the characters must become aware of the Grimaldis. Storytellers can start by



working revenant characters into other stories. Pablo Grimaldi, for instance, wields far-ranging powers for the sake of his global duties. When Sabbat elders need high-ranking government officials bribed, the media manipulated or businesses acquired, they turn to Pablo. If the characters become involved with Mexico City's mortal elite, they encounter Pablo. The suave revenant may help them achieve a goal (for a price) or cover up a blunder or indiscretion (for a bigger price).

A formal audience with Pablo can feel very strange. The characters must come to him, for Pablo's time is extremely valuable to the elders he serves. All the revenant's surroundings — his huge and opulent office high in the Torre Latinoamericana, his secretaries and security guards, his wealth and social graces — suggest that the characters should approach as supplicants, with cap in hand and on their best behavior. Pablo treats them with utmost deference, however. If Pablo can do what the characters ask, he tells them that he lives to serve their every whim. If he cannot, or if he feels that the characters' objective clashes with his own goals, Pablo grovels and says that nothing would please him more than to serve them, but other duties and commands forbid it. He may even offer to let the characters beat him and anyone on his staff they choose, to expiate his shame for denying their command.

The characters should meet other revenants, too. Many of Mexico City's luminaries keep a Grimaldi as their "man of affairs." Whenever the characters want to meet an elder, they might have to arrange it with a Grimaldi secretary. Other Grimaldis tend the communal havens of the older and more powerful covens, including El Grito de Dolor. When characters visit such parishes, they can see how the Cainites ignore their revenant lackey when they do not demand some task or inflict some petty cruelty. The Storyteller can show the importance of the Grimaldis without ever coming out and saying that they are important.

The Storyteller can also lay the groundwork for the defection through events that make sense only after the fact. For instance, a blood bound Grimaldi might discover the planned defection and try to warn the Sabbat. Pablo must move quickly to "silence" his hapless relative by whatever means necessary, as well as anyone else she might have told. The players' characters might wonder at the senseless murder of a revenant. If they already knew that revenant, Pablo might try to find out if they also know about his plans. He must work through mortal agents or Cainites from independent clans who remain ignorant of their employer, but Pablo has more than enough money to arrange such things.

DEFECTION

The Grimaldis sensibly flee Mexico City by day. When the banks open, they transfer all their masters' assets to other accounts. Then they head for the airport, where Pablo waits with reservations and false identifications. They board a plane to Chicago, where a delegation of Ventrue ghouls awaits them. From there the Grimaldis fan out to a dozen other cities, and effectively vanish. At least, that's the plan.

Some Grimaldis encounter other daylight-capable servants of the Sabbat, such as the sect's few ghouls, or Grimaldis

who remain bound. One or two defectors might have to shoot, stab or poison their way out, and that could alert the police. Other Grimaldis might unwittingly tip their hand to still-loyal servants who then try to awaken their sleeping masters, or who follow the defector to the airport and try to stop the escape. Some Grimaldis bear such hatred for Cainites that they cannot resist trying to kill their masters before they leave, whether by arson, beheading or dragging the Cainites into the sunlight. That might awaken a vampire and compromise the plan.

The Storyteller must decide whether or not the Grimaldis carry through their plan with minimum disruption, and whether the players' characters become involved. If the characters deeply antagonized a Grimaldi, that revenant might try to burn their haven before departing. The characters face a desperate attempt to flee their haven by day. If the players do not become directly involved, they and the rest of Mexico City's Sabbat awaken the next night to find the Grimaldis vanished — and the revenants' money with them.

For a final option, perhaps Pablo was himself deceived. Some of the Sabbat's elders possess superhuman cunning and awareness of other beings' thoughts and motives. It might amuse such an elder to let Pablo weave his little scheme. His "Ventrue" contacts were not in the Camarilla. The airplane does not go to Chicago. Through an unfortunate mix-up, the pilot flies the plane to Atlanta or some other Sabbat domain. The plane lands at nightfall... and the city's Cainites are waiting outside the terminal. The ensuing mass blood hunt is a nine days' wonder in the sect. This option does not significantly affect the defection's aftermath, though.

AFTERMATH

Many of the city's leading Sabbat find themselves out of funds, after leaving all their money matters in the hands of their pet revenant. Perhaps they do not even own their havens — the property was held in the revenant's name, and it's just been sold. Grimaldi-managed companies go bankrupt; in the coming weeks, audits show massive embezzlement — and the money has vanished. Cainites who deigned to keep some authority over their companies find themselves under investigation because they apparently signed for everything and will look like co-conspirators. The Cainites who claimed that they did not need the mortal world have a chance to test their boast. It isn't the fall of New York City, but plenty of Sabbat find themselves gravely inconvenienced. They may include the players' characters, if they entrusted any of their affairs to a Grimaldi.

Quite a few Cainites need new havens, communal or otherwise. Characters who retain commodious havens may receive unexpected houseguests. Clever characters can offer to board other Cainites as a way to collect boons. Some of the more stupidly brutal Sabbat might try seizing another pack's haven, as if Mexico City did not have buildings and tunnels enough.

Some Sabbat do engage in business or handle their own money. After the Grimaldi defection, Cainites such as Clova Haines and Miguel Orozco look a lot wiser. Snide remarks about "juicebag" activities die down.

Eventually, someone figures out how the Sabbat lost their influence over the fled Grimaldis, and if it can happen once it can happen again. Revenant-hating Cainites such as General Perfidio call for the Grimaldi's extermination, and no one seriously opposes them. Some of the wilder packs do not wait for a Consistory to decide the revenants' fate and murder Grimaldis, or people they think are Grimaldis, on their own initiative. The paranoia throws the Sabbat into greater chaos. Characters who previously treated a Grimaldi well might find the revenant pounding on their haven's door, with a bloodthirsty Sabbat pack right behind him. Any history of kindness to or trust of revenants might lead to other Sabbat accusing the characters of being "soft on the Grimaldis."

As word of the defection spreads through the sect, all revenants — not just Grimaldis — come under suspicion of treason. Small groups of other revenants might seek protection from the Camarilla or Cainites of the independent clans, as they see relatives slain in Sabbat pogroms. The consequences can spread as far, and for as long, as the Storyteller desires.

SOMETHING TO BELIEVE IN

The Sabbat's very name speaks of the sect's religious character. The Camarilla exists to serve practical, political goals, but the Sabbat exists to pursue a spiritual purpose. In making war against the Ancients, the Sabbat seeks to reshape or avert Gehenna — the Last Judgment upon all Cainites. Some Paths of Enlightenment emphasize specifically religious concepts. The Path of Metamorphosis seeks transcendence. Death and the Soul investigates two of the great religious concepts. The Path of Night addresses the problem of evil. The Path of Caine reveres a once and future prophet-king. Many Sabbat even retain a twisted Christian piety. Explicitly religious stories work very well indeed in a Sabbat chronicle, and Mexico City provides an excellent setting.

RELIGIOUS PLOTLINES

Religion does not offer a simple, linear plot thread like the previous two examples. The stories in a religious plot thread are linked by common themes rather than cause and effect; and while external events drive the previous two plots, a religious plot chiefly grows from the characters themselves. This makes religious plots more difficult to storytell than straightforward action dramas. Fortunately, religious plots can masquerade as other sorts of stories.

THE QUEST

This is one of the easiest religious storylines. A quest story functions on two levels. On a literal level, the characters receive some difficult task that requires them to travel. As the characters move from scene to scene, they face various tests, challenges and dangers. The quest becomes religious when the challenges are spiritual or symbolic. Whether a character succeeds or fails at a challenge, he receives some lesson that

can guide his further spiritual progress. Success in the quest depends on understanding these lessons.

The literal, material goal of the quest can be arbitrary. In a quest story, the journey matters more than the destination. A goal that somehow symbolizes the quest's spiritual purpose, however, emphasizes the religious aspect of the story. For instance, the Holy Grail — the most famous quest-object in Western myth — symbolized Christian salvation and redemption.

As an example, let's build a Sabbat Grail quest around the Path of Metamorphosis. It does not matter if the characters do not actually practice the Path of Metamorphosis. Sabbat can take Paths as their moral ideals even if they retain Humanity in rules terms.

A literal magic cup is too obvious, but the "Grail" can be anything that could enable a Cainite to overcome the limitations of undeath. It could be an Assamite generation-reducing potion, an amulet that grants succor from sunlight, or whatever else seems appropriate. The characters receive some clue that this object exists somewhere in Mexico City, and they're off!

As the characters travel about Mexico City they gather clues to the location of their "Grail." The characters also encounter tests and dangers based on Cainite weaknesses: fire, the compulsion to sleep during the day, frenzy at pain, anger or frustration, and so on. They can overcome these challenges by pushing against their limitations, altering their bodies (by Vicissitude or mundane disguise) and understanding when to curb the Beast and when to let it run wild. The quest leads the characters to a properly Arthurian chapel in a wasteland — say, a missionary clinic in one of the shantytowns — where they pit their will and intellect against the faith of the missionaries. The characters not only gain their "Grail," they have already become greater beings than they were through the challenges they overcame. Perhaps they are even ready to make a complete switch from Humanity to the Path of Metamorphosis.

CRISIS OF FAITH

Another classic religious plot hits the characters with a challenge to their beliefs. Every ideology presupposes that the world works a certain way, and Sabbat ideology is no exception. If events violate that presumed order in some extreme way, a person may doubt the beliefs that form a cornerstone of her life (or unlife). For instance, a typical Christian crisis of faith grows from tragic death: If God is both good and all-powerful, why does he let the innocent suffer so much?

The Sabbat, of course, espouses different ideologies with different weak points for doubt. For instance, the Sabbat preaches loyalty and equality between Cainites. Suppose that a character sees an elder Sabbat commit some grave treachery against a weaker Cainite — perhaps even against the sect as a whole — and escape punishment through use of status and raw power. The character might wonder in his dead heart if his sect is built on lies. In the same way, a would-be Metamorphosist might suffer some humiliating proof that she remains all too human. A Path of Night

devotee might encounter an atrocity that even he cannot swallow, or a Cathari follower might encounter true virtue.

A Crisis of Faith story traditionally ends with a reaffirmation of the character's faith. A Sabbat character could realize that the Sabbat's ideals are worth upholding despite their betrayal by some leaders, or a Path of Enlightenment offers useful guidance even if it is not infallibly true. As with a successful quest, a Crisis of faith story makes a good opportunity for a character's formal switch from Humanity to a Path.

On the other hand, the story could end with the character's complete disillusionment. A character might see so many cases of Cainite hypocrisy that she abandons the Sabbat, or decides that she might as well seek power as the biggest hypocrite of all. A Sabbat might conclude that the Path she hoped to follow is a delusion, and set out to debunk it instead. Considering the nature of Sabbat faith, either vindication or disillusionment offers the potential for personal horror.

A HIGHER PLAN

Most religions argue that worldly events are not truly random or meaningless. To those with faith and wisdom, the trials of existence illuminate a divine plan that gives life its meaning. Storytellers can work this idea into a Sabbat chronicle in many different ways.

The Sabbat believes that the Antediluvians remain active and potent. Even in their millennial sleep, the Ancients shape events that range from world wars to mayoral elections. The Storyteller can decide that the Sabbat's paranoid belief is true, and build a story around it. In this case, the divine plan is malevolent and the characters seek to escape it and oppose it. Paranoia is the rule as mortals, Camarilla "Kindred" and even the characters' fellow Sabbat are revealed as puppets of the Ancients. For an all-Mexico City chronicle, perhaps the characters discover that the Sleeper of Cuicuilco has quietly suborned dozens of their fellow Sabbat and thousands of mortals. These lackeys now labor to exhume the torpid Methuselah from its volcanic prison. Perhaps the characters discover that *they* have served the Sleeper without knowing it, and that some course of action they took in the past actually fit into some plot to further an Ancient's goals. This sort of story takes the conspiratorial aspect of **Vampire: The Masquerade** and pushes it to lunatic extremes.

The Sabbat calls itself the Sword of Caine and treats the First Vampire as a figure of judgment and salvation for the undead. For another storytelling option, the Higher Plan can be Caine's. Perhaps the characters notice that a current situation resembles a scene in the *Book of Nod*, or illustrates some maxim attributed to Caine. Perhaps they find themselves in the right place, at the right time, to foil some infernalist's scheme against Mexico City's Cainites.

Some Paths of Enlightenment suggest other forms of divine providence that could guide the faithful. For instance, the Path of Night argues that Cainites' evil serves a greater good, by testing the faith and virtue of others. A Path of Night storyline could challenge characters to fulfill their role in this divine plan. They can triumph by exposing the

sinful nature that some powerful mortal (or fellow Cainite) masks with a show of respectability, or by frightening and goading someone into a life of true virtue. A Death and the Soul storyline could show the characters the folly and unimportance of any remaining connections to mortals, as well as the importance of closely observing how they die. A Feral Heart storyline could show the vanity of Cainites imagining themselves to be anything but predatory animals.

CRITICAL PERSONALITIES

The most critical personalities in a religious storyline are the characters themselves. To a large degree, a plotline becomes religious to the extent that the characters see it that way. If the players do not want to explore the Sabbat's aspects of faith and perverse holiness, the Storyteller cannot force them.

If a religious plot does appeal to the players, then the Storyteller needs characters who can explain possibly unfamiliar points of view. A few of the sample characters actively teach Paths of Enlightenment, and several more are well known as paragons of various Paths.

The Tzimisce elder Efraín Sortano is Mexico City's chief exponent of the Path of Metamorphosis, though he also imparts the basics of the Path of the Feral Heart. Characters who seek to transform themselves, physically or spiritually, find Efraín willing to guide them. He has little patience, however, for Cainites who seek easy answers.

The Zookeeper often takes a sink-or-swim approach to teaching. For instance, a Cainite who seeks Efraín's guidance in becoming less dependent on mortal society might find herself warped into the form of a hog. Efraín tells the Cainite he will restore her human form in a week. She must survive as an animal that several million poor people want to eat.

The Lasombra elder Zadkiel ben Aron principally teaches his own interpretation of the Path of Night, but can also teach the rudiments of many other Paths. He is far more of a professional guru than is Efraín. Once in a while he also sets out to teach students who do not request the favor. Young Cainites who strike Zadkiel as "too human" may find themselves cast into situations that push them to become more brutal, more ruthless or more manipulative. The Rabbi of Night easily mesmerizes mortals into playing their parts for his harsh lessons. Zadkiel prefers not to condition fellow Cainites into getting themselves in trouble. He regards that as cheating: His pupils may not want his lessons, but they must choose how they respond or the lesson is meaningless.

The Malkavian *antitribu* Bishop Rodolfo offers wisdom as well, or at least he offers a madness that he considers wisdom. He cares more about divining the coming events of Gehenna than about teaching mystic revelations. If characters can help Rodolfo in some way, however, he may counsel them. His remarkable mastery of the Eyes of Chaos enables him to see "higher plans" in characters' unlives, assuming that they trust a Malkavian's word. Rodolfo seeks the Cainites fated to play important roles in Gehenna, and he may take an interest in characters if he foresees this possibility. For Rodolfo, however, "important role" can include

destinies like "First to be eaten by a ravenous Methuselah." The enigmatic bishop wants previews of Gehenna; he does not yet seek to change or avert the disaster.

Father Yoel still considers himself a priest. As such, he would gladly counsel any Cainite in spiritual turmoil, though his madness may render his advice a bit incoherent. He administers sacraments, takes confessions and grants penance and absolution to Cainites who still feel driven by Roman Catholic ways.

OTHER STORIES

A mere three plotlines cannot cover all the stories that can happen in Mexico City. No matter how important sect leadership struggles, mass defections or the demands of faith may seem to some Cainites, other Sabbat follow concerns of their own. These concerns can generate side plots as a change of pace from the chronicle's major storyline. Storytellers can also turn this chapter's main plots into the side plots, or throw them out completely to pursue some other storyline entirely. The Sabbat is about freedom, after all, and you are certainly free to tell the stories you want! Mexico City characters, history or locations may suggest new plotlines, or you can expand on one or more of the suggestions below.

ETERNAL VIGILANCE

The Sabbat has enemies who would see the sect destroyed. Only someone very brave, very clever or very foolish would attempt espionage or terrorism in the Sabbat's black Babylon, but the sect's enemies include Cainites of all three sorts. None of the Sabbat's enemies can strike a crippling blow at the heart of its power, but they can still try to wear down the Sword of Caine. Such attacks can form the basis of thrilling espionage stories with an edge of supernatural horror.

The Camarilla is the sect's most powerful foe, with the greatest resources overall. No Camarilla elder would ever set foot in Mexico City, but the sect's leaders can send in spies, saboteurs and assassins. These agents, most of them neonates, are not necessarily volunteers: The elders of the Ivory Tower equal the Sword of Caine's best at conditioning neonates into becoming "Manchurian candidate" sleeper agents. There is no reason why the Nosferatu Icarus could not be such a Camarilla agent who broke, instead of a Sabbat agent; perhaps Icarus has everything backward. A Storyteller could construct a thrilling chronicle of counter-espionage as the characters race against time to uncover a nest of Camarilla spies before they can assassinate an important priscus or cardinal.

Another enemy advances on the Sabbat from South America. So far, that nameless enemy concentrates on destroying the Sabbat of South and Central America. Sabbat luminaries now receive packages containing severed but still animate Cainite heads that gibber in mindless horror. The enemy can also turn once-loyal Sabbat into suicide bombers who carry explosives and incendiaries in their own bodies.

The only name the Black Hand has yet found for this enemy is "nagual." Unfortunately, in Mexico this word

refers to a wide variety of supernatural beings. Some legends describe naguals as evil spirits in animal form. Other legends say that naguals are witches who take animal form to play pranks and steal, or to drink the blood of the living. The Black Hand suspects that their nagual enemy is a pre-Columbian lineage of Gangrel, possibly aided by Followers of Set or Tremere Cainites. Their list of shape-changing supernatural creatures extends far beyond Cainites, though. The Black Hand knows of Lupines and several other breeds of were-folk. It also hears dubious tales of totemic spirits, skin-changing mortal sorcerers and — they have a *really* hard time taking this claim seriously — an animalistic breed of the fey or even more otherworldly creatures. As yet, the investigators cannot rule out any of these legendary reports.

A Storyteller who wants to bring the campaign of terrorism home to Mexico City may want to make one of the sample elders or senior neonates an agent of the nagual. This Cainite directs terrorist attacks against Sabbat leaders, but does not participate in person. Tlaloc also works with the nagual to the best of his limited ability.

The sect's most insidious enemy lurks within it. The Sabbat Inquisition exists for a very good reason: Cainites who sell themselves to the infernal undermine the sect's cause of freedom at its roots. The Inquisition tends to sweep up every Cainite it finds, however, and sifts the innocent from the guilty under torture. A story about a hunt for infernalists can gain a special edge of terror because the characters have as much to fear from their nominal defenders as from the Devil within.

NEW IN TOWN

The descriptions of the main plot threads assume that the players' characters have dwelled in Mexico City for some time and know the names of at least some of the city's most important Cainites. It could be fun, however, to begin a chronicle with the characters' arrival in Mexico City. The pack has come to the big city to seek their fortune, to be near the sect's movers and shakers, or for whatever other reason appeals to the players. The characters might know the names of a few Sabbat luminaries, but do not know who's who in town, the major covens or who has claimed what neighborhoods as their domains. The characters are likely to get in trouble through no fault of their own.

VENDETTA

Unlife in Mexico City tends to be nasty, brutal and short due to the battles between packs. Sabbat squabble for all too human reasons: rights to hunting grounds and other resources, real or imagined insults, differences of ideology, who supports the better soccer team.... Mexicans and Sabbat also share a macho ideology that can get in the way of backing down or negotiation. What is worse, machismo demands retribution for attacks, no matter what the cause. Once two packs come to blows, the cycle of revenge can go on for decades, long after the Cainites who began the vendetta are all destroyed.

The sect's elders manipulate the neonates through their touchy pride. An elder who wants a rival destroyed seldom does



the dirty work herself. Instead she manufactures a dispute between her victim and another pack — or simply promises favors if her hirelings can deliver Final Death, and leaves the methods and feigned motives to the pack's discretion. Mexico City suffers such a dearth of ancillae in part because the elders knock off these up-and-coming Cainite rivals.

A vendetta between the players' characters and a rival pack is probably too thin a plot for an entire chronicle. A deadly rivalry can supply an ongoing subplot, though. Vendetta can also add continuity to other conflicts, as the rival pack allies with any other Cainite enemies of the characters. By the same token, the characters might ally with any foes of the rival pack. If the characters offended a local elder, they might become the target of proxy attacks; or an elder might try to use the players' characters as his pawns to threaten someone else.

INQUISITION

The Sabbat Inquisition remains alert to enemies within the sect, with special emphasis on Cainites who sell themselves to demons. The *koldun* who propitiate Tlaloc qualify: The God of Waters is not the Inquisition's usual sort of demon, but the Inquisition does not concern itself with technicalities. A *koldun* who offers sacrifices to a spirit in exchange for magical power is an infernalist, and that is that.

If the secret of Tlaloc surfaces, Inquisitors descend on Mexico City and question *everyone*. Any *koldun* found to have

sacrificed to Tlaloc likely suffers an *auto-da-fé*. Any sorcerer who cannot somehow prove that he did *not* sacrifice to Tlaloc risks the same fate, whether she is a *koldun* or not. Esteban del Aguay Tierra, the necromancer La Viuda Blanca, the Assamite refugee Ikraam, Abyss mystics such as Zadkiel and Caridad de Flores — all come under suspicion. The Inquisition questions every Cainite known to possess sorcerous skill, or who ever associated with known sorcerers or mystics.

Insisting upon innocence despite torture does not satisfy the Inquisition. The Inquisitors want *leads*. The characters can please the Inquisitors only by delivering other Sabbat to interrogation... and betraying the Sabbat's cherished ideal of loyalty.

CHARACTER STUDIES

Not every story has to be a desperate brawl for survival, a mystery thriller or a drama of high politics. As a change of pace, the troupe might enjoy a story about their characters' nightly unives. How do they hunt? How do they interact with other Cainites, or with the mortal world? If they possess any influence in the mortal world, how do they maintain it? What *ritae* do they observe? The purpose of such a story is not so much to achieve a goal as to explore a character's personality and place in Mexico City. The better the players know their characters, the more easily they decide how their characters react to each other and to unexpected challenges.





CHAPTER FIVE: STORYTELLING

We assume that Storytellers already know the basics of telling a **Vampire: The Masquerade** story. This chapter discusses some of the factors that set apart chronicles using the Sabbat in Mexico City. From there, Storytellers can move on to consider the tastes of their players and at that point, it's up to each Storyteller to select plot threads, create more characters and settings and set up stories. The players then bring in their characters to make the stories come alive.

POWER SCALE

Mexico City by Night assumes that the players' characters are all relatively inexperienced Sabbat neonates. Most Sabbat are neonates, period — the sect has tremendous turnover. Most Sabbat survive no longer as Cainites than they would have as mortals. Sabbat culture limits their "immortality" through murderous vendettas, Monomacies for leadership, attacks on the Camarilla and high-risk recreations such as jumping through fires.

The book's themes are also geared toward neonate characters. The hypocrisy of the sect's elders bites less sharply if the characters are elders themselves. Likewise, the question of whether the Sabbat enjoys true freedom or mere anarchy means little to elder characters. The elders have *power*, which automatically grants them the leeway

to do pretty much anything they want. Sabbat neonates can do pretty much anything they want, too — but the elders can usually escape the consequences of their actions, at least in the short term.

This is not to say that Storytellers cannot run an elders' chronicle in Mexico City. It merely means that such a chronicle will develop a different style than what **Mexico City by Night** presents, and the chronicle will approach the city and the Sabbat from a different perspective.

If a chronicle runs for some time before moving to Mexico City, the characters may be significantly more powerful than most of Mexico City's Cainites without being significantly older. Such a pack can fight an equal number of fledgling Sabbat with a fair certainty of overcoming them. This matters less than one might think, however, for the city's Sabbat possess a number of "equalizers."

Most simply, the long-established covens such as El Grito de Dolor include characters who have even more experience than the players' characters. The coven may have many more members overall. A pack that finds itself outnumbered three to one, or even more, receives a graphic lesson in how the comparatively young Cainites of the Anarch Revolt slew their powerful but similarly outnumbered sires.

Prudent characters should also remember that the city's covens prefer to fight on their home ground. The

closer an attacker comes to a coven's parish, the greater their chance of running into traps, ambushes or other prepared defenses. The Filth Angels take this concept to the extreme: These Cainites are probably the city's most callow fledglings, but they and their Herd know every hidden recess of their landfill haven. Cainites who swagger into the dump expecting to push around some weakling childer find either no trace of the Filth Angels or a deadly gauntlet of deadfalls, burning oil, spears and machetes.

Packs and covens may also have ties to more powerful Cainites. For instance, Father Yoel of the Machete Cross is the grandchilde of Efraín Sortano. The junior priscus does not personally care what happens to his afflicted grandchilde, but he cares about his reputation among other Sabbat. A pack that leans too heavily on the Machete Cross may find Sortano leaning on them in turn.

Does this mean that characters must meekly tiptoe in constant fear of the city's elders? Hardly. Many of Mexico City's elders ignore most of the neonates most of the time. They involve themselves only when they see their own interests involved. For example, Szechenyi Jolán sees herself as the guardian of Tzimisce clan honor and tradition. If a pack's members show a special hatred of Tzimisce Cainites, or publicly insult the clan in some way, Jolán may call them to task for their disrespect — and a vendetta with a Cainite who remembers the Crusades is going to be memorable, to say the least.

Sabbat packs get away with a lot, including the murder of other Sabbat. A pack that slaughters fellow Cainites too wantonly, however, attracts dangerous attention. Covens form alliances against them; elders ask why the characters fight their brothers and sisters in Caine instead of the Camarilla. If a character or pack becomes too dangerous to her fellow Sabbat, someone finds a way to neutralize them.

CHARACTER CONSIDERATIONS

A Mexico City chronicle can accommodate an astonishingly wide variety of characters. The Sabbat includes Cainites of nearly every clan, plus a few bloodlines of its own. Cainites of every lineage can find reason to dwell in the Sabbat's capital. Sabbat packs can include a broad spectrum of clans, Disciplines and Abilities, and nowhere is that more true than in Mexico City.

The city's Sabbat also includes followers of most of the Paths of Enlightenment. Few neonates have existed long enough to fully abandon their Humanity, but they can sympathize with particular Paths and strive to uphold the Path's ideals. Path sympathies provide another source of character diversity.

Under most circumstances, the Sabbat frowns on ghouls. A pack that included a ghoul as anything but a terrified and tormented abbot might raise eyebrows, if not open concerns. Revenants, however, receive a little more leeway. The Sabbat at large would probably not regard a revenant character as anything but a moderately favored

slave, but some troupes may want to explore the issues of equality and bigotry raised by a revenant character. Perhaps the Cainite characters are unusually broad-minded, or learn to be so. Such a character would also render the Exodus storyline (see Chapter Four) peculiarly relevant, even if the character was not a Grimaldi. If the revenant character is a Grimaldi, she faces the choice between loyalty to her kin and loyalty to the packmates who treat her like an equal... or do they?

The sheer scope of Mexico City also provides a myriad of options for character backgrounds. Characters can come from any district — anything from Lomas de Chapultepec's old-money families to the post-apocalyptic squalor of the *Ciudades Perdidas*. Players and Storytellers can draw upon the city's rich ethnic mix, political history and ties to the rest of the world as well. The character Clova Haines is an example of a young Sabbat drawn by Mexico City's glamour as the premier city of the Sabbat.

While creating characters for a Mexico City chronicle, players need to follow only two rules, and these apply to any **Vampire** chronicle. We've said it before and we'll say it again: Characters are more than dot ratings in Traits. A character with no personality, background or motivations may be a very fine tactical exercise, but will probably become quite boring — to the other players, at least.

Players also need to think about why their characters associate with each other. Brute-force compulsion such as the *Vaulderie* or a command from an archbishop ("You, you, you and you — I want you to do something for me. You're a pack now.") will not keep characters together for long if the characters hate each other or simply cannot work together. While good players can cultivate a pack rapport from such situations (which might make for an interesting story in and of itself), just having an arbitrary group convene for its own sake smacks of the old man at the inn waiting for a party of noble adventurers to... you get the idea. It should also be obvious that a character who is a compulsive loner or back-stabber — or who simply does not care about anything that matters to the other characters — does not work well in an ensemble story.

Some backgrounds are also hopelessly incompatible. For instance, a Cainite who was a Black Panther in life will probably not accept a packmate who was a white supremacist. (Even this has exceptions, though. Players might create such characters specifically to show how induction into the Sabbat wipes away mortal bigotries.) Some shared factor in the characters' history (either as mortals or Cainites) or some common interest or objective helps the pack to stay together and display the Sabbat's famous solidarity.

VIOLENCE

The Sabbat is notoriously violent. Packs fight the Camarilla, Lupines, each other, and damn near anything else that crosses their path. Some exceptionally brutal Cainites kill mortals with relative impunity.

Mexico City is also notoriously violent. Street gangs brawl against each other in the slums. Criminals rob motorists who stop for red lights. The Mexican Mafia murders government officials who refuse bribes. The *Federales* — the Mexican federal police — are so riddled with corruption that some people consider them a drug and crime syndicate of their own. Mexican pop culture idolizes the gun and its wielders, from revolutionary heroes to drug-runners who kill cops. Tens of thousands of Mexicans flock to the bullfight arenas to watch ballets of death, and cheer on their masked heroes brawling in the *lucha libre* ring.

With all this violence in the air, a Mexico City chronicle should be one long fight scene, right?

Wrong. Violence should be common — almost omnipresent — but that does not mean one combat after another.

The violence among the mortals does not need to affect the characters directly. They need only see its effects. If the characters see a teenage boy dressed in gang colors, shot dead in the street, the players remember the brutality that saturates the city. A news story about a murdered judge has the same effect. A cockfight in a bar also suggests the violence that can erupt at any time, particularly if the Storyteller draws the comparison between the roosters and the men strutting and posturing in the bar.

When packs meet, Cainites might indulge in their own sham violence — showing that they are ready to fight without actually fighting. Just like mortals, Cainites can exhibit their machismo through shoving, displaying weapons or fangs, cutting each other off in mid-sentence, trash-talking and other forms of mock-aggression. Such displays tend to become ritualized with time. Everyone knows the drill, everyone has shown that they won't be pushed around, and the packs can get down to business. A newcomer, however, might not know the code and take the gestures as genuine threats. Vendettas that last decades can grow from one hothead's touchy pride or temper tantrum.

SOUTH-OF-THE-BORDER BARBED WIRE CAINITE DEATH MATCH!

Sometimes packs deliberately arrange to fight. A Game of Instinct such as Cowboys and Indians may involve two packs dueling each other. Ducti may schedule a rumble as a way to channel and defuse aggression between their packs — or the macho posturing may escalate of its own accord into a challenge to battle. In that case, ducti who can resist the group fury seek a way to satisfy honor before the nascent grudge boils over and someone meets Final Death. A pack ductus may also call out a rival pack as a way to impress higher-ranking Sabbat. Some fights are just for fun.

In the “fun fights,” the Sabbat feels free to parody itself. The Mexican Sabbat loves the overheated, grand-opera excess of *lucha libre* and other forms of pro wrestling, and adopt them with relish. Before the fight, the pack



members strive to outdo each other with their extravagant boasts and threats. Participants may put on masks — anything from colorful hoods to celebrities, cartoon characters or movie monsters. The packs might brawl in a steel cage, or a ring of fire, or wrap their arms in barbed wire to draw blood from themselves and their opponents. At the end, winners and losers toast each other with a Blood Feast of drugged or drunken mortals. On some occasions, the battling packs invite other Cainites to watch; packs can gain prestige for putting on a good show.

Even the most serious chronicle needs a break now and then. Particularly after a harrowing story arc, it can be a lot of fun to break out the dice and play through a simple brawl, especially one that the characters themselves do not take seriously.

THE REAL THING

Sooner or later, a Sabbat chronicle runs into violence that the characters *do* take seriously — not the camaraderie of rough-housing or an angry brawl, but attempts at vicious, bloody murder. It may be a Monomacy, an ambush by a rival pack or a cold-blooded assassination attempt. The players' characters may be the target of an attack, the perpetrators or a third party caught up in the mayhem.

When this happens, the Storyteller should strive to show the pain and terror of fighting for one's life or unlife. Don't just mark off health levels lost or healed: Describe the bones broken and the flesh punctured, ripped or burned. If any character frenzies, describe how their bestial fury sweeps away any trace of human thought or feeling. Make the fight ugly — spectacular, perhaps, but in an awful, horrifying way.

Give thought to the consequences of a fight as well. These can extend far beyond the characters involved. Did the fighters cause property damage that the city media and mortals in power would notice? Then they had better fix it quickly or come up with a plausible cover story, or answer to the sect's elders for their carelessness. Did any mortals — people those whose word the authorities might take seriously — see the characters perform blatantly supernatural feats? Then someone must silence those mortals, one way or another, but not in a way that attracts even more attention and raises more questions. The Sabbat claims to scorn the Masquerade, and woe to the Cainite who even uses the word, but the sect's leaders frown on members who show a lack of discretion.

POLITICS

Despite the endemic violence of the Sabbat, the sect experiences just as much internal politics as the Camarilla — maybe even more, if such a thing is possible. The Sabbat unites many clans, each with its own culture and traditions, as well as numerous Paths of Enlightenment and views about the sect's basic purpose and organization. The Vaulderie helps curtail some of the resulting conflict. So

does the constant pressure from the sect's many enemies: The Sabbat puts aside its internal differences to fight everyone it perceives as tools of the Antediluvians. All this means that the sect's Cainites must resolve their differences through politics.

The deal-making, compromise and intrigue begin within the packs. The most stable packs share a mission and perhaps even a Path of Enlightenment (or at least the Cainites all sympathize with a Path), but many packs are not stable. Perhaps one Cainite wants to climb the Sabbat hierarchy while another pack member wants to diablerize Camarilla Kindred and a third thinks they should seek a mentor for a Path of Enlightenment. Strong Vinculi prevent them from simply going their separate ways. So... they negotiate. The diablerist tells her ambitious packmate how they could impress their archbishop by destroying Camarilla enemies. The ladder-climber points out that Path gurus do not take just anyone as their disciples, and he could help the Path mystic if he had more clout in the sect. The would-be Path mystic counters that successful devotion to a Path would impress their superiors and make them all better warriors for the Jyhad. The ductus, meanwhile, tries to find a plan of action that does not displease anyone so much that they abandon the pack or challenge her to Monomacy.

Some packs do become virtual hive-minds, where high Vinculi encourage conformity of belief and action. The Machete Cross from Chapter Three is an example. Such packs require shared and strongly held attitudes to begin with. They are the exception for the Sabbat, not the rule.

A megalopolis like Mexico City can support several packs, each with its own little culture and interests. A well-established coven with business ties seeks different things than a roving pack out for blood and glory, but the city's archbishop may need them both. Most Sabbat also understand the basic truth that fighting is *dangerous*. When Cainites fight each other, they risk Final Death; when Sabbat fight each other, they weaken the sect and render it less able to pursue its missions. Some Sabbat don't care, but they rarely last very long. Wise Sabbat channel the enmities between packs into courses other than fighting. The packs compete for favor with their archbishop. They try to put on a better show at the *ritae*. They boast, and sometimes find they must make good on their boasts; they target smear campaigns against rivals, and become targets in turn. Packs try to put a member of a rival pack in their debt — not even because they get much real advantage, but just to be one up on the competition. Ducti negotiate small deals — perhaps a shared War Party, or trading tutorials in Disciplines — to build allegiances against common rivals.

Higher-ranking Sabbat, meanwhile, seek a careful balance among the Cainites they lead. A certain degree of rivalry spurs packs to greater efforts, and their deeds burnish the prestige of their bishop or archbishop. If one pack becomes powerful or prestigious enough to threaten

a coup against the archbishop and her favorites, she can mobilize rival packs to weaken her own new rivals. On the other hand, too much rivalry tears the city's Sabbat apart, which makes an archbishop look bad to her cardinal, the consistory and the regent.

As the world's largest Sabbat community, with the greatest concentration of the sect's leaders, Mexico City sees the most intense politics between packs and leaders. Mexico City lacks an archbishop because the regent fills that role. Covens can win favor from the regent herself, not to mention a few dozen prisci and visiting cardinals and seraphs. A prestigious Mexico City coven, with access to one or more of the sect's highest-ranking leaders, can sell that access to Sabbat from around the world. For instance, the Institutional Devolutionary Party has a known connection to Priscus Venere Carboni; a Cainite who seeks a meeting with Venere first curries favor with the PDI. By the same token, however, an enemy of the priscus may seek to weaken the PDI — if Venere cannot protect the PDI, his reputation suffers.

The subtle web of Sabbat politics and rivalry extends beyond individual cities, too. Sabbat *chilangos* may call their city the Sabbat's "capital," but Mexico City is not unchallenged. The Sabbat themselves have a saying that Mexico City is the sect's heart but Montreal is its soul. Mexico City's Sabbat lead the sect's politics and the war effort against the Ancients, but Montreal predominates in Path mysticism and esoteric Cainite lore. That gives Montreal's Sabbat their own authority within the sect, which can breed the Sabbat's own version of church and state conflicts. If one of Montreal's leading Path practitioners sends out a message advocating a certain course of action, other followers of that Path give the idea serious thought, and the sect's officers have to pay attention. Chaos in the consistory means that power gradually slips to Montreal — not the power of direct command and administration (for the Sabbat does not have this), but the power of prestige and persuasion. This high-level sect politics probably would not affect most Mexico City Cainites directly, but it is something for Storytellers to consider in a lengthy and highly political chronicle.

IMAGERY

Storytellers can use images to underscore the theme and mood of a story. Symbolic images can be used literally or through a variety of representations or allusions. For instance, if the Storyteller wants to use fire as a repeated image, she does not have to work actual flames in every scene. Instead, she could include fire in a billboard image or allude to fire through mention of a fireplace, barbecue or cans of gasoline.

A little of this goes a long way, though. Symbolic images are accents to a story, to increase the sense that events have meaning beyond themselves. If the players do not notice a symbolic image right away, that's okay. Too

much symbolism, applied too blatantly, suggests that the Storyteller cares more about her own cleverness than in providing a rich, scary, exciting story for the players.

Characters themselves can use symbolic images as much as the player or Storyteller feels is appropriate. Cainites who feel great pride in their clan or Sabbat identity might deliberately surround themselves with associated images. The elder Szechenyi Jolán, for instance, sees herself as the voice of Tzimisce clan tradition. She underscores that self-appointed role by wearing the clan's snake-swallowing-its-tail icon in the form of a ring, bracelet or pin. She may also suggest the image through devices such as a sash wound many times around her waist. For another example, the neonate Matías Cazimirsky paints the Sabbat's inverted ankh on his motorcycle. He is not at all subtle in his pride as a member of the Sabbat.

SABBAT SYMBOLS

Images associated with the Sabbat clans and the *auctoritas ritae* work well in Sabbat stories. Such images emphasize the sect's pervasive presence in Mexico City. References to clan and sect symbols in advertisements, murals and other public places can help create a mood of conspiracy and paranoia: The Sabbat is everywhere. Do the characters see a billboard for Corona beer? "Corona" means crown — the Lasombra symbol. The "A" of a stepladder with its cross-brace can suggest the Brujah *antitribu*. The little candy skulls from Day of the Dead celebrations evoke the Harbingers of Skulls, the Path of Death and the Soul, or the *Festivo dello Estinto*. Anything serpentine could refer to the Serpents of the Light or the Tzimisce; any sort of cup suggests the Vaulderie.

The Sabbat has a notorious fondness for fire, and Storytellers can use flames to symbolize the state of the sect. A vigorous blaze in a fireplace suggests controlled strength; a few candles in a dark place evokes the sect's occult mysteries. A flame guttering in the wind can suggest the Sabbat retreating before attack. A building burning down warns of the fury and chaos that could tear the sect apart. Ashes speak of exhaustion, defeat and loss — the fire has burned out.

ANTIQUITY

Pre-Columbian ruins dot Mexico City, while the older neighborhoods sport colonial-era churches and palaces. They serve as a constant reminder that the present grows out of the past and that the past is never truly dead — a concept that holds a special relevance for Cainites. The childer of Caine not only meet figures from their race's past, their elders can sweep them up in conflicts and agendas that date back centuries. When the characters meet an elder, setting the scene in a colonial-era building reinforces the sense of the past intruding on the present.

Pre-Columbian ruins and artifacts evoke a greater antiquity. The Spanish tried to destroy Tenochtitlan, but the Aztec city still haunts the modern metropolis. The *Templo Mayor* and other ruins stand as architectural re-

mind of the ancient city, but Tenochtitlan is not confined to ruins of stone. The Day of the Dead festival, the Virgin of Guadalupe and the *chilango's* love of flowers pulls a shadow of Tenochtitlan into present life. Including pre-Columbian relics and customs in a scene can hint that forces older than the Sabbath may be at work. This works particularly well if the Storyteller includes the Nagual War in her chronicle.

RELIGION

Natives of Mexico take their religion seriously. So does the Sabbath, in its fashion. Even if a story is not primarily religious, images taken from religion help give a story an aura of supernatural force and meaning. Storytellers can draw upon both Aztec and Roman Catholic traditions for images, and the two traditions sometimes intersect.

Any image connected to Aztec gods or worship suggests survival from the remote past. Such survivals seem all the more mysterious and menacing if they are somewhat hidden. Diego Rivera's murals of an idealized pre-Conquest Mexico are simple and obvious. Placing the symbolic animal of an Aztec god within a scene is subtler, more equivocal and therefore spookier. For instance, every year the Aztecs sacrificed thousands of human victims to the state god Huitzilopochtli, whose symbol was a hummingbird. A picture of a hummingbird in the same room as a grisly murder gives the death-scene an extra, uncanny edge. For another example, any depiction of the heart can recall how the Aztecs offered human hearts to their gods. In such a context, a graffiti heart with two names and an arrow can assume a sinister meaning. A heart-shaped box of candy becomes downright perverse, if the characters know that some Aztec gods also demanded offerings of chocolate!

Roman Catholic imagery provides more familiar symbolism with its own connotations of blood and death. Anything cross-shaped hints at the crucifixion of Christ, with all its associations of blood, salvation, pain and life beyond death. Not a few Sabbath twist Catholic images to suit Cainite purposes; the Path of Night and the Path of Cathari are especially blatant in their use of warped Christianity. The tainted power of vitae to sustain ghouls can ironically recall the power of Eucharistic bread and wine — the body and blood of Christ — to grant salvation and eternal life. Angels furnish associations with revolution as well as religion, through the Angel of Independence. An angel knickknack falling off a shelf can foreshadow danger or ruin. The Sacred Heart combines Catholic and Aztec imagery, especially when depicted still in Christ's body with the chest opened like a display cabinet — or like an Aztec sacrificial victim.

UNIQUE ABILITIES

Considering how many Cainites dwell in Mexico City, it should surprise no one that a few Sabbath develop novel powers or manifest unusual Merits. Few of these

Cainites ever teach their special abilities, however, and some abilities cannot be taught at all. A character who wanted to learn a new combination Discipline or the like would probably have to offer a significant boon or some similar payment — with no guarantee of success. Combination Disciplines and other rare powers are often unique expressions of Cainite's personal obsessions. Storytellers do not have to let players' characters learn these (or any other) unique powers, if they think that this would disrupt their stories.

NEW DISCIPLINE POWERS

SHAPE OF ALL BEASTS (PROTEAN •••••, VICISSITUDE ••••)

Cainites with the Protean power of Shape of the Beast can take their choice of two animal forms in a matter of seconds. Cainites with Vicissitude can reshape their bodies into the form of any animal of the same mass, given time and enough vitae to power the Discipline. A Cainite with both — and some knowledge of zoology and comparative anatomy — can learn to take the form of any animal between the size of a tiger and a rabbit. They can also force other beings into animal form.

As with Shape of the Beast, the transformed Cainite retains her psyche but can use the natural abilities of her animal form: keener senses, flight, rapid swimming or even venom (but no more lethal than would be normal for the species).

System: Changing form costs one blood point and takes three turns. Each additional blood point spent reduces the time by one turn, to a minimum of one turn. If the character uses the power to transform someone else, the transformation takes minutes instead of turns. Additionally, an unwilling character can resist, with the player making a contested Willpower roll (difficulty 6) against the would-be flesh-shaper's Dexterity + Body Crafts (difficulty 7). If the potential victim gains more successes, she successfully resists the restructuring of her body.

Unlike Shadow of the Beast, the transformation does not assimilate the Cainite's clothing and small personal possessions. While in animal form, a character can use any of her Disciplines except for Necromancy, Serpentis, Thaumaturgy or Vicissitude. The Storyteller defines the natural abilities of the various animal forms.

A character with Shape of All Beasts can stay in animal form as long as she wants. She can resume her human form at will, without the need to expend more vitae. So can another character who has Shape of the Beast. Cainites of equal or lower generation than the character can heal back the transformation as if it were five health levels of lethal damage. Mortals and Cainites of higher generation than the character cannot reverse the change at all without extensive reshaping by another master of Vicissitude.

This power costs 24 experience points.

BRACE FOR IMPACT (FORTITUDE •••••, POTENCE ••)

A Cainite who possesses both the unnatural strength of Potence and the supernatural toughness of Fortitude can learn to apply that strength to resisting some forms of damage. The power does not help against normal combat damage such as fists, bullets or blades. It does not grant extra protection against fire, electricity, sunlight or other energy-based sources of damage. The power only helps the character soak physical impacts that affect the entire body: falling damage, car crashes, explosions, or being struck with very large objects. The character must also expect the impact, so he can brace against it.

System: A character with this power can automatically soak one health level of impact damage for each dot of Potence that she has. This can be bashing, lethal or aggravated damage (as from falling off a skyscraper), but it must come only from impact — no cutting, piercing, burning or other forms of damage. At the Storyteller's option, Brace for Impact can also help a Cainite resist crushing pressure or vacuum decompression.

This power costs 21 experience points.

NEW MERIT

ALTERNATE SENSE (7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

The character does not require vision because she possesses another sense with equal discrimination. Typical examples include a bat's sonar or a bloodhound's sense of smell. The character does not suffer the usual penalties from operating in total darkness, though specifically visual tasks (such as reading) remain impossible. The character can also identify other characters by non-visual means.

Alternate Senses tend to "see through" Chimerstry illusions and Obfuscate concealment because few Cainites understand nonhuman or superhuman senses. When a character with Alternate Senses encounters a character who uses Chimerstry, Obfuscate or similar powers, use the system for "Seeing the Unseen" in **Vampire: The Masquerade** p. 152 — but treat the first character as having an Auspex rating two higher than it really is. For these purposes, a character who lacks Auspex entirely has an effective rating of two.

Alternate Senses often show some connection to Auspex or to the body-altering Disciplines of Protean, Serpents and Vicissitude. They also usually occur only in Cainites who suffer blindness or other extreme impairment of their normal senses.

ABYSS MYSTICISM

Obtenebration places a Cainite in contact with a mystic realm of darkness that the Lasombra call the Abyss. Strange, alien intelligences dwell in the Abyss, and a master of Obtenebration can contact them, call them into the material world and force them to serve. A sufficiently powerful abyss mystic can travel through the darkling

realm with enormous speed, or temporarily merge with potent entities in its chilling depths.

Abyss mysticism generates other strange manifestations as well, but this art is far more limited than actual Thaumaturgy. Many manifestations are unique expressions of a Lasombra's personal understanding of the Abyss, as filtered through his occult studies and propitiation of dark and deathly consciousnesses. Few mystics learn how to command the Abyss in more than one or two ways, beyond the basic Obtenebration powers.

To practice Abyss mysticism, a character needs at least five dots total in Obtenebration and Occult, and at least two dots in each. Each mystical feat calls for a ritual that lasts at least an hour, the expenditure of a blood point and a successful Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty 7).

Clanbook: Lasombra gives further details on summoning abyssal entities and traveling through the Abyss. In brief, abyssal entities manifest as Arms of the Abyss that act with a will of their own. They have the Physical Attributes of normal Arms of the Abyss and as many total dots of Mental Attributes as the summoner has dots of Obtenebration. Successes on the Intelligence + Occult roll and extra blood point expenditure can increase these Trait ratings. Travel through the Abyss requires the Level Six Obtenebration power of Shadowstep (see **Guide to the Sabbat**, p. 111). Caridad de Flores and Zadkiel ben Aron have developed unique feats of their own.

ZADKIEL'S GUARDIANS

Abyssal entities normally remain on Earth for only a short time. Keeping them around longer requires repeated summoning rituals and feeding them fairly large amounts of vitae each night. The abyssal entities in Zadkiel's well can stay on Earth until something destroys them, and he does not need to feed them more than one blood point per month. In mystical terms, Zadkiel has infused the well with abyssal energies to make the dark, cold water a shelter for the entities. In game terms, Zadkiel has turned these entities into actual Retainers, so he does not have to keep summoning them or feeding them more than he would a ghoul.

The abyssal Retainers have Strength and Dexterity Traits of 5, and ratings of 2 in each Mental Trait. They never leave the well unless Zadkiel commands them out to defend the haven.

CARIDAD'S GARDEN

The Lasombra Caridad de Flores feeds her tenebrous vitae to her plants as part of rites to honor Persephone, the Greco-Roman goddess of death. Her vitae-fed cannabis plants produce the *kalif* that she trades to the Assamite sorcerer Ikraam. She has also produced other prodigies of occult gardening. The plants in her interior garden show death-pale tints or dark, Abyss-tainted hues, and a few masterpieces display unusual powers of their own. Caridad spent years breeding her ghoul plants, and they would take at least as long for anyone else to duplicate.



- **Ghoul Bamboo:** Bamboo shoots can grow a foot a day. Caridad's ghoulish bamboo grows three feet a day, and their Potence lets the shoots punch through inch-thick wood or similar barriers (though this process is slow, and unlikely to work in any capacity as an attack).

- **Cainite Asphodel:** The Greeks believed that asphodel, or white narcissus, grew in the Underworld. Caridad has bred a ghoulish asphodel that grows and blooms in less than an hour, but only in the crumbling flesh of a destroyed Cainite. The flower has no other occult properties or powers.

- **Pomegranates of Persephone:** According to her myth, Persephone had to spend half the year as Queen of the Dead because she ate six pomegranate seeds while a prisoner in the Underworld. For her greatest feat of Abyss mysticism and occult gardening, Caridad imbued a pomegranate tree's fruit with that mythic power of death. A mortal who eats one of Caridad's pomegranates or drinks the juice from the fruit falls into a deathlike sleep for several days. The fruit has a weaker effect on Cainites who consume the blood of a mortal dosed with the juice.

System: If a mortal consumes a Pomegranate of Persephone, his next sleep becomes a vampire-like torpor. Each day, the mortal character's player makes a Stamina + Survival roll (difficulty 6): The mortal awakens when the player accumulates 12 successes. A mortal who has been autopsied or embalmed, of course, is truly dead. Detecting that a torpid mortal is actually alive requires an Intelligence + Medicine roll (difficulty 9).

If a vampire feeds upon a mortal dosed with the magic pomegranate juice, she too may enter torpor. In this case, however, the character can awaken again if the player simply makes a Stamina roll (difficulty 6), which she may attempt once per night at the normal time she would rouse from the day's slumber.

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