

San Francisco

B4 NIGHT™



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A Sourcebook for Vampires: The Masquerade
and Kinred of the East



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Daniel "Oh my God that sucked" **Barclay**, for watching double features of dubious merit, always sharing a laugh and knowing who was better at DOA3.

Matt "You're... choking... me!" **Keeley**, for getting jumped by everyone he knows... in restaurants, stores, bars....

Jesse "Watch the damn tape already!" **Scoble**, for being a saving grace at work and liquoring me up good.

Devinder "Yeah, but is it art?" **Thiara**, for turning debate into both a fine art and a blunt instrument for bludgeoning.

The Stronghold Crowd: Adam, Dac, Heather, Penn, Chris, Andy, Keith, Ross, Jessie & many more who made life in Guelph... interesting.



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PROLOGUE: NIGHT MOVES

All warfare is based on deception.
— Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

“Check,” said the First Oni and Devil of Heaven with a trace of a smile. “You haven’t many pieces left in play, Minister.”

Jochen Van Nuys, Minister of the West and former Prince of San Francisco, studied the board for a moment. It was true. His white pieces were certainly outnumbered by Chiu Bao’s black ones, with a growing number of captured white pieces on his opponent’s side of the board. Chiu Bao had certainly picked up the fundamentals of chess far more quickly than Van Nuys was able to master the subtleties of *mahjong* or *go*. The Cathayan mandarin was a shrewd strategist, for all his appearance as a simple country bumpkin.

“It’s not necessarily a matter of how many pieces you have left, Mandarin, but how you deploy them.” He shifted his queen on the board, deftly removing his king from check and bringing a subtle smirk to Chiu Bao’s face.

“Your queen can’t protect you forever, Van Nuys,” he said. “Sooner or later you will have to come out from behind her skirts.”

* * *

Sara Anne Winder was not pleased. The Camarilla had charged the newly named Prince of San Francisco with regaining the city from the Cathayan vampires who’d taken it, but so far all she possessed were speculations and theories from some of the finest minds in the Camarilla about the nature and identity of her adversaries. She sighed heavily and pushed aside the titanium-shelled laptop and the endless reports and theories it contained.

Her bodyguard, Miriam, looked over from where she stretched, one foot held high above her head in a classic ballet arch. Her black leotard sang every graceful curve of Miriam Caravaggio’s lithe form like a serenade. She lowered her leg smoothly and assumed

another position, hands cupped demurely at her stomach as she bent and flexed.

"More reports from the Tremere?" she asked idly, without missing a beat of the practice that had become so intrinsic, so second nature to her. Sara enjoyed watching Miriam train. She was so graceful, and so deadly. Winder knew full well that many mortals and a goodly share of Kindred thought the two were lovers. They spent much time together in the prince's haven in the heart of Frisco's Castro district. Winder had only one love, however, and that was success. Let them think what they wanted.

"More idle theories and guesswork, if that's what you mean," Winder replied with a note of disgust. "Every fact that Luna Demain and her chantry uncover about these Cathayans spawns a hundred more questions. They think they've confirmed that the Cathayans do not make others of their kind through the Embrace, but they have little inkling as to how they actually do it. The report states that it might be a special rite, or perhaps simply killing the intended target and breathing into her mouth. They could be more fertile than we ever imagined, or they could be the victims of circumstance."

Winder stood and paced irritably. "I can't fight a war based on theories! I need facts, weapons we can use against the Cathayans. And until we ascertain their breeding capacity, the source of their strength, we cannot act... we mustn't."

"Why waste time letting the Tremere dissect and study them?" Miriam asked, kicking one leg up to the bar and leaning forward as she ran her hands up toward her toes. "We know full well the Cathayans meet Final Death just like any of us. A stake through the heart and a severed neck is enough."

Miriam smiled at the memory of her last fight with them, snapping the necks of the Cathayan assassins who tried to kill Winder. They had fought well, but not well enough. They hadn't expected such a demure-looking woman to serve as prince's bodyguard. It was a good fight, almost fluid, like long ribbons sailing in the wind. She appreciated their grace and sense of motion. She was looking forward to more.

The prince shook her head, however, bringing a lock of long blond hair across her face. She brushed it aside, then turned her attention back to the laptop. "Don't be so sure," she told Miriam. "We have reports of some Cathayans completely unaffected by stakes, stories about them breathing fire and running up walls. We need to know more about them. 'Know your enemy as you know yourself and you will always be victorious.'"

"What's that from?" Miriam asked.

"Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*," Winder replied, tapping the copy of the book on her desk. "We need to know how the Cathayans think and what they're

capable of before we can move against them. They've shown that they know far too much about us already. It's time we turned those tables and showed them we are not to be trifled with."

"Difficult to do that while we're penned up here," Miriam noted, with a pirouette and swing of her arm that swept the window nearby and what lay beyond its heavy curtains. Winder bit back a harsh retort. Her bodyguard was right. The Cathayans gave her a haven in the Castro, San Francisco's famous "gay district," a not-so-subtle snub. By Camarilla propriety, she should have a manor on Nob Hill and free rein to run her city as she saw fit. Under the auspices of the Cathayans and their "New Promise Mandarinate," though, she was little more than a prisoner. Still, even that could be turned to her advantage.

"Allow the Cathayans to become comfortable," she said, as much to herself as to Miriam. "They'll decide we aren't a threat while we watch, learn, and gather information about them. And when they least suspect it, that's when they'll learn the lessons that took the Anarchs and Sabbat centuries to understand. We aren't going anywhere."

* * *

"The queen's protection and power are considerable," Van Nuys told his opponent, much as a tutor would lecture a schoolboy, "but it's the cooperation of all the pieces, working together — their moves complimenting each other — that makes for strategy. No individual piece moves without benefiting the whole."

Chiu Bao smiled. His people had grasped this lesson millennia ago under the august teachings of Kung Fu Tzu... Master Confucius.

Van Nuys slid his king to the side and safety while he prepared to sacrifice other pieces to keep the monarch safe just a little while longer. Victory demanded sacrifices; a good gambit was never actually what it appeared to be.

* * *

The Castro was libidinous, with social freedom unlike any Dan Gemmel had known before. He couldn't help grinning when he walked into the club and scanned the room, bathing in the sea of guys, considering his choice in a banquet of denim and muscle-shirts. There wasn't anything like this waiting for him in Nebraska.

'So many guys, so little morals,' he thought eagerly; his gaze rested on the man standing at the bar. 'Damn!' he thought, 'I've never seen him in here before.'

The guy looked hot, the type of heat that nearly boiled the sweat off Dan's skin. He was the college frat-boy type; exactly the kind of cheesecake Dan went for. His T-shirt was stretched tight against a beautifully cut chest and his jeans hung loose around

his waist. He leaned against the bar, languidly watching the dance floor and completely at ease with himself and his surroundings — like a cat who had the walk of the house. He glanced over at Dan and gave him a slow, almost shy, smile. A shiver of electricity coursed through Dan's body as their eyes met. Before he could move, though, the guy had looked away again.

Dan took a couple steps forward. He *had* to meet this guy. He'd only crossed a quarter of the distance between them when a figure emerged from the tangle of sweaty bodies on the dance floor and stepped up to the guy at the bar. Dan's heart sank. The guy at the bar was cute, but the Asian was gorgeous. He was Japanese and didn't even look old enough to be in the club. He was all in white, from his tight spandex shirt to his equally snug jeans, showing off every curve of his slim body. He looked like an almond-eyed angel, but with an edge. "This kid isn't innocent," Dan thought. "If he's bar-guy's boyfriend, my chances are...."

Bar-guy whispered something to the Japanese kid and looked over at Dan again, smiling. Then they were both looking at him and grinning. "Oh my God,"

Dan thought, 'this can't be for real.' Before he knew it, he was composing a letter in his head... "Dear First Hand, I thought this would never happen to me...."

The two guys walked over to Dan, who managed to say "hi" without sounding too desperate. He accepted gracefully when they offered to buy him a drink, relieved not to have shown his Midwestern roots. The first guy's name was Tim and his friend was Saki. "Like the drink," the Japanese kid said with a smile that made Dan melt. They were both students at UC Berkley, the same as Dan, but he was surprised he'd never seen them around campus. Then again, they didn't have the same majors. Apparently Saki was from Japan, studying environmental sciences at Berkley, while Tim was a history major. They were both amazing dancers.

After a few drinks, Dan was only too happy when Saki announced he was bored and suggested they go somewhere more private. They left the club laughing and talking, heading down the street to catch the Muni to the BART station.

When Tim pulled Dan into a dark alley between a bistro and a closed-up tourist bookstore, he thought again. "Is this for real?" Then Tim sank fangs into his neck,



puncturing the jugular with a pop. Dan gasped in ecstasy, shuddering in Tim's iron grasp while blood trickled down his neck. Tim lowered Dan against the cool wall and gently lapped at his neck before straightening up.

"I can see now why you wanted to meet here," Saki said, bending over Dan.

"I thought it would be wise if we saw to our needs before discussing other matters, Sakurai-san," Tim replied. "But we shouldn't stay here too long." Saki nodded and pressed his lips to Dan's neck. Dan felt a cold aching pleasure spread through his body again.

* * *

"It would be different," Chiu Bao supposed aloud, "if you had built stronger defenses for your side, rather than leaving yourself open to attack. It is wise to see to the defense of one's home before venturing forth to war, is it not?"

"Absolutely," Van Nuys agreed; Chiu Bao moved a rook closer to the attack, tightening his net. "But sometimes one must risk sallying forth to seize an opportunity before it slips away."

Van Nuys smiled tightly while studying the board. The First Oni was still pontificating about the goals of the Harmonious Menders of Broken Fences. Happily, Van Nuys understood more about Kuei-jin politics than anyone else believed. The Fence Menders were focused on strengthening the Kuei-jin's traditional power in Asia, fortifying their position exactly like Chui Bao said ... only circumstances had drawn them into the lamentable task of holding foreign cities.

Now duty forced them to expend effort on creating new courts in foreign lands rather than caring for the business of home. Van Nuys knew that this chafed strategists like Chiu Bao. What the Kuei-jin needed was a capable local regent, able to administer their holdings for them; someone who knew the city and wasn't interested in Asia's affairs. It was only a matter of time before they realized it.

All he needed to steer the game's course was patience.

* * *

"Patience," Lili Zhu said in a calm and soothing tone, "is our ally in this matter."

"On the contrary," replied Song Feng, Devil Tiger mandarin of the New Promise. "Patience is a deceptive ally at best. We cannot afford to wait out the Kin-jin. We must neutralize any threat they pose to this city's new order, and quickly. We may have caught the barbarians off guard at first, but that cannot last."

"Are you saying you fear reprisals from the Kin-jin?" Zhu replied, her tone frosty. It was no secret she cared little for Song Feng or his methods. Although she had once heard the Howl of the Devil Tiger herself, Zhu now followed the Song of the Shadow, and preferred calm contemplation to the fiery action

of the Heavenly Devils. To her, Song Feng's fascination with the modern world — money and electronic toys — made him seem childish.

"Only a fool would expect the Kin-jin to accept this city's loss without complaint," Song Feng replied. "They've already taken steps to pen us in and slow our advance, giving them time to plan a counter-offensive. We must take action before they can."

"We will," interjected Han Hui. The follower of the Way of the Resplendent Crane had remained silent at the start of the exchange, but she now spoke with authority. "We *will* act," she repeated, "but not to attack the Kin-jin. There is nothing to be gained in that exchange." She ignored Song Feng's attempted protest and continued. "Our actions must strengthen our ties with this city's Kin-jin; give them reason to profess their loyalty to us. If we take them for our own, we strengthen our position and weaken our enemy in equal measure. By giving the Kin-jin a part of this domain, we make it that much more difficult for them to dislodge us."

"But at what cost?" Lili Zhu asked. "If we integrate the foreigners too quickly, we must ignore the traditions of training *hin*. The August Courts are not likely to look upon us with approval. We will integrate more of the Kin-jin, but it must take time. Therefore, patience is the key."

"Fah! The August Courts will approve of nothing less than success," Song Feng said with a dismissive wave of his hand. "The truth is that they care little for the means of success and we all know it. I agree; we must strengthen our ties here before the new prince can sever them."

"We agree, then; we must give the Kin-jin hope that the future we offer is better than what their Camarilla offers them," Han Hui said, resting her elbows on the table and clasping her hands before her. "If we divide their loyalty, the Kin-jin cannot stand against us."

* * *

Chiu Bao picked up the white queen and set his own black rook in her place.

"Your queen is lost to you, Van Nuys. I hope your king does not grow lonely without her gentle embrace. Do not worry though," he said with the utmost gravity, "I will ensure his misery does not last long."

"You are most kind," the minister replied with a sober expression, "not to prolong my agony."

* * *

The hot iron pressed into his flesh and Peter Kwan screamed. Blistering pain ripped the sound from his lungs until he couldn't scream any more. The pain drove all thoughts from his mind — thoughts he knew he shouldn't have — bad thoughts. They were right to punish him. They were only

trying to help him understand.

"Pain is the greatest of teachers," the man with the iron said. He held its glowing tip just inches from his own face, studying it, as if he could divine the future in the sizzling droplets of Peter's blood. There was a distinct odor of burning flesh and blood in the air. "Pain doesn't coddle us. It forces us to learn, or suffer." He smiled and looked down on Peter, bound to the chair with tears of blood running down his face. "What has it taught you today, Mr. Kwan?"

"Mr. Kwan?"

The voice brought Peter Kwan back to the present, far away from his "indoctrination." He turned from the window overlooking the glittering lights of San Francisco. Fu Peng, the Minister of the East, stood in the shadows with a questioning look on his wizened face. Peter hadn't heard him approach. He sketched a quick bow, which Fu Peng returned.

"Yes, minister?" he asked.

"The mandarins wish to see the Minister of the West," Fu Peng said. He rarely spoke of Van Nuys by name, preferring his formal title. His dedication to formality was what made Fu Peng adept at his job.

"I'll summon him," Kwan replied, withdrawing with another bow. He turned and walked away. He wondered if Fu Peng knew what he'd been thinking about — if anyone knew. No, they didn't. If they had, they would have forced him to face the Eye of Heaven, staked out for the sun, long ago. No one suspects, he thought, and that's just as it should be.

* * *

Van Nuys shifted a pawn forward into a vacant space in the Devil Tiger's first rank. As Chiu Bao looked up from the board, Van Nuys indicated the queen he'd just lost with a tip of his head. The

returned queen now threatened Bao's black king. Hemmed in behind a protective wall, the king had no room left to maneuver.

"Checkmate," Van Nuys said quietly.

Before Chiu Bao could answer, a soft knock came at the door.

"Enter," the Minister of the West said, and his aide Peter Kwan stepped into the room with a respectful bow in Eastern style to both men.

"Pardon my interruption," he said, "but the Cloud Mandarins wish to see you, Minister."

"Of course," Van Nuys said, rising from his chair and straightening his tie a bit. "We were just finished here. You will excuse me, General?"

"Of course," the First Oni replied, "we must attend to our duties. I will be leaving for Hong Kong shortly, but I hope we will have the opportunity to play again soon."

"I look forward to it," Van Nuys replied. "Remember, General, beware of the power of an ambitious pawn." He turned while Kwan held open the door.

The Heavenly Devil, First Oni of the Extraordinary Commission, picked up the white queen from the board in front of him, dead fingers caressing the cool ivory. He glanced at the minister's retreating back. As he did so, his gaze fell for a moment on Van Nuys' aide, who looked back briefly before bowing and withdrawing. In that moment, Chiu Bao saw a trace of ... what? Fear? Anger? Ambition? Then the two men were gone.

He studied the chess piece again, thinking of Van Nuys' parting words.

"Good advice, Minister. You would do well to heed it yourself."



CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

*Don't everybody like the smell of gasoline?
Well burn motherfucker, burn American dreams....
— Gasoline by Outkast, "Stankonia"*

San Francisco: the City by the Bay, city of the Golden Gate. It has a reputation as a free-wheeling place that manages to hold onto some of the hippie-style peace, love and acceptance of the 1960s. It's a city on the edge of modern trends in fashion, culture and technology, home to the up-and-coming as well as the down-and-out — haven to alternative lifestyles of all kinds. It's also a city struggling with the effects of its own success; increased wealth and soaring real-estate prices force many of San Francisco's traditional inhabitants further toward its outskirts, filling the void with dot.com professionals and Internet millionaires.

In the World of Darkness, San Francisco rots from the inside out; success replaces ideals, style wins over substance. It's a city of conflict, where Asian vampires create a new kind of political state among the undead, leaving Western Kindred with the choice of either joining them or becoming exiles in their own home. It's a place where conflict could explode at any moment: where the future of all vampires, both Eastern and Western, hangs in the balance. San Francisco is a dark and dangerous place, but it is also rife with opportunities for the cunning and ambitious. Do you dare to walk its fog-wrapped streets in the Final Nights?

OVERVIEW

San Francisco by Night is a sourcebook for **Kindred of the East**, but it's also useful for players and Storytellers of **Vampire: The Masquerade**. It describes the city of San Francisco after the Quincunx's Kuei-jin seized power, ousting the Kindred Prince and his primogen and creating a domain they call the New Promise Mandarinate. The book describes the current state of San Francisco and the forces arrayed on both sides of the Kindred/Kuei-jin conflict. It sets the stage for pivotal events in the biggest West Coast power play ever.

THEME

The occupied city of **San Francisco by Night** touches on several themes in **Kindred of the East**, particularly involving contact between the Kuei-jin and their Western counterparts. These themes underlie this book's material, and Storytellers can use them to enhance stories set in and around San Francisco.

It's not necessary for these themes to appear in every story, or for them to be especially prominent. They do, however, provide a sense of unity when used

subtly and consistently in the background. Consider them when creating stories and characters for a San Francisco chronicle.

COLONIALISM

The Middle Kingdom suffered under more than a century of European colonialism, which forced alien laws, values and conditions on nations and cultures thousands of years old. Although many of Asia's nations have reasserted their own cultural identities, the legacy born of European influence and rule remain like a bitter aftertaste. Now the Kuei-jin of the August Courts have turned the tables on the West, invading and occupying two of their cities and imposing their own rules and requirements.

Most Kuei-jin see this as justice of a sort — an opportunity to take the battle to the unrighteous Kin-jin. There are those Kuei-jin, however, who see the Quincunx becoming exactly what it claims to fight against. They question the wisdom of a crusade when there's still so much to be done closer to home. In fact, many within the Fence Mender faction grow disillusioned with how their leaders have become entangled in foreign affairs, after proclaiming so loudly that the Quincunx needed to deal with matters in the Middle Kingdom first. The Kuei-jin adopt the methodology of the colonialists and seek to impose their ways on the outsiders, so the cycle continues. Are the modern invaders' actions based on justice — or just bitterness and vengeance?

CULTURE SHOCK

The notion that East meets West in San Francisco brings about some profound culture shock for both the generally insular Kuei-jin and Kindred. Both parties see themselves as the center of everything; their own culture and traditions are considered “natural,” while viewing the other as foreign, alien or even corrupt.

Now circumstances are forcing the two sides to co-exist in close proximity. Night after night, they are slowly learning more about each other. Some lessons are written in trust, while others are scripted with blood. Regardless, the experiences of the vampires in San Francisco makes it harder for them to view their opposite numbers as faceless and nameless “foreign devils.” The needs of the New Promise Mandarinate, thanks to their low numbers and unfamiliarity with their surroundings, make it more difficult still for the Kuei-jin to openly treat the Kindred as corrupt beings to be wiped out. They need Western vampires to act as their interpreters and guides, and they need their cooperation to hold the city.

Like it or not (and most vampires do not) the two cultures become more bound up in each other, while both sides discover they may have more in common than they anticipated. How do the Kindred within the Mandarinate adapt to the demands of Kuei-jin culture?



How do the Quincunx react to Western culture “corrupting” the Kuei-jin in San Francisco? Are the *kànbujiàn* a potential bridge of understanding between East and West? All of these are questions a chronicle can try and answer.

Younger, often disaffected vampires, with more fluid, modern notions of identity (like an international appreciation and curiosity and an ability to adapt to a dynamic, global community forever on the cusp of constant change) explore common ground between Kuei-jin and Kindred. They reject the culture and traditions of their elders, striking out to find their own identity and meaning in a world that seems meaningless. As it has been for mortals for generations, San Francisco fast becomes a city where young, rebellious vampires go to “find themselves” and exist on their own terms. That is, of course, provided they dodge the rules of the New Promise Mandarinate and not entangle themselves in the political conflicts erupting between their elders.

FATALISM

There’s a certain fatalism in many Eastern cultures; what is, is, and there’s nothing one can do but accept the inevitable. Vampires in San Francisco sense monumental events on the horizon, and few believe they bode anything other than disaster for the city and its inhabitants. There’s a sense of powerlessness; the Kuei-jin and the Kindred, locked into their macabre roles like unwilling actors headed for inevitable collision, prepare for the final acts in their shared drama.

Of course, there’s nothing that says the characters must be powerless. Acting in the face of such overwhelming fatalism is also a possible theme; young Kuei-jin struggle against the custom-addled mandates of their elders; Kindred create an island of peace despite the Camarilla’s edict to push out the invaders; vampires of both hemispheres forestall Gehenna/The Age of Sorrows through cooperative ventures rather than struggling against one another. Regardless, the players should derive a strong sense that there’s something *bad* happening in San Francisco... a harbinger of something even worse lurking in the future. A sense of inevitable doom shrouds the city like the nighttime fog, and everyone feels it, even if few acknowledge it.

INDIVIDUALITY AND IDENTITY

San Francisco has long been the destination for people trying to “find themselves,” thus sparking a culture-rich environment open to diverse lifestyles and philosophies. In the mixing of Kuei-jin and Kindred — along with their different cultures and backgrounds — some vampires raise questions that make their elders uncomfortable. They look around themselves and ask,

“Is this the only existence for me?” They ask if it is their bloodline, clan, Dharma, race or culture that defines them — or if there is something more?

Experience exposes many Running Monkeys to new ideas, heretical Dharmas and Kindred philosophies, while Western vampires learn more about the spirit worlds, paths of enlightenment and Eastern principles. Minority factions like the *gaki*, the anarchists and the *kànbujiàn* struggle to find their voices in the Final Nights, trying to encourage others to listen to what they have to say. While this volatile mixture will most likely lead to an explosion, there’s also the chance of something entirely new arising from its ashes, a possibility all sides view with trepidation.

MOOD

Place and time are important in establishing a story’s mood. San Francisco’s modern nights are a study in contrasts: filled simultaneously with activity and new opportunities while smothered by an almost overpowering sense of dread and imminent disaster. The city’s vampires exist in a state of siege; not quite at war, but certainly not at peace either. Events spiral out of control, liable to explode at any moment with many different factions jockeying for position and working to ensure they emerge on top in the end — assuming they survive long enough to claim victory. This environment offers Storytellers a wide pallet of moods and tones to choose from.

FRIGHTENING

There’s a strong sense that matters in San Francisco are just *wrong*, and that they can only lead to disaster for all involved. Many Kuei-jin and Kindred feel trapped on a roller coaster of events that is rushing headlong toward a break in the tracks. They can see the impending disaster, but no one seems able to divert themselves from the inevitable horror. Although both sides believe victory is just around the corner, the truth is that a sense of foreboding regarding both San Francisco’s and the world’s future fills the gullet of every vampire in the city. How do these creatures deal with such issues? They pace, like all caged animals, awaiting that one opportunity for primal savagery that they inherently sense will accomplish nothing.

There’s also the fear of confronting the unknown. Both sides know so little about their counterparts that every night involves cautious probes into the dark and the hope that some new danger doesn’t come leaping out with fangs bared. Kindred who hear tales of souls dragged screaming into Hell (and fighting their way free) and Kuei-jin confronted with the reality of the Embrace and the Curse of Caine can only feel the chill of horror touch what remains of their souls. They wonder if their opponents more monstrous than they are. In many ways, these vampires — confronted by

distorted reflections of themselves — earn a bitter taste of what mortals must feel when confronted by the undead: They don't like it at all.

GLOOMY

Frisko's omnipresent fog shrouds the streets, covering the deeds of Kuei-jin and Kindred alike. Vampires penned in their neighborhoods feel like zoo animals denied the freedom to hunt where they please. The Kuei-jin grip on the city's heart seems unbreakable, and more than a few Kindred venture to the other side, becoming collaborators of opportunity. The invasion seemingly snapped the back of the anarch movement. It is no surprise that the Kindred of San Francisco see little hope for the future, if hope was ever part of their vocabulary. Those who do cling to hope foresee a long and difficult road ahead. Overcoming the Kuei-jin is not easy, and it will be costly in terms of both resources and the number of vampires delivered to Final Death on both sides. Anyone who believes otherwise is at best optimistic or at worst deluded.

The Kuei-jin's outlook isn't much better. Although the New Promise Mandarinate has achieved some success, it totters along a razor's edge, surrounded by enemies on all sides. One wrong move sends the Mandarinate and its collaborators tumbling headlong into Hell. The Kuei-jin must compromise their principles almost nightly to maintain their ground, and every evening they question the price of victory; is conquest worth the struggle when it requires the surrender of identity and culture, turning them into what they struggled against all along?

Despite the odds, vampires on both sides struggle to accomplish their duty. Both sides march grimly forward, no matter what the cost. And in the wake of an uneasy truce, a sense of hopelessness fills the hearts of San Francisco's unliving more deeply than ever before.

TENSE

A vampire's existence is always one of vigilance against any number of threats, but San Francisco's undead now endure in a state of almost constant siege. The city's new masters now corral the Kindred, once undisputed masters of the night, into "Munificent Transitioning Sectors." Tempers run high when hunting is difficult and scarce, or when someone threatens the Masquerade. Fights break out; a thin red line is all that separates the Kindred from frenzy each week.

All is not well with the Kuei-jin either. They constantly deal with the threat of Kin-jin reprisals, counter-attacks and sabotage, as well as with the creeping dangers of *akuma* and the possibility of treason within their own ranks. Accustomed to stability and tradition, they must contend with the city's ever-changing conditions. The lack of solid leadership splits them into fractious mandarins who vie for the title of ancestor.

The San Francisco of the modern nights is like Cold War-era Berlin, modern Jerusalem or any city constantly on the verge of war. Everyone is watchful and on guard, waiting for the other shoe to drop and unleash a torrent of violence that neither side may survive. The more nerves fray and tempers stretch thin, the more likely a single spark will light that apocalyptic fuse. Players and characters should feel that San Francisco is a powder keg, ready to explode at any minute.

NOVEL

All is not lost, however, in the City by the Bay. There is a measure of hope — at least the possibility for something new and different within San Francisco. The conflict shakes the traditional power structures and *modus operandi* on both sides, allowing enterprising vampires opportunities to advance their own causes. San Francisco is where cunning and capable vampires build names for themselves, provided they survive long enough. Ambition is in the air, with the coming struggle determining the fate of prince and mandarin alike.

On the streets and in the havens, Kuei-jin and Kindred mingle as never before. Although centuries of mistrust and misunderstanding remain a near-palpable barrier between them, there is also the potential for something greater, something truly unique in the merging of East and West. In a city known for its tolerance of new ideas, this might well be the birthplace for new philosophies.

Few vampires can even conceive of peace between the two factions. Some, however, dare dream of a different way: one that avoids inevitable ruin and offers instead the hope of understanding, and perhaps even redemption. Then again, in the World of Darkness, the most spectacular plummets occur from those closest to heaven. Just ask Caine and the Wan Xian.

Of one thing is for certain: change comes, for good or for ill. Regardless of what events unfold in the New Promise Mandarinate, nothing will ever be quite the same again.

How to Use This Book

San Francisco by Night provides all the necessary information for Storytellers to set a single story or an entire chronicle in the city's modern nights. It begins with a general overview, then delves into specifics of important people, places and things in San Francisco.

Storytellers should read the book through from start to finish to familiarize themselves with the setting's entirety and its characters. Players looking for information on San Francisco can skip ahead and read Chapters Three and Four, which summarize the current situation in the city. They can peruse Chapter Five for information on the supporting characters (Storyteller permitting) and glance over Chapter Six for some ideas

concerning what their characters may or may not know about their opposites.

Chapter One: Introduction summarizes San Francisco in relation to the overarching mood and potential themes. It introduces both the city and sourcebook in as concise a manner as possible.

Chapter Two: Interesting Times covers the city's history, from the arrival of the Europeans through to the modern nights. It studies the interaction of Kuei-jin and Kindred in the city over the years, leading up to the current conflict. Players and Storytellers may incorporate historical periods or events into the background of elder vampires. Alternatively, they may take inspiration from past events to paint modern characters.

Chapter Three: Utopia Lost looks at San Francisco's geography, particularly the Munificent Transitioning Sectors established by the Kuei-jin as places where the Kindred may exist and hunt in relative safety for now. The chapter discusses the city's major landmarks and places of importance to Kuei-jin and Kindred alike, along with the *feng shui* of San Francisco and the region's most contested areas.

Chapter Four: San Francisco Nights looks at the nightly existence of Kuei-jin and Kindred under the New Promise Mandarinate in San Francisco. It describes the unique problems (and potential solutions) facing them, the forces arrayed on both sides of the conflict and how conditions in the city affect both Eastern and Western vampires. It also takes an in-depth look at the spirit worlds of San Francisco, as well as how conditions there affect the Kuei-jin.

Chapter Five: Honored Shen describes the City by the Bay's supernatural inhabitants, focusing on the Kuei-jin and Kindred factions. There is additional information on both neutral or third parties caught in the midst of the struggle and other *shen* involved in the city. Storytellers can use these descriptions (complete with game stats) to spark story ideas or as supporting characters in a chronicle.

Chapter Six: Storytelling San Francisco provides advice for Storytellers in using the material provided herein. It offers an objective look at what the Kuei-jin and Kindred know about each other, with story ideas, game information on some of the unique rituals used by San Francisco's vampires and material on the *kānbujian* — Kuei-jin who take the Second Breath outside the Middle Kingdom without the benefit of Dharmas or instruction from their elders.

RESOURCES

San Francisco is a large and diverse city, and this book focuses on its existence as part of the World of Darkness. This means there is less coverage of all the various nuances and locales of the city itself and

greater information on its supernatural elements. Fortunately, there is a wealth of resources available for Storytellers looking for more information on the city and its unique character.

FICTION

The Big Sleep by Raymond Chandler. Chandler set this and many other noir detective stories in the San Francisco of the 1920s and '30s. It provides an excellent feel for the development of the city in the World of Darkness (along with ideas for a historical chronicle, if the Storyteller is so inclined).

Bone by Fae Myenne Ng (Hyperion, 1993). A novel about three sisters growing up in San Francisco's Chinatown, providing a good "inside" look at the neighborhood and culture. Her other book, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, is not set in San Francisco but may also be of interest for its approach to Chinese-American culture.

Sandman: Three Septembers and a January by Neil Gaiman (reprinted in the *Fables & Reflections* graphic novel, DC Comics/Vertigo). An interesting tale about Joshua Norton, a famous San Franciscan and self-proclaimed Emperor of the United States.

Several of Anne Rice's novels touch upon San Francisco (it is where Louis tells his story to a reporter in *Interview With a Vampire*, as well as where Lestat makes his debut as a rock star in *The Vampire Lestat*). Rice's *Lives of the Mayfair Witches* series presents San Francisco from a different angle. All of the presentations are rich in ideas for a World of Darkness chronicle.

NON-FICTION

The Hollow City by Rebecca Solnit and Susan Schwartzberg (Verso Press, 2000). A look at how San Francisco is becoming the victim of its own success, with the bohemian culture that made the city famous being pushed out by dot.com millionaires. Useful inspiration for World of Darkness-related history and atmosphere.

Old San Francisco: The Biography of a City from the Early Days to the Earthquake (Putnam, 1975). A historical guide to San Francisco, from the city's founding until its ruin at the hands of the 1906 earthquake and fire. It is useful for background and historical stories.

Various city guidebooks also provide greater detail about landmarks, shops, hotels and attractions in San Francisco. The *Lonely Planet* and *Fodor's* guides are particularly good.

FILM AND TELEVISION

Escape from Alcatraz. A good (although somewhat dated) look at the legendary island prison and the three men who may have been the only convicts to escape from it. Useful information for turning the

prison into the Camarilla staging-ground for retaking the city from the Kuei-jin.

The Joy Luck Club. A film about the trials and triumphs of Chinese-American women in modern-day San Francisco.

L.A. Confidential. While the film's setting is Los Angeles rather than San Francisco, it captures the feel of operating within San Francisco's PD in the Final Nights, with double-crosses and rival factions vying for control.

Pacific Heights. San Francisco yuppies rent out a room in their house to a man who turns out to be a psychopath. Great location shots as well as mood shots on San Francisco's spooky side. A good feel for the Pacific Heights community for chronicles focusing on its political doings.

The Streets of San Francisco. This old cop show is extremely dated, but still conveys some of San Francisco's feel, along with ideas about crime and criminals in the city. The various *Dirty Harry* movies also transpire in the city, for inspiration for hard-bitten, big guns style chronicles.

WORLD OF DARKNESS RESOURCES

In addition to the material in *Kindred of the East* and the *Kindred of the East Companion*, players and Storytellers may find the following World of Darkness books useful in conjunction with *San Francisco by Night*.

Blood Magic: Secrets of Thaumaturgy. A sourcebook on the Thaumaturgy discipline for *Vampire: The Masquerade*, useful for expanding on the powers and research of this book's Tremere characters — particularly Wan Zhu (p. 88) and Luna Demain (p.110).

The Gilded Cage. This sourcebook for *Vampire: The Masquerade* takes a hard look at vampires' interactions with their natural environment: the city. Its guidelines on handling Kindred influence of mortals and their institutions fit perfectly with the political machinations transpiring in San Francisco. It can add additional depth to chronicles as well as providing ideas for how the Kindred and Kuei-jin continue their struggles through their mortal proxies (as outlined in Chapter Four).

Killing Streets. This sourcebook for *Kindred of the East* describes the criminal organizations Kuei-jin often use as Scarlet Screens. In particular, information on the Chinese Tongs and Triads are very useful, given Kuei-jin efforts to revive the Tongs of San Francisco's Chinatown as their agents in the modern nights. It also contains rules for the "broken mirrors" created when the Yomi World spills over into the Middle Kingdom.

Nights of Prophecy. Another sourcebook for *Vampire: The Masquerade*, this compilation of adventures discusses major events in adventure format changing the World of Darkness. The adventure

Walking After Midnight plays upon the events surrounding the fall of San Francisco to the Cathayans. It includes the anarchists' ill-fated assault on the peace negotiations between the Quincunx and Camarilla. It also serves as an excellent launching point for Storytellers looking to run a San Francisco chronicle.

Shadow War. This *Kindred of the East* sourcebook takes an in-depth look at how the Kuei-jin manage conflicts with each other, ranging from low-level disagreements to open warfare. It contains useful advice for handling the growing friction between the different Kuei-jin factions in San Francisco and their struggles with the Kin-jin.

World of Darkness: Hong Kong. Some characters and events from this sourcebook influence current affairs in San Francisco. Certainly the Fence Mender faction is interested in resolving the ongoing conflict and reclaiming Hong Kong for the Flame Court while the Kindred struggle to hold the city. Some elements of that struggle mirror those in San Francisco, and Storytellers may gain ideas for tying the futures of the two cities together in a chronicle.

LEXICON

New frontiers and new situations call for new language to describe them. Some of these terms have become common parlance in San Francisco's modern nights.

Bamboo Princes: Young Kuei-jin who favor modernization of the August Courts and dragging their kind into the 21st century. Practically all of them took the Second Breath in the 20th century and are more comfortable with modern technology and conveniences than their elders.

Cathayan Free Zone: The Camarilla's term, referring to the plan to keep the Kuei-jin contained within San Francisco, thus making the area around the city a "Cathayan Free Zone" (or CFZ).

Cloud Mandarins: The Kuei-jin administrators of San Francisco, so called because their authority and mandate remains nebulous and unclear, but lofty and idealistic.

Compliance Supervisors: Also called "wardens," these Kuei-jin operate in packs and ensure the Kindred remain within their assigned sectors. While Final Death is a decision reserved by the Cloud Mandarins, the Compliance Supervisors may destroy a vampire to defend themselves. Otherwise, they have full sanction in punishing "transgressors."

Extraordinary Commission on the Rectification of Borders: Commission created by the August Courts of the Quincunx to satisfy demands of action regarding the occupied capitol of the courts and the continued incursion of foreigners into the Middle Kingdom. The

Commission's Ancestor is the Bone Flower Jiejie Li, the Elder Sister Plum.

Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders: A faction of Kuei-jin favoring crusades against the unrighteous to stay the arrival of the Sixth Age. Currently in disfavor within the August Courts.

Glorious Ocean-Crossing Warriors: The force of Kuei-jin that invaded Los Angeles under the orders of the Quincunx. Largely wiped out by a terrible storm in the Yin World, with the remnants incorporated into the New Promise Mandarinate.

Gum San: "Golden Mountain." Old Chinese name for San Francisco, sometimes still used by Kuei-jin.

gweilo: "White ghost." Chinese term of disrespect for foreigners (mainly Caucasians) and the equivalent of the Japanese *gaijin*. Commonly heard in the modern nights of San Francisco.

Harmonious Menders of Broken Fences: A faction of Kuei-jin that favors focusing on internal problems in the Middle Kingdom and securing its borders (the "broken fences" in their name) against outsiders.

Heaven Promise Society: A loose alliance of rogue Kuei-jin and Kindred who believe in the possibility of redemption and enlightenment (or Golconda).

heimin: "Half person." Those without a court or *wu* are tolerated among Kuei-jin as messengers and go-betweens; they remain outside conventional society. In San Francisco, the term applies to some Kin-jin within the New Promise Mandarinate.

hin: The lowest rank of vampires in Kuei-jin society. *Hin* are students, accorded the right to exist and feed, but no other privileges until they prove themselves worthy. Ignorant of Kuei-jin culture, most Kin-jin in the New Promise Mandarinate are *hin* by Quincunx standards.

kànbujiàn: "Unable to see." Kuei-jin who took the Second Breath outside the Middle Kingdom and know nothing of the Dharmas or proper behavior.

Munificent Transitioning Sectors: Parts of San Francisco set aside by the New Promise Mandarinate as "reservations" for the Kindred. Intended as a "temporary" arrangement until the Mandarinate stabilizes the situation in the city. The five M-T Sectors are Pacific Heights, SoMa, the Castro, Sunset and Bay View.

New Promise Mandarinate: Formal alliance between the Kuei-jin of the Quincunx and some Kin-jin of North America. It currently controls Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Project: Crosshairs: Tremere study of the Cathayans (particularly their strengths and weaknesses) underway in San Francisco and at the Tremere chantry in Las Vegas.

nisei: The American-born children of Japanese immigrants.

Two-Fang Serpent Plan: A plan compromising the pursuits of the Glorious Ocean-Crossing Warriors and Harmonious Menders of Broken Fences. The first fang advocates strengthening the borders of the Middle Kingdom against future incursions, while the second speaks of invading a foreign city and holding it for a while, verifying it can be done.

Ukiyo: "Floating World." An *uji* of *gaki* based in Japan Center of San Francisco. Progressive, but limited to a minority faction of the New Promise Mandarinate.

Wicked City: The hell ruled by the Yama King Mikaboshi. The Wicked City insinuates itself into existing cities with sufficiently corrupt chi. It is currently doing so in San Francisco.



CHAPTER TWO: INTERESTING TIMES

May you live in interesting times.
— Chinese curse

A rich and at times tragic history precedes the current state of affairs in San Francisco, though many of the vampires embroiled in the conflict are unaware of it (and perhaps doomed to repeat it). What both Kindred and Kuei-jin know is that history has picked up its pace in the Bay Area as well as the rest of the world for some time now. It is a pendulum racing on the downward swing, a prisoner of both gravity and momentum and subject to forces and paths not of its choosing. Aware of this, both sides fear there may be no stopping the events they set in motion within the city.

THE EARLIEST DAYS

While San Francisco's history only covers a two-century span, the history of the Bay area extends back much farther than that. Native American tribes like the Ohlone and the Miwok inhabited the region long before the arrival of the first Europeans or Asians landed on the shores of North America. These people knew nothing of the Curse of Caine or the Fall of the Wan Xian, although they understood the creatures haunting the world's dark and wild places. For the most part, the tribes remained small, warding off undue attention from their preternatural

predators. They lived in relative peace with the Changing Folk of the wilds, never dreaming their fellow mortals from across the Atlantic would prove the greatest threat to their existence.

EXPLORATION AND SETTLEMENT

The first European visitors to curse the shores of California came in 1542, when Portuguese explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo circumnavigated the tip of South America and sailed as far north as the Russian River, mapping the western coast of South and North America along his route. In 1579, famed English sailor Sir Francis Drake landed on California's northern coast, pausing briefly to claim the land for Queen Elizabeth before repairing his ships and setting sail once again. Sebastian Cermeno, another Portuguese explorer, "discovered" Punta de los Reyes (King's Point) in the 1590s. All the visiting Europeans missed the narrow entrance to San Francisco Bay, however, shrouded as it was by mist and nearly invisible from the sea. It would be centuries more before a European discovered the site of what would become the city of San Francisco.

BURIED TREASURE

Before the fall of the San Francisco Chantry, Tremere experts on the mystic practices of California's Native Americans believe that a tribal society called the Kuksu Cult used magic to shield the bay from notice. The Kuksu Cult, which predominated the region, believed that by dressing in totemic costumes, they could convince the spirits to relate their knowledge and power. The Tremere hoped to learn more about the Kuksu Cult's breadth of wisdom in the mystic crafts. When the Kuei-jin invaded, however, the Tremere hid the files somewhere within San Francisco. Kuei-jin assassins destroyed the only Tremere who knew the location.

In 1769, a Spanish soldier named Gaspar de Protola accidentally stumbled upon the bay's entrance while sailing to Monterey Bay in the south. Six years later, Juan Ayala actually sailed into San Francisco Bay on a mapping expedition for the Spanish crown. It did not take the Spanish long to realize the value of their new discovery, given its strategic and economic potential.

In 1776, about a week before the thirteen English colonies on the other side of the continent declared their independence, Juan Bautista de Anza and some thirty Spanish-speaking families made their way from Sonora, Mexico to San Francisco Bay. They claimed the land for Spain and settled there. Their headquarters was an adobe fort they named the Presidio.

The settlers established a mission about a mile away from the fort. The priests officially named the mission *Nuestra Senora de Dolores* or Mission Delores, and dedicated the church to St. Francis of Assisi; it was known as "San Francisco," the name later applied to the bay itself. The mission's priests took an interest in the spiritual welfare of the local Indian tribes, ensuring they were baptized and converted to Christianity; for the most part, the natives welcomed trade with the new settlers.

INDEPENDENCE AND GROWTH

In 1821, Mexico won its independence from Spain, secularizing the Spanish missions and abandoning interest in the spiritual well being of the natives — or anyone else, for that matter. Freed from European rule, California's ports opened for trade and shipped a wealth of goods (mostly hides, furs, wood and tallow) by sea around Cape Horn to the burgeoning factories in New England and New York. Trappers and hunters told tall tales about the strange beasts they encountered in the California hills, but few paid them any heed so long as the goods continued to flow.

The area's growing prosperity was enough to convince English sailor William Richardson to jump ship in 1822 and settle there. He fell in love with the daughter of the Presidio's commandant and converted to Catholicism to marry her. He established a trading post that he named

Yerba Buena (or "good herb") for the wild mint growing in the area. The aptly chosen name later became a source of great humor to the people of San Francisco in the 1960s. Richardson's enterprise was wildly successful, and Yerba Buena grew from a trading post to a small town, with a saloon of ill repute frequented by English-speaking hunters and trappers.

Even though Yerba Buena and Mission Dolores grew, their population remained a few hundred at best, comprised of mostly farmers, trappers and a handful of soldiers stationed at the Presidio. During the war between the United States and Mexico in 1847, U.S. Marines from the warship *Portsmouth* seized the Presidio and the main plaza of Yerba Buena. The dozen or so Mexican soldiers at the Presidio surrendered without firing a single shot. Commander John Montgomery raised the U.S. flag and declared California an American territory. Among the first acts of the new territorial government was to change the settlement's name to that of the bay: San Francisco.

Such small political victories were certainly of no interest to either the Kindred hunting in the nighttime streets of Boston, New York and Philadelphia, or to those sleeping by day in the mansions of Louisiana, Georgia or Carolina. The events in San Francisco were of even less interest to the Kuei-jin, who barely knew of California at all and remained far more concerned with the Opium Wars brought on by European (and Kindred) incursion into the Middle Kingdom. That, however, was about to change with a single word....

GUM SAN: THE GOLDEN MOUNTAIN

"Gold! Gold in the American River!" Mormon preacher Sam Brannan shouted that memorable statement while running through San Francisco's streets in 1848. Although Brannan was a notorious charlatan, in this case he shouted the truth. Gold was found in the riverbed at a sawmill owned by Swiss-born John Augustus Sutter. Despite Sutter's best efforts to keep the discovery quiet, the news spread like wildfire. Sam Brannan, incidentally, purchased large tracts of coastal land in San Francisco, as well as cornering the market on shovels, pickaxes and canned goods before making his fateful announcement. He became fabulously wealthy without turning over a single spade of dirt.

It seemed the world was primed for the news from San Francisco. The "Year of Revolutions" swept through Europe, with political and social unrest in many of her major cities. The Potato Famine stalked Ireland, driving people from their homes in hope of a new life elsewhere. The United States caught its breath following the war with Mexico while the conflicts leading to the Civil War simmered beneath the surface. China reeled from the Opium Wars and the abdication of Hong Kong to the British, while reforms swept through Japan. All this was dry tinder for the spark of hope ignited by the discovery of riches in California.



People from around the world flocked to San Francisco in droves. Ships departed from docks in Europe and America groaning from the weight of passengers and mining equipment. Ship-crews immediately deserted upon reaching California's shores, leaving boats abandoned and turning Yerba Buena Cove into a "forest of masts." Townspeople in America's heartland headed west in wagon trains, leaving behind empty homes and shops with signs in their windows reading, "GONE TO THE DIGGINGS."

In 1849, San Francisco's population soared from 900 to 26,000. Another 100,000 people drifted through the area on their way into the California hills and hinterlands in search of their fortune. San Francisco crushed the equivalent of fifty years of growth and development into the course of a single year.

The effects of San Francisco's sudden gold boom did not escape the Kindred. While their elders continued their affairs in Europe and the Eastern Seaboard, the promise of wealth and blood offered by an overcrowded boomtown drew young vampires from across the nation. Ambitious Camarilla neonates saw the potential to create domains of their own, away from the stifling grip of their elders. Meanwhile, Sabbat packs and anarchists anticipated a new, unspoiled frontier where they could do as they pleased. The Kindred certainly found opportunities in San Francisco, where the arrival of a ship laden with heavy crates was commonplace. In a place where so many new people intermingled, hardly anyone noticed one or two strangers among thousands... or cared if a few of those new arrivals mysteriously vanished.

Although there was no gold in San Francisco itself, it was the largest port community near the gold fields, making it was the destination of choice for disembarking prospectors. Although a few of them actually found gold, most didn't. Instead, most of the money in the area was made in a more traditional fashion. It didn't take long for the locals to discover that it was far more profitable catering to the miners and prospectors than searching for gold themselves. Shops, saloons and all manner of businesses sprang up in San Francisco, looking to serve the needs of the burgeoning population.

The abandoned ships in Yerba Buena Cove were put to good use in helping the city grow. The city fathers handled the problem by hauling the ships up onto the shore, where they were either broken up and used to construct new buildings and furniture or simply turned into buildings themselves. Cut a door or two in the hull of an overturned ship and you had a saloon. Many such structures sprang up along the harbor.

In the shadows between these new buildings and in the tent cities of the newcomers, the Kindred hunted with near abandon. Prospectors in the San Francisco Bay area fell victim to accidents, the elements, starvation and despair. They committed suicide at the rate of over 1,000 a year. It was not uncommon to stumble across a dried-up

corpse bearing a pickaxe and shovel in the hills; common enough, in fact, that inquiry into the deaths were unheard of. Nobody cared how the poor wretch died.

The hunting was plentiful and good, so much so that vampires all but ignored the traditional conflicts between Camarilla and Sabbat while glutting themselves on the bounty of blood. Naturally, vampires fought over certain watering holes, but the conflicts simply demonstrated how easily they fell to their baser needs. Kindred and Cainite were all too similar in their bestial tendencies — except when the Sabbat and Camarilla sects stepped in to enforce opinion and policy. Regardless of allegiance, however, all vampires quickly learned to confine their hunting to the new city. The Lupines stalked the wilds outside San Francisco as guards encircling a prison. They shredded the first vampires to stray into their domain as a warning to the rest.

A NEW LAND OF PROMISE

Of course, new arrivals to San Francisco came not only from Europe, Mexico and the United States, but also from the Middle Kingdom. China's Opium Wars against England and the ongoing encroachment of *gweilo* — white barbarians — everywhere strained the situation in the Far East. To many Chinese, California was *Gum San*, the "Golden Mountain," a land of promise and opportunity away from war and starvation. Around the time of the Gold Rush, the first ship laden with some three hundred Chinese arrived in San Francisco.

Unfortunately, these immigrants discovered their "golden land of promise" was a rough frontier following the Golden Rule: Those with the gold make the rules. The Chinese remained a close-knit community even after their arrival, laying the foundations for San Francisco's modern Chinatown. Rather than becoming prospectors and miners (though some of them did), many Chinese found employment either serving the needs of San Francisco's more fortunate inhabitants or working for the powerful railroad companies, who sought cheap labor to complete the transcontinental railroad.

Of course, with the Chinese and other Middle Kingdom immigrants came the Wan Kuei, the Ten Thousand Demons. It was not that the August Courts had any interest in a frontier city in a barbaric land, but the presence of some Kuei-jin was inevitable. A few, disgraced in shadow wars or fallen from favor in the August Courts, chose self-imposed exile over facing the Eye of Heaven and Final Death. Some found the freedom of the frontier exhilarating while others suffered in silence, hoping to redeem themselves and return to civilization. There were also those mortals who crossed the ocean only to die in their new land, fight their way free of torture in Yomi and take the Second Breath. More experienced Kuei-jin usually dealt with the resulting *chih-mei*.

Regardless of their reasons for coming to the Golden Mountain, though, the Wan Kuei who made the ocean

crossing quickly discovered they were not alone in San Francisco's nights.

THE KĀNBUIJĀN

In Chinatown's early years, the Kuei-jin learned that leaving the Middle Kingdom behind did not necessarily free a soul from the weight dragging it down to Yomi after death. On occasion, a mortal of Chinese descent would take the Second Breath outside the bounds of civilization and away from the watchful eyes of the Kuei-jin *jina* and elders. With no aid from others of their kind and no knowledge of their nature, most of these poor unfortunates succumbed to their Demons, becoming ravening flesh-eaters that the Kuei-jin were forced to hunt down and destroy. On rare occasions, the Kin-jin discovered one of these *chih-mei* and destroyed it as a threat to the Masquerade, unaware of what it really was or where it originated.

The Wan Kuei called these poor wretches *kānbuijān* — "unable to see" — because they were blind to Dharma and the path to the Hundred Clouds. If found soon enough, they were often able to master their P'o nature and join Kuei-jin society; if they failed or were not found in time, the Wan Kuei "mercifully" gave them Final Death. What the Kuei-jin did not know at first — and later refused to acknowledge — was that some rare *kānbuijān* mastered their Demon nature on their own. Most did so by surrendering to the Yama Kings and becoming *akuma*, but a few struggled to find their own way, even discovering some Dharma principles through trial and error. Their Way was flawed and fraught with peril, but their determination was great.

For more about the *kānbuijān* of San Francisco, see Chapters Five and Six.

EAST MEETS WEST

The first encounters between Kuei-jin and San Francisco's Kindred were brief and fleeting. The Kindred quickly discovered the clannish Chinese immigrants were better left alone. While most Europeans and Americans had abandoned such "childish" notions as vampires, the Chinese still maintained their old ways. The Kindred were surprised that Asians knew enough to take precautions against creatures of the night. Some of them — paper charms, rice scattered across thresholds and the like — were laughable. Others, such as prayer beads, charms backed by a true and abiding faith or the simple wisdom to huddle close to the light in groups, made the Chinese more difficult prey.

Of course, most Kindred created excuses not to bother rather than admit difficulty. "Chinese blood is thin and not as satisfying," some said. "They're not as vigorous, and

less lively than other mortals.” “It’s a small loss, since there is so much already available.” Still, it vexed some Kindred to be denied anything. Some accepted the challenge by hunting more “interesting” prey in Chinatown... only to vanish and never be seen again.

Rumors circulated among the city’s vampires. They said the Chinese knew far more than they let on, luring Kindred into some kind of trap. Another whisper claimed that their numbers included mysterious magi or vampire-hunters. Yet others said that they had forged a pact with the Lupines, or they were host to a hitherto-unknown clan of Cainites. This last fiction was the closest to the truth.

The Wan Kuei needed the Chinese community to build Scarlet Screens in this new and alien land. To protect their interests, they destroyed any threat to Chinatown. In the process, the Demon People learned more about the White Demons dwelling among the Western mortals, the ones who came with the *gweilo* to the Middle Kingdom.

The first thing the Kuei-jin realized was that the Westerners were too numerous; they were too few to risk open confrontations. So the Wan Kuei remained in Chinatown’s shadows and kept to their own affairs and council. They gave the *gweilo* vampires good reason to avoid their domain, but did not venture too far outside of it either. Those who disobeyed or threatened this version of the Kindred’s Masquerade paid with their unlives.

SHADOW PLAYS

Lawlessness ruled San Francisco’s streets in the years immediately following the Gold Rush. The population surge overtaxed the city’s limited law enforcement, and bribery helped ensure the law looked the other way for almost anything. Along the waterfront rested saloons and whorehouses where miners spent their money, with roving gangs of criminals more than willing to help lighten their pockets.

One of the most notorious gangs was the Sydney Ducks, comprised of criminals who had escaped exile in Australia and made their way to California. They would waylay passers-by, throwing a bag over their heads and relieving them of their money and valuables (often leaving the victim dead or merely stunned with a strike from a sap or fist). The practice became known as “hooding” and the criminals who did it as “hoodlums.” The Australian gangsters also operated protection rackets in and along the Barbary Coast. The Sydney Ducks set fire to parts of the city five times for denying them tribute. It happened so often that Chinatown and Barbary Coast residents built exclusively with brick and stone rather than wood, so their homes and businesses would not burn so easily.

Some Kindred thought it too convenient that the depredations of the Sydney Ducks hurt businesses influenced by the Camarilla as well as burning out portions of Chinatown. Rumors claimed the gang was under the influence of a Sabbat pack or anarchs. Some even believed that its roster might have included vampires, though no

proof of these conjectures ever manifested. The fires, however, did convince many local Kindred and Kuei-jin to find fireproof havens — a precaution that would prove vital a few decades later.

By the mid-1850s, miners had panned or mined out most of California’s surface gold, leaving only the deeper underground veins to be tapped. Those wise enough to invest their money carefully (including the Ventrue and other Camarilla vampires) funded large mining operations to dig out the gold that remained beyond the means and reach of individual miners. The continually expanding waterfront also became the mouth by which to feed the hungry factories of the East Coast and Europe. During that period, trading companies shipped every product workers could dig, drag, chop or tear from the mountains, fields and forests. The city became the premier center for commerce along the Pacific Ocean, finally drawing the attention of the elders and Princes that their childer had left behind years before. The unspoken truce between Camarilla, Sabbat and anarch vampires in San Francisco was over.

Of course, “peace” was a relative term. Kindred from all three factions struggled against each other previously, but mostly over territory and mortals. When the Transcontinental Railway became a reality, the Camarilla mentality reasserted itself. It was decided that San Francisco should be brought under the Camarilla’s aegis, to that ensure the Sabbat and anarchs would not control the city.

PUBLIC VIGILANCE

As usual, the Camarilla operated behind the scenes, using mortal proxies to carry out their plans. The Sabbat Cainites in 1850s San Francisco were wealthy and powerful. In very un-sect-like machinations, they influenced mortals — usually criminals — who in turn assumed positions of power locally during the Gold Rush and held them through graft, corruption and influence peddling. Ballot stuffing was practiced openly and an honest man’s vote counted for little. The common people, however, grew tired of this lawless state of affairs. Their desire to see justice was the Camarilla’s weapon against the Sabbat.

On June 9, 1851 in Sydney Cove, a man named John Jenkins simply walked into a merchant’s store, picked up the safe and walked away. He loaded the safe into a boat and calmly rowed out into the bay. Several of the merchant’s friends and associates pursued Jenkins and caught him easily, though he dumped the safe overboard. The public outcry was considerable.

Local citizens formed the Committee for Public Vigilance, which tried and executed Jenkins on its own authority. The Committee was very loosely organized at first, but its presence did give San Francisco’s criminals pause, at least for a short while. Jenkins’ boldness and the relative ease of his capture sent rumors among the Sabbat of a Camarilla plot, but local corruption ran deep. The Sabbat knew it would take more than a few outraged vigilantes to mobilize San Francisco’s citizens against its mortal power base.

EMPEROR NORTON

At the preemptory request of a large majority of the citizens of these United States, I Joshua Norton, formerly of Algoa Bay, Cape of Good Hope, and now for the last nine years and ten months past of San Francisco, California, declare and proclaim myself the Emperor of These United States.

— Joshua Norton, September 19, 1859

The first and only Emperor of the United States was born in London, England in 1819. He arrived in San Francisco by way of South Africa at the age of 30, with the sum of \$40,000 to his name. Within five years, he'd lost that considerable fortune by speculating in real estate and attempting to corner the local market on rice. Living in poverty, Norton wrote a proclamation declaring himself Emperor of the United States. It was published in a local newspaper, at least in part due to the sheer novelty of the idea. He wore a uniform that he obtained from a second-hand store and walked the streets, administering to the daily needs of his "domain."

Emperor Norton issued various proclamations during his "reign," including the abolition of the Democratic and Republican parties and a decree against using "the abominable word 'Frisco,' which has no linguistic or other warrant." That alone carried a \$25.00 fine. He also proposed the idea of a "League of Nations," where the international community could settle its disputes (many years before the actual League of Nations signed its charter in San Francisco). He issued his own money, which he traded for legal tender; many stores came to accept Norton's currency as payment. He even mediated public disputes, defusing one anti-Chinese demonstration by quietly standing and reciting the Lord's Prayer. His example shamed the demonstrators so greatly that they returned to their own affairs.

Idle speculation about Emperor Norton circulated among San Francisco's Kindred. One account said he was the victim (or, perhaps, beneficiary) of Malkavian manipulation. Others suggested he was a puppet of one faction or another, or that he provided a useful spectacle for the mortal herd. Some even believed he was fey-touched. Whatever the case, vampires considered Norton inviolate because of his fame and public standing. He was left as a purely mortal phenomenon.

Norton died on January 8, 1880 on California Street. He was buried in the Masonic Cemetery, and his funeral procession ran two miles long. Between 10,000 and 30,000 people attended his funeral to bid farewell to America's first and only Emperor.

It wasn't long, however, before matters worsened. In 1855, there were nearly 500 murders in California but only 6 legal executions. Corrupt politicians maintained a tight hold on the government. Municipal spending was through the roof — much of it went into graft, bribes and embezzlement, lining the pockets of the city's "civil servants."

James King was a prominent San Francisco banker who had lost his fortune when local financial panic closed his bank. Outspoken against local corruption, he used his remaining money and the encouragement of his friends to found a newspaper voicing his opinions. In October of 1855, King began publication of the *Evening Bulletin*, a four-page paper. In it, he denounced criminals and political figures alike in fearless editorials that had people all over the city talking.

When notorious gambler Charles Cora shot and killed U.S. Marshal Richardson, he was "formally arrested" by friends of his who held public office. It was considered likely that he would walk away a free man. Following the incident, King ran an editorial saying that if Cora wasn't hanged, Sheriff David Scannell should take his place on the gallows.

King also took on city supervisor James Casey, revealing that Casey was a felon who had served time in Sing-Sing Prison in New York. In retribution, Casey shot King outside the *Bulletin* office on Montgomery Street. Witnesses rushed the wounded reporter to a doctor while Casey's cronies in law-enforcement "took him into custody."

In response to the shooting, over a thousand people turned out at the Montgomery Block in a show of support for James King. The crowd later made its way to the Plaza, where word circulated that the Committee for Public Vigilance was reforming. The following morning, members of the 1851 Committee met and created a new, more organized group. They penned an oath of fealty and assigned each member a number by which he would be known within the organization, to maintain anonymity. A few days later, the Committee consisted of some 3,500 members. In the meantime, however, James King died from his gunshot wound at home.

The Committee for Public Vigilance marched on the jail guarded by hundreds of local militia and law officers loyal to James Casey. Using a cannon to batter down the door, the Committee took Casey with little protest from his protectors. They also took gambler Charles Cora into custody. Both men received advocates and stood trial before a jury of Committee members, who summarily convicted the two men and sentenced them to a public hanging. An immense crowd filled Sacramento Street to watch the double execution, cementing the Committee for Public Vigilance's power in the minds of San Franciscans.

Meanwhile, the Camarilla encouraged the Committee's vigilantes to attack the Sabbat's mortal proxies in the name of justice. They eliminated many of the Sabbat's pawns from positions of power. The so-called revolution also hid the nightly movement of Camarilla scourges eliminating Sabbat targets and consigning

vampires to ash. As far as the Camarilla was concerned, the strikes were clean and precise. They believed that they were the cause of the Sabbat's fall in San Francisco. What they did not realize was the extent of the Sabbat's internal dissent and scattered resources. The Sabbat were defeated as much by their own lack of foresight as the Camarilla's attacks.

After the Committee's cleanup of the city's political echelons, legitimate businesses thrived — with the Camarilla riding their coattails. San Francisco formally incorporated as a city of some 30,000 people. The City by the Bay became reality, and the Inner Circle recognized the rule of Prince Jedediah Hawthorne in the Domain of San Francisco.

PATHS OF IRON

San Francisco continued to grow steadily through the next decade, remaining a key center of commerce for North America's entire West Coast. As gold mining dwindled, the discovery of the Comstock Silver Lode in Nevada sent a new infusion of wealth into San Francisco's coffers. Many of the city's most powerful mining magnates owned either the Nevada mines or the machines to properly drill them, setting up a continuous circle of wealth. The newfound prosperity further cemented the Camarilla's hold over the city, their only real victory of any substance in California. It was a bastion of influence amid a sea of Sabbat and anarchy power.

San Francisco's only limitation was its isolation from the rest of the United States. Out on the edge of the continent's westernmost frontier, travel to and from the City by the Bay required East Coast ships to circumnavigate Cape Horn. The building of the Transcontinental Railroad in the 1860s rectified that problem by connecting the Pacific and Central rail lines.

Chinese immigrant workers did much of the hard labor required to extend the Pacific Line through the harsh Utah desert. This elicited jealousy from Caucasian workers, who grumbled that the Chinamen stole their jobs. The government responded by passing "coolie laws" that penalized the Chinese workers and made it hard for them to earn a living. It was only part of a prejudice against Chinese people that simmered and festered beneath the surface — occasionally erupting into accusations or even violence.

San Francisco's Chinatown remained a city-within-a-city; people mostly kept to themselves, running their own schools and businesses and generally catering to the area's inhabitants. In turn, the city government passed laws limiting "foreign" ownership of property. It also enacted laws taxing foreign (mainly Asian) workers more heavily, thus protecting jobs for "good Americans." The situation suited Chinatown's few Kuei-jin and shen, since it kept their havens secure from foreign devils and prevented expatriated Chinese from intermingling with local Westerners.

BLACK BART, THE PLUNDERING PO8

One of the most notorious criminal figures of late 19th century San Francisco made his debut in August of 1877. The man who later became known as Black Bart stopped a Wells-Fargo stagecoach, leveled a double-barreled shotgun at the driver and uttered his famous command: "Throw down the box." The driver surrendered the wooden strongbox, after which the robber allowed him to leave unharmed. The box turned up later, empty except for a poem scrawled on the back of a waybill:

"I've labored long and hard for bread —
For honor and for riches —
But on my corns too long you've tread,
You fine-haired sons of bitches."

It was signed "Black Bart, the PO8."

News of the mysterious Black Bart and his "po8try" spread quickly, though the robber himself remained out of sight for roughly a year afterward. When he finally resurfaced, he robbed another stagecoach, followed by several more. He always worked alone, apparently traveling on foot through the rough hills outside San Francisco. Wells-Fargo and the city placed a considerable reward of \$800 on his head, but Black Bart remained at large.

Authorities didn't capture Black Bart until 1883, when he was wounded in a stagecoach robbery. Although he escaped, he left his possessions behind. Investigators tracked him through the San Francisco laundry that cleaned his clothes, leading them to Charles Bolton, AKA "Black Bart." Bolton confessed to the robbery, but the courts sentenced him to only six years in prison. He served a little over four.

At his release, reporters mobbed Bolton, looking to interview the infamous Black Bart. When asked if he planned to rob any more stagecoaches, he replied that he would not commit any further crimes. The questions continued, until one young reporter asked, "One final question. Do you plan to write any more poetry?"

Bolton smiled and said, "Young man, didn't you just hear me say I would commit no more crimes?"

Charles "Black Bart" Bolton left San Francisco heading south. He disappeared shortly thereafter and was never heard from again.

THE DRAGON THRASHES ITS TAIL

Fire has reclaimed to civilization and cleanliness the Chinese ghetto, and no Chinatown will be permitted in the borders of the city... it seems as though a divine wisdom directed the range of the seismic horror and the range of the fire god. Wisely, the worst was cleared away with the best.

— *The Overland Monthly*, 1906

On April 18, 1906 at 5:12 AM, Kuei-jin geomancers sensed a shift in the dragon-lines, a stirring of powerful



forces — the Earth Dragon was restless, and a tremendous earthquake struck San Francisco in response . The quake itself lasted for less than a minute, but it toppled buildings and buckled streets. Broken gas mains and fallen lamps ignited fires that swept through the city.

The local fire department mobilized almost immediately, but the earthquake had ruptured all the water mains, leaving them to fight the fires with buckets instead of hoses. They retreated, hoping to contain the inferno and allow it to burn itself out. That, unfortunately, did not happen. The fires raged and spread, burning all of one day and into the next. They consumed some 28,000 buildings, including all of Chinatown.

Despite both the Kuei-jin's and Kindred's best precautions, the fires caught them all by surprise. A few vampires perished in the blaze, unable to flee without facing sunlight and frenzied by Röttschreck or wave soul. Retainers helped some Kindred escape from mansions on Nobility Hill, while other vampires sought refuge in the earth that had seemingly turned against the city. A handful remained underground for several nights, fearful of the heat they felt above their heads. The horror of being burned to kindling frightened one or two Kindred so greatly that they waited too long and sank into Torpor, where they lay to this night. Some sires tell their neonate progeny that on still nights, you can hear them, scratching at the underside of sidewalks and roads.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers finally created a firebreak by dynamiting entire city blocks in the western districts. The blaze lasted for three days, as did the quake's aftershocks. When it was all over, reporter Jack London wrote in a newspaper dispatch, "the City of San Francisco is no more." The city was devastated, with some 3,000 people dead, 225,000 injured, vast numbers homeless and \$400 million in damage (valued in 1906).

San Francisco's vampire enclaves were in great disarray. Worse yet, with the mortal survivors huddled together for protection and comfort, hunting and feeding became exceedingly difficult. Forced to pick on lone stragglers and looters, many vampires turned on one another for vitae, sect be damned. The following weeks endured nightly destructions, with the strongest eliminating the weak . During the inevitable reconstruction, however, the Camarilla sent scourges into San Francisco to halt the indiscriminate feeding and make examples of Kindred who committed diablerie. The scourges caught and destroyed three Kindred, including one member of the primogen, but any other culprits either fled the region or hid their crime expertly.

The surviving Kuei-jin suffered the loss of their havens as well, and they would have to struggle against *gweilo* opposition (both mortal and Kin-jin) to regain it. Bereft of their sanctuaries , they hid among the mortal refugees of Chinatown as best they could, taking advantage of the deaths caused by the disaster to conceal their own feeding.

Some heralded Chinatown's destruction as a blessing of sorts, and publicly hoped it would not be rebuilt.

Chinese and Western businessmen, however, planned to turn Chinatown into a tourist attraction — a unique part of San Francisco's heritage that would draw people from around the world. The plan received the quiet support of Chinatown's *shen*, including Father Li T'ien (see p. 117).

The city could not ignore the potential for prestige and income. Even Kindred who bothered concerning themselves with the "Chinatown problem" believed a tourist-town would eliminate the barriers the Asian enclave presented before. What they did not know was that the Kuei-jin chose to sacrifice their previous security for the opportunity to hide in plain sight.

In some ways, the fire and reconstruction following the Great Quake benefited both Cainites and Kuei-jin. With decades of influence among the wealthiest and most powerful mortals, the vampires subtly directed the reconstruction to suit their own needs. The rebuilt mansions on Nob Hill and the new Chinatown's mazelike urban topography took shape under the watchful eyes of the city's oldest residents, with few people the wiser. The destruction of so many important papers and public records in the fire facilitated the flood of forged identities and birth certificates. In fact, a new wave of Chinese citizens known as "paper sons" gained their citizenship through such fake documents, swelling the local Asian population. Vampires "reset the clock" and established new, "legitimate" identities that withstood official scrutiny. The earthquake was a setback, but it would not keep San Francisco down.

Of cardinal importance to the Kuei-jin was that the earthquake revealed the shifting dragon lines in and around San Francisco. The shaking of the Earth Dragon's tail released reservoirs of Chi that the Demon People tapped for their own purposes. They ensured that the new Chinatown controlled one such Dragon Nest. This life-force filled an invigorated San Francisco, thinned the Wall between worlds and drew the attention of other *shen* as well, who migrated to the city over the years. The Kin-jin remained largely ignorant of the geomantic implications of the quake, as the Kuei-jin hoped. Let the barbarians play at their petty struggles... the Demon People controlled San Francisco's true power.

FOR THEIR OWN PROTECTION

After rebuilding, San Francisco settled into a seemingly quiet existence for the local Kindred and Kuei-jin. Anarchists found the City by the Bay less appealing than Los Angeles, but this was mostly thanks to the reconstruction process. Camarilla and Kuei-jin alike helped fund or support the city's restoration, thus claiming territory and businesses from the ground up. The Sabbat and anarchs, however, contributed little. Thus, they found themselves with no grip on the city whatsoever, be it socially, politically or financially.

Conflict between Kindred and Cainite in San Francisco was tame by comparison to domains like New York or Mexico City. Resultantly, the Camarilla's reign over the region grew weak and decadent, raising concerns

WHERE THE DEAD OUTNUMBER THE LIVING

Such room to roam in after death!

—Joaquin Miller, speaking of the new graveyards in Colma

In 1901, San Francisco passed an ordinance banning any burials within the city. Land on the peninsula was simply too precious to waste on cemeteries. In fact, the city fathers encouraged the relocation of existing graveyards to outside the city, so that land currently allocated for cemeteries would be open for development. This need only increased following the 1906 earthquake and the city's reconstruction. Many landowners found it lucrative to move bodies to other plots and sell the land at a considerable profit (or, sometimes, to leave the interred bodies and sell the land anyway).

Between re-interring the previously deceased and the number of quake-related fatalities, it was a simple matter for a cart laden with caskets to move through San Francisco's streets unnoticed. This allowed the city's Kindred to go about the business of rebuilding and relocating with minimum duplicity during the years immediately before and after the reconstruction. Disturbing the graveyards also stirred the occasional ghost, drawing more psychics and mediums to the area.

Several new graveyards opened in the small town of Colma. In fact, the "town" consists mostly of cemeteries, with only a few homes and businesses for the cemetery attendants and other support services. Even tonight, Colma's deceased far outnumber the living, a situation that draws the occasional Bone Flower, Giovanni or Samedi.

over Sabbat and anarch activities that local Kindred largely dismissed. San Francisco's inhabitants were confident in their mastery of the night — confidence perhaps justified in the years following the quake, but that turned to unsupported arrogance as the years passed.

The city's Kuei-jin, on the other hand, saw considerable activity in the first decades of the 20th century. Unrest in China sent thousands of rebellion-weary refugees across the sea, filling Chinatown's already crowded streets. Occasionally, this deluge of mortals hid survivors from shadow wars and conflicts within the August Courts, fleeing the Middle Kingdom and seeking shelter in the West. These Kuei-jin — taught the formal manners and precise discipline of the Quincunx — were shocked by the laxity of North America's *kānbujiān*. The friction between traditionalists and Chinatown's undead inhabitants inevitably degenerated; shadow wars spilled over into conflicts between the city's Tongs and associated criminals during the 1920s and '30s.

In December of 1941, the Empire of Japan attacked the United States Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, drawing

the U.S. into World War II. In response, the American government displaced over a hundred thousand Japanese (two-thirds of them American citizens) from their homes to detainment camps in California, Utah and Idaho "for their own protection." Many San Francisco *gaki* hid initially, while the army spirited their mortal screens and protection elsewhere. Eventually, however, the *gaki* realized that they were imprisoned as well. They possessed no freedom of movement, since no individuals of Japanese descent were supposed to be left behind.

When war workers and low-income families moved into the housing vacated by Japanese families, the *gaki* were forced to relocate. One or two *gaki* returned to Japan through the Yellow Springs, but most sought refuge in Chinatown. This latter lot suffered at the hands of their Chinese Kuei-jin hosts, who treated the *gaki* like slaves in retribution for Japan's invasion of the Middle Kingdom. Eventually, a few *gaki* escaped into the countryside, waiting for the matter to resolve. When the displaced Japanese returned, they found their homes and neighborhood occupied. Most resettled elsewhere. Japantown shrank from 30 blocks to a mere six.

Kuei-jin of Chinese descent capitalized on the Japanese deportations to eliminate or subjugate many of the *gaki* in San Francisco, deliberately ignoring the shadow war rules and requirements detailed under the Precepts of the War. What was the point, after all, since the August Courts were across the sea and thus could not appoint a *ganshezhe* (mediator) to oversee the conflict.

San Francisco was a pale reflection of the struggles transpiring in Nanking and Shanghai, but it was traumatic nonetheless. The city's *gaki* population never truly recovered from the experience. Any Kuei-jin of Japanese extraction faces a difficult existence under the watchful eyes of San Francisco's New Promise Mandarinate. Conversely, the Kuei-jin's actions taught the *gaki* they could effectively play dirty pool in shadow wars, a trick they use to their advantage against the tradition-bound Mandarinate.

THE GREAT LEAP OUTWARD

As the 20th century drew to a close, signs and portents of an impending storm grew. In San Francisco, the status quo changed in ways few people anticipated, making the city a pivotal location in coming events.

THE DRAGON WAKES

In October of 1989, a powerful earthquake struck the San Francisco Bay Area incurring billions of dollars in damages and resulting in 63 deaths and numerous injuries. It thankfully did not spark the same terrible fires of 1906. In addition, most of the city's buildings were constructed to resist earthquakes (although some "quake-proof" structures failed miserably). The event damaged portions of the city, however, including the Marina District and sections of the freeway and Bay Bridge.

To the citizens of San Francisco, the earthquake was a disaster. To local Kindred it was a nuisance, but also an opportunity to hide their activities in the resulting chaos and again influence reconstruction. To the Kuei-jin, it was something far more. The regional dragon lines shifted once more. The city's presence and continued growth polluted the wells of Chi in the area, sending out poison arrows that disturbed the slumbering Earth Dragon. The city's life force waned, and the Kin-jin were bloated parasites feeding on its weakening Chi.

In the early 90s, Jochen Van Nuys was a junior member of a cabal of East Coast Ventrue, sent to San Francisco as their envoy. What Van Nuys found was a city of great wealth and potential ruled by a weak and ineffectual Prince, who did little to either keep the anarchs in check or even to enforce the Camarilla's traditions. He also uncovered vampires existing in fear of the Prince and his primogen, squabbling over feeding territory and committing diablerie against each other in a dog-eat-dog struggle to survive. In short, he found a city of great potential that was ripe for a revolution. He decided to provide it.

By 1996, Van Nuys was ready to act. With allies back east as well as newfound local support, he executed a swift and masterful coup that deposed Prince Vannevar Thomas and his few remaining supporters. The Inner Circle was aware and tacitly approved of Van Nuys' coup, backing his claim as the new Prince of San Francisco.

From the very first night he assumed power, Van Nuys walked a thin line. He replaced Thomas' weak and ineffective leadership with decisiveness and action, but not so much as to rankle San Francisco's anarchs or foster resistance against his rule. He guided with a firm but light touch, and San Francisco remained an unusually free and open city. Ventrue money followed in his wake, and San Francisco's economy strengthened while the Ventrue's coffers grew fatter.

THE TWO-FANG SERPENT PLAN

The first stirrings of San Francisco's current woes began far from California's shores, in the August Courts of the Quincunx. In 1997, two of the five regional capitols of the August Courts were in foreign hands, with Hong Kong controlled by the Kin-jin and Shanghai under the *gaki akuma* of Japan. The "bamboo curtain" of Maoist China grew increasingly tattered. Western influences reverberated throughout the Middle Kingdom, carrying with them the influence of the Kin-jin. Elders and *jina* alike pointed to the impending Sixth Age and demanded something be done, while the Running Monkeys lived up to their names and strayed even further from tradition. The Bamboo Princes, in turn, demanded modernization and an abandonment of the ancient ways, practically courting the Demon Emperor's arrival.

Two factions formed within the August Courts, each advocating their own plan of action. The Righteous Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders followed Mandarin Hao

Wei-Liang, a cunning Resplendent Crane politician. It consisted of Resplendent Cranes, Devil-Tiger extremists and Thrashing Dragon hotheads. They called for a crusade to sweep the foreign devils from the shores of the Middle Kingdom and carry the battle to the unrighteous in their own lands. They proposed the Ash Plan as a means of accomplishing just that, which found support among Wan Kuei opportunists and those frustrated with the August Courts' apparent weakness.

The Harmonious Menders of Broken Fences, led by Bone Flower elder Jiejie Li, proved more moderate. They claimed the Middle Kingdom needed to put its own house in order before beginning any crusades against the unrighteous. Corruption and evidence of the Yama Kings were rife in their own domains, yet the Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders would charge off to other lands, leaving their homes to rot from within. This was foolishness, the Fence-Menders said. The Crusaders countered by accusing their opponents of being cowards unwilling to take action while the world slid screaming into Hell.

The Menders of Broken Fences offered a compromise they called the Two-Fang Serpent Plan, which dealt with both the threats facing the Quincunx at home and abroad. The Kuei-jin directed the first "fang" toward securing the borders of the August Courts and dealing with dangers close at hand, like the occupations of Shanghai and Hong Kong. The plan's second "fang" proposed taking and holding a western city to probe the Kin-jin's strengths and abilities while establishing a foothold for a later time.

Shadow wars erupted between the two factions, each struggling to win the support of the August Courts. Finally, the Elders decided Hao Wei-Liang presented the greatest danger to their power and the Quincunx's traditional ways. They chose the moderates' plan, with some slight revisions. The August Courts created the Extraordinary Commission on the Rectification of Borders and appointed Jiejie Li its Ancestor, with experienced Devil Tiger General Chiu Bao as her lieutenant and First Oni. The Courts placed Hao Wei-Liang in command of a force known as the Glorious Ocean-Crossing Warriors, and charged him with capturing and pacifying Los Angeles, under the watchful eye of his rivals. The Ancestors would see whose approach proved more successful.

In the first days of 1998, scouts for the Ocean-Crossing Warriors entered Los Angeles, launching the Kuei-jin's invasion. Initially things went smoothly. Kuei-jin warriors struck the Kin-jin like a hurricane, sweeping away loners and small, independent gangs of anarchs, while leaving the other Kindred scrambling for information and protection. By contrast, the Fence-Menders' efforts in Shanghai and Hong Kong were slow and costly, both in terms of resources and the number of Kuei-jin who met Final Death. Hao Wei-Liang's star was rising, to the concern of the August Courts' Ancestors.

In 1999, however, a new star arose and changed everything. The red star known as the Eye of the Demon Emperor appeared in the heavens; it was believed an

omen of the impending Sixth Age. Organized resistance spread among Los Angeles' anarchs, sending Running Monkeys and war-wu to their Final Deaths in greater numbers. The Righteous Crusaders allied themselves with the spirits of the Yin World and the Yellow Springs, preparing a final, massive assault on Los Angeles from the Spirit Realms. In the midst of the attack, however, a storm of unprecedented fury struck the Yin World, smashing Kuei-jin and spectral forces alike. The Kin-jin pressed their advantage until, by summer, both sides were too exhausted to continue fighting.

Meanwhile, the Fence-Menders made considerable progress in Shanghai while maintaining a stalemate in Hong Kong. Jiejie Li also secured the defection of high-ranking Tremere Oliver Thrace, providing the August Courts with valuable information. Meanwhile, Hao Wei-Liang's troops were decimated and demoralized, his assault a failure in the eyes of his superiors. Ancestor Ch'ang of the Blood Court sent Hao an inkstone and calligraphic brush as a sign of his judgment. In late 1999, the Resplendent Crane Mandarin Hao met the Eye of Heaven with honor, leaving the Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders greatly weakened.

The invasion of Los Angeles sent shockwaves through the Anarch Free State and the Camarilla, which quickly moved to secure San Diego and San Francisco. Refugees from the fighting in LA sought shelter in Prince Van Nuys' domain. He generously granted it, swelling the number of local anarchs. The Camarilla's western princes strengthened their borders, looking to the Inner Circle for aid and waiting to see what the Cathayans would do next.

THE NEW PROMISE MANDARINATE

With the Final Death of Hao Wei-Liang, the Ancestors of the August Courts turned their attentions on Jiejie Li. Although the Fence-Menders won a considerable victory, Li knew full well she must now succeed where Hao failed, or she would follow him into the mouth of Yomi. If she were killed, the Ancestors could eliminate two powerful rivals and still reclaim Shanghai in the bargain. She didn't intend to allow them that opportunity.

As Li studied the situation, it became clear that a direct assault was no longer viable. The ranks of the Glorious Ocean-Crossing Warriors were severely thinned and morale was just as depleted. Elements loyal to the Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders also needed to be weeded out and replaced with *jina* and mandarins loyal to Li and the Fence-Menders. Li appointed Monkey Trip Wu ancestor of Los Angeles, with Mandarin Fun Toy of the Flatbush and Stockton Posse as his seconds-in-command. With that accomplished, she and Chiu Bao went to Los Angeles to oversee matters directly.

The new Kuei-jin strategy used a weapon from the arsenal of Western colonialism: divide and conquer. The Cathayans approached some of the prominent surviving anarch leaders and offered them a deal: their cooperation in exchange for aid in wiping out their closest rivals. It

only took the agreement of a few to break the back of the anarch resistance and drive most of the surviving rebels out of the city. The Kuei-jin dubbed their alliance the “New Promise Mandarinate” and created a power structure that included both Wan Kuei and Kin-jin.

Jiejie Li presented this as a victory to the August Courts. Not only were the Kin-jin under control, but the Kuei-jin could civilize and teach them proper behavior, making them a useful resource in the coming struggle against the Sixth Age rather than chaff thrown to the winds.

To the Kindred of Los Angeles, the Mandarinate presented itself not as another process towards “enlightenment” or an egalitarian society, but as the fruition of those pursuits. It promised to upend the Camarilla’s *status quo* and offer advancement based on merit and ability rather than generation or diablerie. This strategy worked, leaving The Kuei-jin and their allies in control of Los Angeles. The Camarilla knew it would be a matter of time before the New Promise Mandarinate turned its attention elsewhere along North America’s Pacific Coast.

AN HONORABLE AGREEMENT

To forestall the Mandarinate’s expansion, the Inner Circle appointed Justicar Madame Guil to deal with “the Cathayan problem.” Of course the Camarilla’s idea of confronting the situation was to sue for peace with the Cathayan invaders and cede Los Angeles to them. Hopefully this would keep them contained while the Camarilla dealt with a more pressing threat in the Sabbat. Theoretically, the justicar’s presence would also remind the western princes where their loyalties lay and help keep other cities from defecting to the New Promise Mandarinate.

Madame Guil and her entourage traveled across North America from Boston to San Francisco, dealing with several minor matters along the way and “marching out the flag” to rally the Camarilla’s western holdings. Unfortunately, the local princes realized the Camarilla was essentially leaving them to the mercy of not just the Sabbat but also the Cathayans.

Once Guil established herself in San Francisco with Jochen Van Nuys unable to do anything save cooperate, negotiations with the New Promise Mandarinate began in earnest. To the Camarilla’s surprise, the Cathayans eagerly discussed terms and welcomed the offer of a settlement. Negotiations took place throughout 2000, with meetings alternating between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Negotiators sent flurries of messages back to their superiors in the Camarilla and the Quincunx every step of the way, finally resulting in an acceptable agreement for both sides. The Kindred saved face by recognizing Kuei-jin authority in Asian matters and “approving” their recovery of the renegade domain of Los Angeles, allowing them to retain it so long as they kept “good and reasonable order” in the city. The Camarilla also agreed to compensate the Cathayans for the costs they incurred in “recovering” Los Angeles from the anarchists.

In short, the Camarilla capitulated, agreed to let the Cathayans keep what they’d stolen and offered them a bribe in hopes they wouldn’t plunder any more territory. The Kuei-jin willingly allowed the Kin-jin to ascribe whatever face they wanted on the compromise, since it provided the Quincunx with significant gains — and even Western barbarians should be allowed to save face. The deal was set, but there was something on which neither side had counted.

THE WHEEL TURNS

Regardless of the Camarilla’s intentions, the western princes were not about to accept the Inner Circle’s betrayal to Cathayans. Neither were the surviving anarchists driven from Los Angeles by the invaders. In the anarchists, the princes found the perfect tool. They would use one problem to solve another and, regardless the outcome, they would come out ahead. The plan called for the anarchists to execute a coup in San Francisco as the Camarilla’s delicate negotiations came to a close, eliminating both the Eastern and Western envoys. Once in control of the city, the anarchists could raise a force to move south and re-take Los Angeles with the backing of the western princes.

If the anarchists succeeded, they would eliminate or at least weaken the Cathayan threat and owe their success to their former political enemies. If they failed, the anarchists would be eliminated and the Camarilla would be forced into conflict with the so-called New Promise Mandarinate instead of suing for peace. Even if the Inner Circle discovered the culprits behind the coup, they would still need support to deal with the Cathayans (as well as the Sabbat). Any retribution would be minor at best and long in coming, even in the worst case scenario.

The details of the meeting between Kindred and Kuei-jin representatives on San Francisco’s Telegraph Hill are hazy, but what remains clear is that a well-armed force of anarchists attacked the meeting site. Many vampires met their Final Death that night with many more destroyed in the following hours. Accusations of betrayal and collaboration with the anarchists flew on both sides, as Prince Van Nuys watched his hopes of becoming the Camarilla’s peacemaker crumble.

THE TAKING OF SAN FRANCISCO

The August Courts graciously accepted the Camarilla’s tribute, then sent “envoys” and “peacekeepers” to San Francisco to ensure the safety of their own kind. In short order, the city’s Tremere and Toreador primogen met their Final Deaths at the hands of Kuei-jin assassins. The Wan Kuei swept into San Francisco like a black wind. It seemed nothing could stand before them. They seized control of the city’s prime areas, then opened “negotiations” with Prince Van Nuys and his surviving primogen.

Although couched in diplomacy, the Kuei-jin made it clear that the Kindred would be relocated to specific areas of San Francisco and allowed to exist under the watchful



eye of the New Promise Mandarinate. Those who showed “merit” (i.e., loyalty to the new order) had the potential for advancement, while any threats would meet with swift retribution. The local Kindred had little choice; most complied with the invaders’ terms and moved their havens and strongholds to Cathayan-appointed areas.

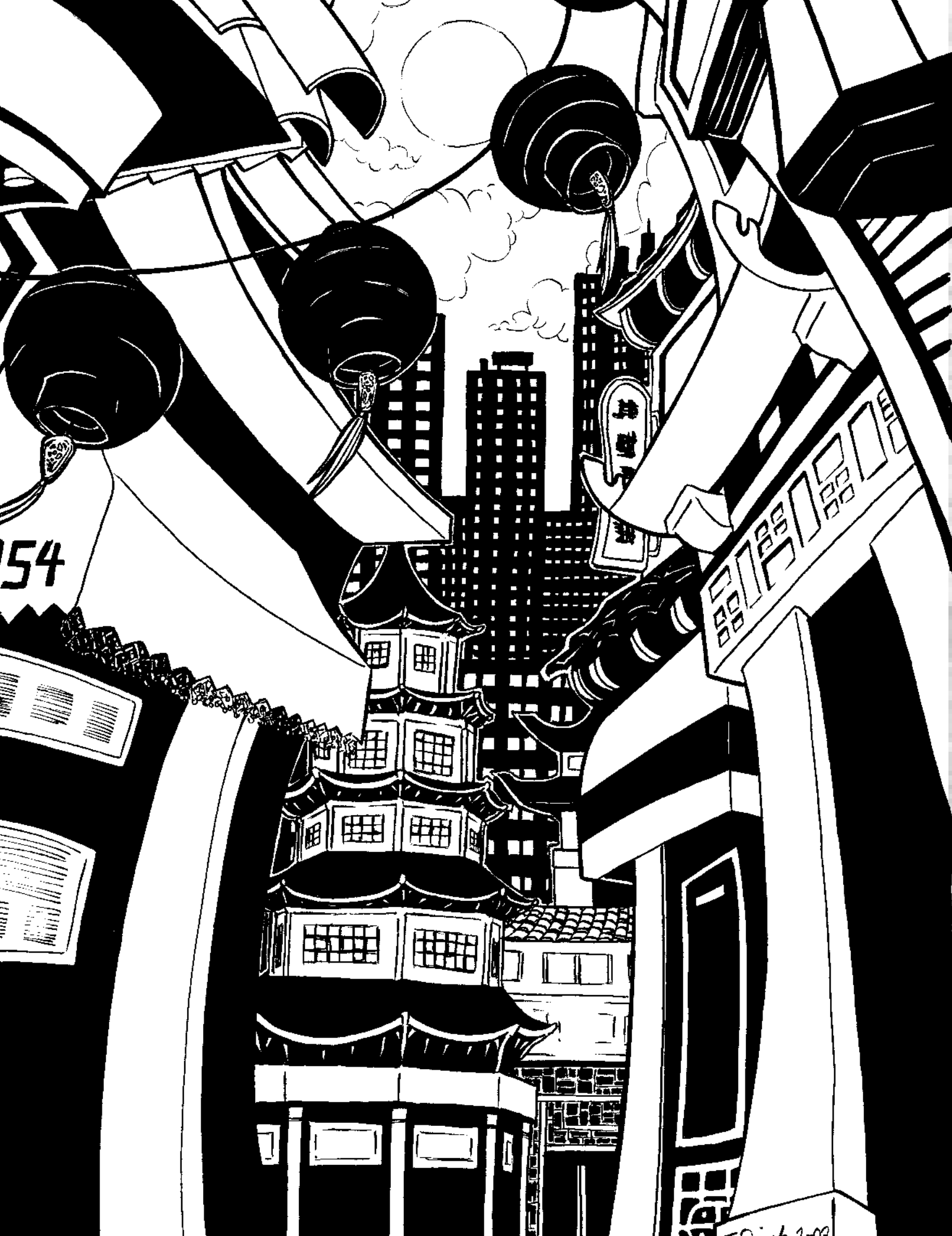
After Van Nuys’ failure to hold the city, the Inner Circle stated they needed his diplomatic skills to “continue negotiations” with the Cathayans. They relieved him of his duties as prince, conferring that title on Sara Anne Winder, an ambitious and cunning Ventrue tactician charged with eventually re-taking the city.

In turn, the New Promise Mandarinate named Van Nuys Minister of the Office of Western Affairs, making him their official representative and mouthpiece for dealing with San Francisco’s Kin-jin population. In their view, this places Van Nuys above Winder in the city’s hierarchy, even if many within the Camarilla don’t see it that way. It also secures the ousted Van Nuys’ loyalty for the New Promise Mandarinate.

Having taken the city, of course, the Fence-Menders now face the challenge of holding both Los Angeles and San Francisco while dealing with affairs at home. To worsen matters, the Quincunx expects them to expand

their holdings in North America — against the better judgement of Jiejie Li and her advisors. The Two-Fang Serpent Plan is something of a victim of its own success, leaving the Kuei-jin stretched thin across California’s coast. The Kindred have regrouped from their early defeats, and the Camarilla now makes the Cathayans a greater priority than before. Robbed of the chance to gather intelligence while maintaining the element of surprise, the New Promise Mandarinate faces the prospect of organized resistance and an inevitable Camarilla counterattack while they fortify their holdings.

In San Francisco, these two powerful factions dance a delicate and dangerous diplomatic tango, each carefully hiding its weaknesses while ferreting out the enemy’s vulnerabilities and making plans for the future. On the city’s fog-shrouded streets, Kuei-jin and Kindred encounter each other almost nightly, sometimes slipping past one another in the mist with the barest acknowledgment, other times exploding into violence that may eventually consume the city. As the pressure grows, each side can’t help but reflect upon the prophecies of the End Times, watching the signs manifest all around them and wondering if hope still exists.



CHAPTER THREE: UTOPIA LOST

We feel this claim is just and proper, and that this land should rightfully be granted to us for as long as the rivers run and the sun shall shine. We hold the rock!

— from “The Alcatraz Proclamation to the Great White Father and his People,” November 1969.

STEALING PARADISE

The days of hippies, love-ins, Kool-Aid acid tests and upscale Bohemian hegemony are a thing of the past for San Francisco’s residents. Even without the helpful assistance of the Kindred and Kuei-jin, San Francisco is being eaten alive from the inside by the cancer of its own runaway success. Romanticized notions portray the City by the Bay as a peaceful haven for artists, activists, gay people, hippies and idealist bohemians of all stripes. While that may have been true as recently as a decade ago, it isn’t accurate any longer.

The soft-focus love-fest of the ‘60s and ‘70s fell to an Internet-driven economic boom of unprecedented proportions. Millionaires, lots of them, want to live in San Francisco, close to the rampantly lucrative technological innovations of Silicon Valley, but a safe distance from the hardcore banality of corporate life in nearby San Jose.

Market dynamics sent housing costs skyrocketing; anyone not making a six-figure salary — including the artists, idealists and bohemians who gave the city its unique character in the first place — fled. The dot.com millionaires and trust fund babies infesting San Francisco can afford to

live there, but nobody else can pay three thousand dollars a month for a studio apartment — least of all the activists, musicians, artists and non-profit crusaders.

Fully one third of the investment capital in the United States is in the Bay Area. The Camarilla, particularly the Ventrue, were more than happy to nudge whatever spoils they could into their own coffers. The Blue Bloods’ financiers literally made *billions* of dollars in the nineties, bankrolling in part the retaking of New York City. That they alienated the other Camarilla clans in doing so never bothered them, until scores of Kindred met Final Death at the hands of strange Asian invaders.

In the eyes of the Kindred, the Kuei-jin invasion was more than a brazen incursion by upstart exotics; it was a major blow to the Ventrue’s financial and banking empire, and by extension, to that of the Camarilla.

Had San Francisco been any other city in Western North America, the Camarilla would simply pull out, regroup and decide after much debate what to do next. Given San Francisco’s vast (and much-needed) wealth, however, and the crucial part it plays in the fields of computers, biotechnology and finance, that was not an option.



For that reason and that reason alone, the Camarilla willingly pays tribute to a foreign power in exchange for the right to remain in the city while the two iron out the “logistics of Kuei-jin occupation.” Kindred and Kuei-jin both call San Francisco home now with varying degrees of comfort, but the slapdash patchwork of petty fiefdoms, domains, demilitarized zones, “Munificent Transitioning Sectors” and no man’s lands wears on everyone’s nerves. Unfortunately, no one could come up with a better arrangement. There appears to be one thing and one thing alone that Kindred and Kuei-jin both fully agree on: the *status quo* cannot continue much longer.

SAN FRANCISCO GEOGRAPHY OVERVIEW

San Francisco is located on the northern tip of the San Francisco peninsula. North across the Golden Gate Bridge is wealthy Marin County and Napa Valley wine

country. Eastward across the Bay Bridge lies Oakland with Berkeley to its north. To the south is a collection of upscale suburban communities and the city of San Jose.

San Francisco, commonly called “The City” by most residents of central and northern California, comprises a myriad of distinct neighborhoods in a remarkably small geographic area. This is due in part to the many steep hills within San Francisco city limits, creating natural boundaries between districts. More accurately, however, the distinct neighborhoods stem from the innumerable ethnic communities settled in the region.

Of American cities, only New York has a greater population density. It is San Francisco’s compacted communities that allow it to support its many clubs, bars, restaurants and other businesses. It also means that for a city of its small geographic area, San Francisco presents a rich buffet of blood and Chi to its nocturnal residents. A good thing, too, because the city’s current vampire population is precariously high. Health workers, sensitized by the

AIDS crisis to look for odd trends in pathology, will notice a significant increase in the number of patients with symptoms of anemia, particularly in certain neighborhoods.

Camarilla Prince Sara Winder currently pressures vampires under her jurisdiction to spread feeding as widely as possible, as well as to feed lightly from a single individual in order to keep the city's vampires unnoticed. Some take this edict as sanction to hunt beyond the Munificent Transitioning Sectors, however, resulting in growing friction with the local Kuei-jin. Luckily, local tourism is a major industry in San Francisco, while the city is also home to a virtual army of homeless. These transient vessels constitute a large percentage of the city's population at any one time, so it only requires a little effort to hide one's feeding habits while still indulging in *vita* extravagantly. The Kuei-jin also learned to maintain "a Masquerade."

Even Chinatown, for all its similarities to the Middle Kingdom, is unmistakably part of an American city; respect for the *shen* is not a value that survived the test of time and distance, though it's one the Kuei-jin hope to revive. For the time being, however, the three ruling mandarins, known as the Cloud Mandarins, enforce principles of conduct for the Kuei-jin. Once the Quincunx chooses San Francisco's ancestor, he or she will codify the principles of conduct into a formal set of rules. Until then, the Kuei-jin "Masquerade" demands the following on pain of punishment (administered by the Cloud Mandarins and ranging from censure to facing the Eye of Heaven):

- 1) The Cloud Mandarins alone may assign usage of Scarlet Screens and mortals as proxy. Currently, the New Promise Mandarinate needs to appear unified, which means no Shadow Wars over resources — mortal or otherwise.

- 2) Avoid killing mortals of Asian extraction, which essentially amounts to "don't piss in your own watering hole."

- 3) Do not reveal your true nature to any mortal unless that mortal receives the Mandarinate's sanction as trustworthy.

- 4) Avoid contact with the Kin-jin outside of your duties. If confronted or offended by Western vampires, avenge your honor short of their destruction. Their Final Deaths serve no purpose at this moment.

The nocturnal population is relatively spread out throughout the city, but the Kuei-jin, as the party in power, dictates where each camp of vampires may settle.

THE KUEI-JIN

The Kuei-jin of the Quincunx, while technically free to claim any portion of the New Promise Mandarinate as their own, chose to assume full control of the city's prosperous northeast quadrant. They claim Chinatown, the Financial District, North Beach, Nob Hill, Russian Hill, Telegraph Hill and tourist-haven Fisherman's Wharf (essentially the prime neighborhoods) as theirs. This is where the money and Chi flow most abundantly. The Camarilla paid tribute to the Quincunx in hopes of gaining access to the Financial District, but so far only Jochen Van Nuys and a small army of Ventrue ghouls carry out business there with any ease.

THE CAMARILLA

The Quincunx "temporarily" relegates the city's Camarilla Kindred to strictly delineated neighborhoods called, euphemistically enough, Munificent Transitioning Sectors. This includes Pacific Heights and Castro Street. Quincunx representatives claim that once the New Promise Mandarinate's new masters settle in, they will allow local Kindred to make their havens anywhere in the city. None of the local Camarilla Kindred, however, give that lie enough credence to even hope it's true. The Kuei-jin's Tongs and Scarlet Screens watch for Kindred who leave their assigned sector, but with such thin populations on both sides, it's not difficult for Kindred to break the rules if they really try. They must be ready, however, to accept the consequences should the Quincunx catch them.

Essentially from its founding, San Francisco has been a Camarilla city. Since the mid-19th century, the Camarilla power structure in America — largely dominated by Ventrue operating from New England — kept a tight grip on both San Francisco and the large quantities of money and clout flowing through America's most civilized western city. The Camarilla ensured other sects never established a significant foothold in San Francisco, keeping the struggle for the city to a minimum. Unfortunately, that leeway and security made local Kindred decadent, weak and unprepared, allowing the Kuei-jin presence to grow as quickly as it did. By the time the sybaritic Toreador, the greedy Ventrue and the chantry-bound Tremere noticed powerful Asian vampires had infested their city, it was too late.

Key assassinations by the Kuei-jin and the poorly timed defection of the Gangrel collapsed the Camarilla's structure in San Francisco like a house of cards. The local Brujah also never had a substantial presence in San Francisco proper. Those not fighting in L.A. with the anarchs, including San Francisco's Brujah primogen, moved across the bay to Oakland and Berkeley. Numerous Kindred left for other Camarilla cities, including many of the fair-weathered Toreador; most found their way to San Diego, where Prince Tara welcomed them. Most Ventrue, however, had devoted significant investment in San Francisco and remained behind, as did the Tremere assigned to the San Francisco Chantry. They, and the handful of other Camarilla Kindred, avoided complete expulsion or destruction at the hands of the invading Kuei-jin only by paying the enormous three hundred million dollar tribute to the Quincunx.

What the Kin-jin purchased with their tribute, however, was not what they thought they were buying. At the time of the payment, Prince Jochen Van Nuys claimed that once the tribute had been paid, Western Kindred could freely roam the city (or "the Mandarinate" as he called it) as they always done, only with a bit more... supervision. What the Kindred actually purchased were, in effect, large and carefully monitored internment camps supervised by Kuei-jin guards and inspection teams who insisted on knowing the location of every Kindred haven in the city.

After paying tribute to the Quincunx, the biggest insult to the Camarilla was the discovery that the Financial District was not open to the Ventrue and would not be for the foreseeable future. The Ventrue must monitor their business empires from afar through ghoul intermediaries, while the Kuei-jin forge direct inroads with their own Scarlet Screens.

THE GAKI

The *gaki* ensconce themselves in Japan Center, much to the dismay of the Quincunx. While the Japanese vampires resent and deeply dislike the Quincunx (owing to years of both overt and covert warfare between the two factions), they still acknowledge Chinatown as the seat of Kuei-jin authority in San Francisco. The Quincunx, for its part, must tolerate the Azure Dragon Kuei-jin because it needs them for reinforcements — and call on them it does, with increasing frequency. This gives the Japanese Wan Kuei insights into the New Promise Mandarinate's growing instability... insights they eagerly exploit at every turn.

The Quincunx knows better than to invest the same degree of trust in the *gaki* as they do their own members. What they don't know is that the *gaki* are far less reticent than the arrogant Quincunx about interacting with local Kindred. Many are forging alliances their Chinese counterparts would find horrifying as well as seditious.

While many *gaki* feel sympathetic to Kin-jin concerns (they've been victimized by Quincunx arrogance for centuries), those sentiments are developing into a grudging camaraderie. Japan Center and the few small neighborhoods controlled by the *gaki*, while not openly hospitable, are non-hostile to Kindred passing through. Amusingly, only a handful of Kindred suspect potential allies exist amidst the sea of invaders, but more will learn with time. The *gaki* are a resource the Camarilla hasn't discovered yet.

NON-CAMARILLA VAMPIRES

Technically, the Quincunx declares all of San Francisco under the New Promise Mandarinate's aegis, and for the most part, they're right. The only area free of Kuei-jin control, however, is the northwest quadrant. The city's major parks, as well as Richmond district between them, are as free of Kuei-jin as two marauding Gangrel can make them.

The Richmond district, along with the Presidio, Golden Gate Park, Lincoln Park and — to a lesser degree — Harding Park, are relatively open territory for any Kindred willing or desperate enough to escape the assigned sectors and maintain the Masquerade. The Kuei-jin still contest the region, but have little "manpower" to handle the problem properly. The Gangrel responsible for this self-appointed free zone maintain vestigial connections to both the anarch movement and the Camarilla, but they possess no tolerance for the Sabbat (admittedly a lesser concern these days).

Non-Camarilla Kindred are in short supply in San Francisco, most having been destroyed in the crossfire between the Quincunx and the Camarilla or forced out of the city. Fearing for their unives, many anarchs have cast

their lot with the Camarilla, at least until the Kuei-jin withdraw. The Sabbat, on the other hand, maintain a token presence in the city, which they hope is enough to throw a wrench into the already beleaguered Quincunx and the Camarilla peace process. The Sabbat hope a full-scale war erupts between the two giants, allowing them to clean up. Few Sabbat believe this might actually happen, but at the very least, San Francisco is still a hell of a lot more fun than Mexico City.

Most non-Camarilla Kindred live in either the Western Addition, the Tenderloin, or the city's southernmost regions — those neighborhoods most San Franciscans conveniently ignore as part of their "community." These areas constitute no man's lands where the Kuei-jin maintain little interest in controlling them (and thus maintain minimal presence), but enough to consider them off-limits for Kindred (just to hamper their feeding options). The Sabbat understands well that hiding where others can't look is only one way of hiding, while hiding where others prefer not looking is another time-proven technique that is effective against arrogant enemies. This is traditionally the Ventrue, but now it more than adequately applies to the Quincunx invaders as well.

THE MUNIFICENT TRANSITIONING SECTORS

Shortly after the Camarilla paid tribute to the Quincunx (what some call "the most expensive rent in San Francisco"), the August Courts announced it needed to "temporarily" relocate the city's Kindred to several predetermined and carefully delineated neighborhoods.

The Cathayans claim Kindred will receive their old privileges back once the city fully transitions into the New Promise Mandarinate. Happily, the Quincunx allows Kindred to remain in San Francisco during the change. During the process, however, Kindred must feed and move their havens into small and carefully defined sections of the city. The Kuei-jin call these "Munificent Transitioning Sectors." They are "munificent" because the Quincunx feels it shows great compassion and restraint toward the barbarian Kin-jin by letting them stay in the New Promise Mandarinate. They are "transitioning sectors" because the Kuei-jin claim Kindred will remain there only for the time it takes to finish transforming the Camarilla city of San Francisco into the New Promise Mandarinate. The Kindred find the Cathayans' terminology long-winded and ridiculously euphemistic. They refer to them as the M-T Sectors or simply "the Empties."

By all appearances, the Kuei-jin explicitly requested only that the Kindred relocate their havens and conduct the majority of their feeding within the M-T Sectors — ostensibly to allow the Kuei-jin space and relative privacy while they assume residency as the city's new masters. Privately, however, many Kindred wonder if the Kuei-jin take their lessons from the rape of Nanking — corralling the enemy to simplify their destruction.

The Quincunx retains the right to reassign Kindred from one M-T Sector to another. It uses this power to

extend favor or disfavor to Kindred according to “merit,” or the degree of cooperation a vampire willingly offers the new regime. The Quincunx relocated former Prince Jochen Van Nuys, for example, to the Pacific Heights M-T Sector to reward his dedication to ensuring the New Promise Mandarinate’s success. Current Prince Sara Anne Winder, however, was conspicuously slighted by the Quincunx, who noticed their takeover became significantly harder after she replaced Van Nuys. They assigned her to one of the less prestigious sectors, the Castro.

It became obvious what the Quincunx really intended with the M-T Sectors when Kindred who strayed from designated neighborhoods vanished. The Kuei-jin never explicitly forbade Kindred from passing through any city sector; in practice, however, Western vampires who venture from their assigned areas do so at personal risk. The Quincunx punishes Kindred with a reputation for traveling outside their own M-T neighborhoods too frequently by reassigning them to less desirable sectors, interrogating them, torturing them or sending a *wu* of Kuei-jin (or assembly of Tong members wielding incendiary round shotguns) after them.

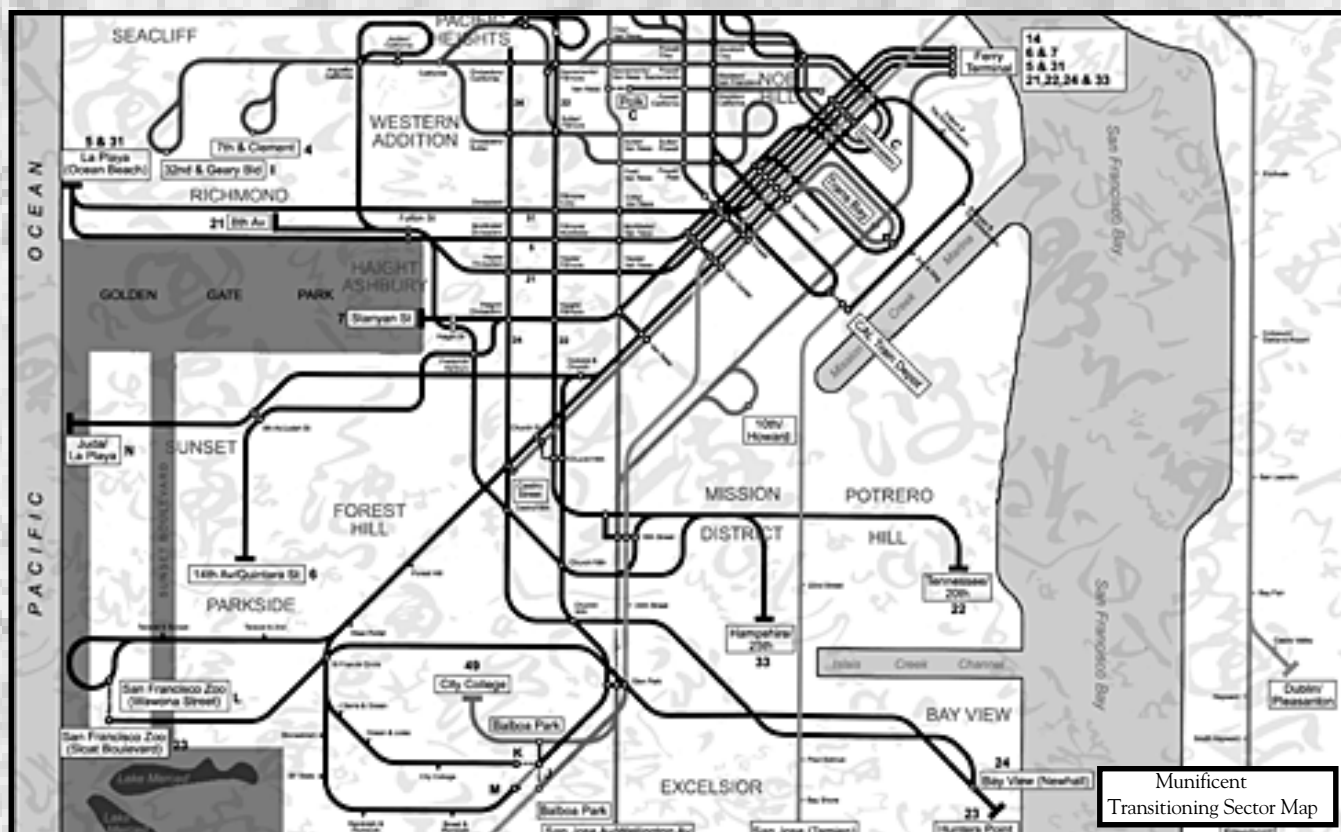
The Quincunx insists on knowing the whereabouts of every Kindred haven in the city, and they perform frequent random inspections to ensure the vampire hasn’t moved. The Mandarinate decrees immediate destruction for any Kindred who changes havens without its express permission. It is this and this alone keeping Kindred from establishing havens wherever they wish, regardless of the Kuei-jin’s M-T Sector assignments. Those Kindred who dislike betraying their haven’s location are welcome,

even encouraged, to leave. The Quincunx is always happy to see the vampire population shift in their favor.

Two clans notorious for straying outside their assigned sectors frequently and with near impunity are the Nosferatu and the Gangrel. The Nosferatu’s advantage lies in their unrivaled hold over San Francisco’s subterranean domains (sewers, subway tunnels and forgotten passages), allowing them access across the city under everyone’s noses. Conversely, the Gangrel care little for the Camarilla’s position in San Francisco or the Kuei-jin presence and go where they please. Members of both clans, consequently, possess a certain prestige with the local Camarilla that they don’t possess elsewhere. The result is a slow influx of vampires from both clans, bolstering the Camarilla’s position in the case of the Nosferatu.

Of course, entering San Francisco is another matter. The Kuei-jin use Scarlet Screens working at the Port Authority and at bus and train terminals to monitor incoming traffic and packages and track suspected vampires if necessary (the pale skin and predatory manner are two telltale clues). That doesn’t even mention Scarlet Screen Tongs who drive the highways and bridges throughout the day (and night), watching for unmarked vans or tinted-windows on cars. These watchdogs make entry into San Francisco difficult, and one phone call from them is enough to bring in the dreaded “compliance supervisors” (a Kuei-jin squad of enforcers).

There are five M-T Sectors in all, (Castro Street and Noe Valley, SoMa, Pacific Heights, Bayview and Sunset) and the mood of each is radically different from the others. Perhaps most astonishing is that one small city like San



Francisco holds such a disparate collection of neighborhoods, which range from sheer luxury, comfort and wealth to the most wretched, polluted and despair-inducing locales.

In some ways, the differences between the Empties are moot; they are all Kindred holding pens. The best are gilded cages while the worst border on penitentiaries. The well-connected white-collar criminal plays out his sentence in minimum security with golf courses, televisions and leaving privileges, while the more problematic violent street offender is locked in solitary, given no indulgences, and eventually disappears from the minds and hearts of society. Putting this in context to the Empties, the primogen, low-generation Kindred, assimilationists, turncoats and supporters of the New Promise Mandarinate receive the posh assignments. It is they who exist and feed in Pacific Heights or South of Market (SoMa), while the Quincunx relegates the weak-blooded, problematic and no-status vampires to less desirable sectors, the worst of which is Bayview.

Immediately following the Camarilla's tribute to the Quincunx, the city's Kindred were strangely docile, their main representatives still in shock. That tractability fades rapidly, however, and the Kindred press the Kuei-jin more frequently and more aggressively. The New Promise Mandarinate responded by cracking down harshly on Kindred

caught outside their assigned sectors. The Cathayans possess an amazing array of Disciplines that Kindred are only now becoming acquainted with (abilities that make them fearsome combatants). Only the strongest Kindred willingly risk capture by a cadre of Kuei-jin "compliance supervisors" (called wardens by most Kindred), but from time to time a low-generation vampire leaves her assigned sector and hunts elsewhere. Fights between Kindred and cadres of Kuei-jin quickly become the stuff of rumors and tall tales regardless the outcome (a fact the Quincunx resents because it motivates powerful Kindred to test its limits).

The Kuei-jin issue warnings to Kindred of status who violate the Mandarinate's edict. For most other vampires, however, the Quincunx will attack them, report them to the Kindred in power or, for repeat offenders, destroy them. Some Kindred of prestige flout this policy with impunity. In particular, Mirko Mirkonen (p. 108) harasses the occupying Kuei-jin if they venture into any of the local parks. He helps make the parks *de facto* Kindred territory, although the Quincunx puts increasing pressure on the Camarilla to rein in the old Gangrel. The Camarilla claims it can do nothing since the Gangrel left the sect, labeling Mirkonen a renegade while secretly applauding his efforts. Wildcards like Mirkonen enrage the Quincunx while simultaneously troubling and delighting the powers that be among the Camarilla.



In the eyes of the Camarilla, all Kindred supporting the New Promise Mandarinate (and therefore the Cathayan presence) enough to earn havens in the Pacific Heights M-T Sector are suspect. Whether or not they actually collaborate with the Kuei-jin is almost moot. It is not behavior that is objectionable, but the appearance of impropriety.

Likewise, many Kindred in the upscale Empties wonder what unnecessarily antagonistic tactics their brethren committed for the Kuei-jin to relegate them to the worst M-T Sectors. This kind of thinking creates a silent barrier of suspicion between different Empties, making it subtly harder for the Camarilla to work with any degree of real cohesiveness.

The Kuei-jin work hard to reinforce this phenomenon as a means of keeping the Kin-jin scattered. It is effective in preventing young vampires from fostering alliances, but elders familiar with the nuances of the *Jyhad* are skilled manipulators themselves. The Quincunx may be able to lead neonates by the nose, but the thin-blooded rabble isn't the threat the Kuei-jin should worry about.

The greatest danger to experienced Kindred is the appeal of working with (and possibly manipulating) the Kuei-jin. Some Western vampires find they have much in common with their Asian counterparts, which fosters an awkward sense of solidarity. The fraternization between the Quincunx and the Camarilla makes for hesitant alliances between their members. Certain Kuei-jin and Kindred alike find their hostilities turning into mutual tolerance and, in rare moments, grudging respect. Of course the danger in this is that predators only cooperate when they benefit from the exchange, and the undead are not known for their altruism. Cooperation is just one tool in an arsenal of political murder; betrayal is another.

THE CATHAYAN FREE ZONE

The Camarilla's Inner Circle privately acknowledges that it was too slow in dealing with San Francisco's Cathayan incursions. After the first skirmishes between Kindred and Cathayan, the Camarilla simply raised an eyebrow at this new peculiarity and went on with business as usual. New York was of greater concern at the time, given the already-spent investment in retaking that city. Even after a few irritating anarchs and insignificant high generation vampires went missing, the Inner Circle overlooked the situation as unimportant. Only after militant Kuei-jin assassinated both the Tremere and Malkavian primogen did the Camarilla acknowledge they had yet another war on their hands. By then, of course, it was too late.

Since the Kuei-jin occupation of San Francisco, however, the Camarilla treats "the Cathayan problem" with the attention it deserves. The Ventrue, driven by Prince Sara Anne Winder, launched a full-bore multi-phase crusade to create a Cathayan Free Zone (CFZ) around San Francisco. **Note:** Because the first three phases of the endeavor are still active, the characters may still involve themselves with the various steps, or the Storyteller may launch the initiative during the chronicle, allowing the characters full participation from the get-go.

For phase one of that program, the Ventrue grant all Kindred (particularly Gangrel) exceptionally generous feeding privileges in all West Coast Camarilla domains for a period of one year for every Kuei-jin they capture or kill in the relatively wild areas around San Francisco (in effect, it is a Kindred version of Pope Urban II's indulgences to the first Crusaders). Furthermore, the Ventrue extend those same generous feeding privileges to all Kindred of Asian extraction who moved to San Francisco. This is both a means of creating confusion for the invading Kuei-jin and a way of attracting a body of potential undercover agents working for the Camarilla.

For phase two, Nosferatu—or anyone with transportation influence—watch the ferry terminals at night and monitor boat rentals for Cathayans trying to leave the city by water. While not as effective as the Tremere's approach (detailed below), the Sewer Rats are relatively successful, garnering significant prestige and prime feeding grounds for their efforts.

The Tremere, in phase three, wage what is the most effective campaign yet on behalf of the CFZ by warding the bridges and the BART tunnel out of San Francisco with a series of lethal Wards versus Cathayans. While they claim to do this at the behest of the Ventrue, the wards were largely created at the command of Meerlinda herself in retaliation for the 1998 assassination of the Tremere primogen, a favored pupil and sycophant of hers.

The wards reduce any Kuei-jin traveling across the Golden Gate Bridge, the Bay Bridge or the San Mateo Bridge to dust and charred bones before they even reach the halfway point. The BART tunnel leading out of San Francisco also has wards in place, but the Tremere rigged these into the power grid so that when a Kuei-jin trips a ward, the train's power "flickers." The resulting second-long blackout prevents the passengers from seeing the Kuei-jin destroyed and interrupts the video feeds from potential security cameras. Of course some members of the Camarilla consider such actions a betrayal of the Masquerade, but desperate times call for desperate measures. Additionally, the Ventrue and Toreador continually divest much of their media and police resources into killing news stories concerning these "freakish accidents."

The Tremere and Camarilla know of the wards' limitations. They only prevent Cathayans from leaving or entering San Francisco via car and subway, and they must be recast every so often, creating large enough holes for Kuei-jin to escape through unscathed on the occasion. Unbeknownst to the Camarilla, however, the Kuei-jin consulted with the Hong Kong Tremere defector Oliver Thrace and his childer Wan Zhu, and circumvented the wards. Thrace and Wan Zhu developed one ritual to negate the wards and one to allow safe travel across them. Currently, the Cloud Mandarins keep these developments secret because they don't want the Tremere developing a newer and more effective countermeasure. They also don't want the Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders to push for an untimely invasion of the West Coast. Instead, the Cloud Mandarins rant and rail and pretend the wards hem them in San Francisco, when they in fact wait patiently to fortify their position before continuing their annexation of the West Coast.

EFFECTS OF THE WARDS

In case a foolish Kuei-jin tries leaving the city via any bridge or the BART Tunnel, the wards inflicts three dice of lethal damage on contact. The Tremere placed thirteen warded points along each route. Any traveling Kuei-jin suffers a total of 39 dice of lethal damage before reaching the opposite side. Additionally, the Kuei-jin must check for wave soul after activating each ward. Failure means the Kuei-jin flees back the way he came as quickly as possible (and passing through at least one ward on the return trip). Spending a Willpower allows the Kuei-jin to automatically pass the wave soul check, but no Kuei-jin has enough Willpower to survive the journey without making at least three checks.

Needless to say, no Kuei-jin survives the wards without using a Writ of Protected Passage ritual (see p. 130).

To keep up appearances, the Cloud Mandarins “threaten” to execute Kindred within San Francisco until the Camarilla drops the wards. Van Nuys, unaware of the Mandarinate’s true intentions, negotiates on the Camarilla’s behalf, trying to prevent “a massacre” while bolstering his reputation within the Camarilla. The Cloud Mandarins counted on that, however. They possess neither the strength nor manpower to execute Kindred in force. Instead, they want Van Nuys to succeed in his negotiations and appear the Camarilla’s hero. In that way, the Cloud Mandarins increase their own clout in the city through Van Nuys, while removing some of Prince Winder’s support. It also allows them to keep the Crusaders quiet under the mistaken assumption that the wards stymie the invasion. Meanwhile, the Camarilla believes its strategy of erecting the wards makes excellent use of the city’s geography and turns San Francisco into a less effective launching point for the Kuei-jin invasion of America’s West Coast.

The CFZ’s phases four and five, while planned and in the early stages, have yet to be fully implemented. Phase four includes stationing Assamites still operating for the Camarilla in small cities throughout northern California — Silicon Valley in particular — to act as scourges for Cathayan vampires. Stage five of the CFZ plan, by far the most controversial, grants acknowledgement in Camarilla cities to any unaligned Kindred who capture or kill a Cathayan anywhere in North America outside of San Francisco. Not surprisingly, Clan Giovanni takes the most ardent advantage of this offer, both as a means of entering the Camarilla’s good graces and avenging their own thwarted efforts at penetrating the Orient. The Followers of Set also see this as an interesting means for insinuating themselves into Camarilla cities. While there are not many of them on the West Coast, the region’s handful of Setites are suddenly very interested in the

Tongs’ heroin trade — much to the chagrin of the Tongs, whose casualty rates soar.

The Inner Circle continues to brainstorm over techniques at reducing the Cathayan incursion in North America to a minimum. With anarchs and the Sabbat already threatening the continent’s stability, the Camarilla hopes to quash this new threat before it gains any more momentum. What further tactics Camarilla strategists employ to nullify the Cathayan threat in this nascent conflict remain to be seen, but the battle plans of the Camarilla’s master tacticians are sure to give the Quincunx cause for second thoughts on their much-vaunted “Great Leap Outward.” Conversely, the Kuei-jin’s generals are equally adept at turning obstacles into advantages — as demonstrated by their handling of the wards. The Inner Circle is again in danger of underestimating their opponents’ skill and resolve in the matter.

MOVING AROUND SAN FRANCISCO

Much of San Francisco rests on a series of steep hills. The rising streets and spectacular views lend the city much of its charm and character, but the hills also pose problems for San Franciscans, both mortal and immortal. Before the advent of the cable car, people needed teams of horses to haul wagons up the hills. Occasional accidents dragged wagon and team to the bottom of the hill, resulting in the deaths of numerous horses. In fact, the rebuilding of San Francisco following the 1906 earthquake killed hundreds of draft horses.

In some areas, the city’s hills are so steep that sidewalks become stairs for pedestrians to climb. Most people can’t do more than walk going uphill and may even move at half walking pace on a steep hill. Vampires do not contend with the fatigue of climbing hills, but must keep the terrain in mind when hunting (or fleeing pursuit, in the modern nights).

A famous sight along the city’s downtown streets are the cable cars making their way up and down the hills. Built over a hundred years ago, the cars have only two lines. The city considers them a national monument, preserving them for their historical value and as a tourist attraction (only tourists really ride them any longer, considering one must often wait an hour or more in line to do so). Of course, given that cable cars nearly always carry tourists, some vampires look at them as “lunch wagons” holding potential prey.

With space at a premium in the crowded city, parking along the steep streets is necessary. Such parking spaces are often angled toward the street, and drivers must turn their car’s wheels inward, preventing vehicles left in neutral from rolling downhill and out into traffic. A city ordinance mandates a fine for anyone parking improperly on a hill.

San Francisco’s streets are hilly, winding and crowded, although not as congested as New York City or Los Angeles. Driving can be difficult and parking is expensive in the downtown area. The city encourages its citizens to use public transportation. San Francisco has an excellent

subway system called the Muni that reaches most areas. There is also the BART (or Bay Area Rapid Transit), an underground train traversing the bay into Oakland and points north and south.

Wards placed by the Tremere along the BART tunnel prevent the Kuei-jin from safely using it to leave the city (see p. 130 for details). The Tremere also considered warding some of the Muni tunnels (with the assistance of the Nosferatu), thus making it more difficult for the Cathayans to move about within the city. The Camarilla fears the threat to its Masquerade, however, and such a move would provoke a severe response from the New Promise Mandarinate, which already threatens to execute vampires.

THE DISTRICTS OF SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco is a diverse city in terms of culture and population as well as architecture, landscape and neighborhoods. The Kuei-jin claim most of the major areas or “set them aside” for the Kindred. San Francisco neighborhoods vary widely, given the steep hills that serve as the city’s hallmark and provide natural boundaries between the many different districts.

THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT

Wall Rating: 9

The heart of Ventrue, and therefore Camarilla, control over San Francisco was the city’s bustling Financial District. Centered on Market Street in the north-central area, it is home to many international corporations, particularly financial institutions like the Bank of America, insurance companies and brokerage houses. The Financial District’s various enterprises employ hundreds of thousands of people, some of them loyal to Kindred masters their employers know nothing about.

The number of ghouls operating in the Financial District has increased since the Kuei-jin ousted the Kindred. The Ventrue always used ghouls and mortal proxies to handle their affairs during the day, but that need grows now that the Ventrue cannot easily visit the District personally and must handle everything via cell phone and e-mail. Even Kin-jin assigned to the Pacific Heights M-T Sector aren’t allowed in the Financial District without a high-ranking escort from the Mandarinate.

The Kuei-jin are becoming aware of just how deeply the Ventrue sank their fangs into this financial center’s heart. They know ghouls hide among the mortals here, but have had a difficult time thus far finding them and surreptitiously weeding them out. Instead, the Kuei-jin focus on extending their power and building Scarlet Screens to serve their needs in North America. Their capacity to offer lucrative business ties with Hong Kong and other parts of Asia is an attractive asset. Behind the scenes, the ghouls and Scarlet Screens clash in a ballet of corporate buy-outs, stock manipulations,

dividend frauds and investment schemes, struggling for the tremendous prize this small district represents.

The Financial District is also home to several San Francisco landmarks, the most notable of which is the Trans-America Building, a pyramid-shaped tower some 853 feet tall. The top 212 feet taper into a spire holding mechanical equipment. Although famed for its architecture, the Trans-America Building is both an eyesore and a true thorn in the Mandarinate’s side. Its design and layout flout nearly all conventions of *feng shui*, polluting the city’s Chi and sending out “poison arrows” in all directions, particularly in the Financial District (see *Cultivating Chi* in Chapter 6 for more information). Kuei-jin geomancers believe the building’s presence is one reason the Mandarinate faces such adversity in the District, but there is little to be done about it (despite some radical suggestions about arranging for the building’s destruction).

PACIFIC HEIGHTS (M-T SECTOR)

Wall Rating: 8

As prisons go, Pacific Heights is perhaps the most luxurious the world has seen. Its lavish residences provide homes for technology barons, bank presidents and, in the modern nights, those Kindred sufficiently useful to the New Promise Mandarinate.

Any Kindred who makes a clear effort on behalf of the New Promise Mandarinate earns a shot at Pacific Heights. Assignment to this M-T Sector is a priority among Kindred intent on pursuing a lengthy unlife in San Francisco. The district is large, the Kindred population small and the havens, while expensive, remain affordable by those with four or more dots in the Resources Background. Pacific Heights is comfortable and sits close enough to the city’s hub of power that the more politically minded Kindred consider it a perfectly respectable base from which to lobby the Kuei-jin. Former Prince Van Nuys resides in Pacific Heights M-T as does Kelvin Wee, the Camarilla’s chief negotiator.

The Pacific Heights Sector is bounded by Chestnut Street to the north, California Street to the south, Scott Street to the west and Van Ness Avenue to the east. It includes the popular Union Street Shopping district, Alta Plaza, Lafayette Park, Pacific Medical Center and the University of the Pacific. Add in several hotels and other tourist draws, and you have exceptionally rich feeding grounds for the resident Kindred.

Relocation to Pacific Heights is no small matter. It requires significant effort, political finesse and subservience to the Quincunx. Speaking Chinese (any dialect, though the Quincunx prefers Mandarin) sets Kindred far ahead in the running for a cushy Pacific Heights reassignment. The Quincunx’s representatives find English bland and don’t like using it. They automatically upgrade any Kindred familiar with their native Tongue from “barbarian” to “potential tool.” These Kindred must truly believe, or at least convince the Quincunx they believe, the New Promise Mandarinate is the way of the future, is better than the Camarilla and is worth the dedication of effort. They must willingly advocate the Quincunx’s position to other Kindred and apprise the Mandarinate of the

Camarilla's position and—ideally—strategies. Ventrue, prized for their persuasion skills, earn priority status for allocation to Pacific Heights.

Understandably, Camarilla loyalists look askance at vampires assigned to Pacific Heights, the inference being that only those vampires who betrayed the Camarilla and became the Quincunx's lapdogs dwell here. Even Wee, a known Camarilla supporter, is the target of occasional barbed comments, most often by those who simply envy his comfortable existence and haven.

Surprisingly, only a little more than half of the Pacific Heights Kindred actually "sold out" to the Quincunx. While many are there because of their various services on behalf of the invaders, the Quincunx assigns some specifically to bring them under suspicion by other Kindred. Still others dwell in Pacific Heights because they're too important in the Kindred power structure. If Prince Winder was not so clearly a Camarilla agent of war, the Quincunx would assign her to this Munificent Transitioning Sector as well. In her case, however, the only thing saving her from being relegated to Bayview is that she is a powerful and respected Camarilla Prince.

The Kuei-jin do not maintain a strong presence around the Pacific Heights M-T Sector, nor may Tong members venture there for any reason. The Kindred assigned here have too much to lose by straying from their "reservation." The Kuei-jin do launch occasional spot checks, however, to ensure the Kindred do not abuse the so-called freedoms the Quincunx so kindly gives them.

On those occasions when a Kindred is demoted and banished from Pacific Heights to a less desirable M-T Sector, the Quincunx's agents turn it into a grand spectacle of shame and drama. The Quincunx distributes special writs dictating the event with brutal embellishment. They require the area's Kindred to gather and watch the offending vampire leave, often only carrying the contents of one box. The Quincunx destroys, confiscates, or sells the vampire's remaining possessions. They want San Francisco's entire Kindred population to know this Kindred in question is a disgrace to the New Promise Mandarinate. The results are surprisingly effective since the vampires in this M-T Sector are already suspect, and earn the animosity of vampires in the poorer Munificent Transitioning Sectors. Even those Kindred who despise the Kuei-jin as invaders go out of their way to avoid public humiliation.

Pacific Heights boasts the best feeding opportunities in San Francisco currently available to Kindred. The Kuei-jin deliberately keep the Kindred-to-mortal ratio low here to maintain this particular luxury element. The irony is that most, though not all, the Kindred assigned here possess large herds and don't particularly need to take advantage of the sector's feeding opportunities. Still, it's nice to know it's there.

The greatest drawback to the Pacific Heights M-T Sector is its impact on vampiric social existence. In the absence of the traditional citywide Elysium, the only vampires one often sees are members of one's own sector. That's little

consolation when that comprises perhaps six other individuals, particularly when their political affiliations are in question. Exacerbating the situation is that Kindred from the other sectors hesitate to speak with the Kindred assigned to Pacific Heights for fear of being in league with perceived traitors. The net effect is the Kindred in Pacific Heights feel as though they exist in luxurious isolation.

While the Kuei-jin claim they keep Pacific Heights thinly populated with vampires to maintain higher-caliber feeding territory, the Quincunx's opponents suggest Pacific Heights is all about shifting the Kindred's loyalties to the Kuei-jin. By making the representatives of the Quincunx the only social alternative and appearing sympathetic to the concerns of that sector's Kindred, the Kuei-jin ensure that high-status Kindred become strongly motivated into transferring their loyalties to the Quincunx.

The Pacific Heights M-T Sector is the goal toward which all Kindred should work as part of the New Promise Mandarinate. While few Kindred actually believe the Kuei-jin's stance, they're not beyond playing the game to earn luxury housing assignments and good feeding grounds. Kindred are nothing if not pragmatic.

CHINATOWN

Wall Rating: 7, as low as 5 at night and as low as 3 in places of strong Chi.

The seat of the Quincunx's power in San Francisco is, of course, Chinatown; the epicenter of the Kuei-jin invasion. Smelly, vibrant, overcrowded, colorful and noisy, Chinatown's two dozen blocks at the base of Nob Hill, three blocks from Union Square, are the most densely populated in the entire city.

This neighborhood provides a relatively safe and familiar environment for the Quincunx's representatives and a gentle introduction to American culture for conservative Kuei-jin. Despite the ornate gates marking Chinatown's major entrances, the quarter mile area seems barely able to contain the ninety thousand teeming bodies keeping the district busy twenty-four hours a day.

By day, tourists throng Chinatown's main streets (like Grant Avenue) looking for exotic knick-knacks while night brings swarms of xenophilic diners to the district. Some of Chinatown's residents prefer less activity, but the Kuei-jin find the situation conducive to their needs. Not only does it remind them of the world they left behind, but also in the bustling masses, amid chopsticks and fortune cookies, floppy hats and plastic Buddhas, they easily hide and conduct their affairs unnoticed. Chinatown offers anonymity and its commercial hum covers their whispered plotting. In fact, in a country full of louts who cannot discern Chinese from Japanese, the Kuei-jin don't believe they require much cover... or so they like to think. As far as the Kuei-jin believe, Chinatown is their sole fortress in a perilous and alien land.

With the rare exception of heavily supervised Camarilla politicians, the Mandarinate expressly prohibits

Kindred from entering Chinatown. Being caught outside one's assigned M-T Sector is never a good thing, and the Quincunx punish Kindred in a myriad of ways for such a transgression. Trespassing in Chinatown, however, invariably results in the Kindred's destruction after a lengthy and excruciating interrogation to discern the interloper's motives.

Strategically located near all the city's power-brokering districts, Chinatown is ideally situated for the Kuei-jin's incursion into San Francisco. The powerful Financial District lies only a few blocks east, wealthy Nob Hill begins its rise in Chinatown's center and its northern edge blends into the affluent North Beach district.

Chinatown relies heavily on money pumped into its coffers by tourists. Despite this, it retains a respectable degree of autonomy and ethnic identity. Although tourist shops selling tacky curios and cheap souvenirs choke its main streets, it has its own schools, churches, banks and newspaper. The real Chinatown is in the dark and narrow alleyways wending their labyrinthine way between the buildings housing markets, bakeries, laundries and temples — all huddled in the shadows of the enormous Chi-warping glass and steel monoliths of San Francisco's Financial District.

Parallel to the tourist-infested Grant Avenue, the real center of the district is Stockton Street, crammed with spice shops, bakeries and vegetable and fish markets

selling wares too exotic for the standard tourist. The district's secret heart is a narrow alley all of two blocks long that American maps call Waverly Place. This is the Quincunx's base of operations in San Francisco. Two skillfully hidden temples, opulently decorated in vermilion, black and gold and closed to Caucasian visitors, provide the setting for the vast majority of the Kuei-jin's planning.

Despite appearances, neither Chinatown nor San Francisco's Asian population is poor. Owing to their pro-education attitudes and willingness to work seventy-hour weeks (not to mention their inclination to sell Mystery™ and Exoticism™ to bored Americans), the locals are the city's most affluent ethnic population. In the eyes of the Kuei-jin, this prosperity is simply one more tool with which to leverage their control of the city. While it still can't compete with the sheer financial clout that the Ventrue wield, it gives the Quincunx more cash flow options than merely relying on the Tong-run gambling and drug trades.

Although home to the second largest Chinese-speaking population outside of China, San Francisco's Chinatown isn't solely Chinese and hasn't been for decades. Koreans, Vietnamese, Thai, Filipinos and Laotians also integrated into the community, making the district representative of *all* of the Middle Kingdom, not



CHINATOWN SPIES

Despite the thin veneer of civility masking the real nature of the Kindred/Kuei-jin conflict, there is no mistaking that a war exists — and every war needs its spies. The Kuei-jin primarily use Bone Flower spies because their combination of self-control, stealth and scholarship makes them well suited for the task. It was they who formed the first wave of Kuei-jin entering San Francisco and they who assassinated key members of the city's primogen. It continues to be the Song of the Shadow followers who disguise themselves as American Kindred to provide the information they need on the Camarilla's activities. Rootless Trees are also masterful spies, but the few followers of the Path of a Thousand Whispers in San Francisco are hardly ideal servants of the Mandarinate (see Chapter Four for more information).

The Camarilla does not have easy access to shape-shifting spies, but they have resources of their own. While the Kuei-jin spot Caucasian Kindred lurking in Chinatown (typically posing as tourists) with relative ease, the Camarilla has greater success using Asian Kindred as spies.

Many Kindred of Chinese extraction fled Hong Kong in 1997 after Britain returned her former colony to China. When the Kuei-jin poured in, their zeal and anger turned toward eliminating the Kin-jin presence. There was no appealing to their shared heritage and culture for safety. The lucky ones fled to Camarilla-controlled lands.

Today, these individuals constitute the Camarilla's most effective agents in the war against the invading Quincunx. Their extensive knowledge of Chinese culture, fluency in the language and their lingering bitterness toward the Kuei-jin provide both the competence and the motivation the Camarilla needs in its campaign against the invading Cathayans. Throughout the Camarilla's higher echelons, rumors abound of Chinese operatives specially trained in rare Disciplines unknown to the Kuei-jin. Valeran and Vicissitude in particular resemble the Cathayans' strange abilities, to some degree. These alleged agents effectively venture into Chinatown under deep cover, thereby assisting Camarilla spies in the infiltration of their Kuei-jin adversaries. The truth of these reports, as one might expect, remains elusive.

What is certain is both the Quincunx and Camarilla maintain secret windows into each other's activities, but how it impacts the impending conflict between the two sects remains to be seen.

just the Quincunx's August Courts. While this fact mildly irritates the Quincunx at times, it conveniently provides them with a hook for drawing Kuei-jin from other courts into their American campaign.

The Quincunx happily implies it will take control of North America's West Coast by itself unless Kuei-jin from other regions help them in their invasion. The thinly veiled reality of the situation is that the Quincunx by itself is hard-

pressed to find enough Kuei-jin willing to leave their positions in Quincunx society to join in the Great Leap Outward. Likewise, many of those willing aren't competent or trustworthy enough to receive that task.

Instead, the Quincunx forges coalitions with Kuei-jin from other Courts — notably the Green and Gold Courts, where the chains of expectation, tradition and stasis bind Kuei-jin less firmly than they do in China (and where being allied with the Quincunx carries somewhat more cachet). In this way, the Five August Courts manage to recruit and deploy enough Kuei-jin to overwhelm the native Kin-jin, though high casualties resulting from a war of attrition make the Great Leap Outward a more difficult prospect than the Quincunx admits.

While the Kuei-jin think of Chinatown as theirs, that may be less true than they imagine. The social ills that Kuei-jin re-ignite may explode in their faces like a New Year's firecracker if they don't avoid antagonizing Chinatown's real masters: its mortal inhabitants.

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

For all the cultural similarities between the two groups, Chinatown's inhabitants are not the people of China. They work hard to maintain their community to its current level of affluence and bourgeois comfort, and they happily reap the concomitant rewards of the American system. They don't have the same inclination to turn a blind eye to graft as their Chinese cousins do, for example, nor do they exhibit as much tolerance for (or belief in) troublesome *shen*. While the differences are subtle, they are crucial with regard to the relations between Kuei-jin and Chinatown's mortals.

Chinatown's citizens possess a strong, unquestioned appreciation for tradition, but even the most conservative among them experiences more freedoms, less political corruption and more comfortable circumstances than the average Chinese citizen. They are not as fatalistic as the Chinese, and that in itself makes them more independent and dynamic — and the Kuei-jin uncomfortable. It is as though the headstrong American psyche permeates the character of those living here longest. They do not accept Tong activity in their neighborhoods as a given, and they fight the Kuei-jin's re-establishment of the Tongs at every step. Second generation inhabitants are almost as bad as Americans with their relentless pursuit of middle class values.

That said, tradition follows Chinatown's inhabitants from infancy. Children go to American schools by day and to Chinese schools by night, absorbing the language and culture of their parents. The community stresses and rewards academic performance. This focus on learning creates a communal wealth that serves as one more obstacle facing the Kuei-jin. In China, only a tiny minority of the population is as educated or as prosperous as the vast majority of Chinatown's mortals.

Admittedly, however, that is not indicative of every Chinatown resident. There is a small but growing population of first-generation immigrants smuggled into

America by Tongs. They remain alienated from Chinatown's more established residents because they lack money and connections. Many are criminals who fled China to avoid jail. Those who are not criminals remain at the mercy of the Tongs. It is Tong policy to meet the families of anyone they smuggle to America. If the Tong makes a request of the refugee and he refuses, they threaten or kill the illegal immigrant's family members to insure matters go their way.

The Kuei-jin occasionally use Tong connections in China to pressure some Chinese Americans in Chinatown, but it's exactly those tactics that may bring about the strongest anti-Kuei-jin backlash if the Quincunx is not careful.

Epitomizing Chinatown's no-nonsense approach to the Kuei-jin is the old Taoist wizard, Father Li T'ien (p. 117). While he represents the very heart and soul of Chinatown's traditional values, he also understands and appreciates the many differences between the United States and China. His deep esteem for tradition does not include tolerance for those Kuei-jin trying to shackle Chinatown's citizens with the same servitude and obligation to the *shen* under which their Chinese cousins labor. He sees the increase in Tong activity and prepares to take rectify the situation, teaching the arrogant vampires a lesson in the process.

The growing culture clash is result of the Kuei-jin's expectations that Chinatown should be like China and Chinatown's residents insisting it isn't and never will be. The vast majority of the Kuei-jin participating in the establishment of the New Promise Mandarinate originate from the Middle Kingdom.

The number of *kānbujiàn* emerging on American soil since Chinatown's establishment remains in the low double digits. Four of those, however, took place in the last year, so it's possible the Great Leap Outward really does extend the Middle Kingdom's sway into North America. Time will tell whether this is real or a temporary anomaly. The Quincunx obviously hope it remains an ongoing trend. For it to do otherwise means their invasion efforts fall apart the moment the Camarilla realizes their Asian adversaries can't mass-embrace. If that happened, Kindred could outnumber Kuei-jin by two to one in the space of a week.

Further complicating matters is the difficulty in tracking down newly risen Kuei-jin. Without education in the Dharmas, an uneducated *chih-meh* is more animalistic and barbaric than the Kin-jin at their worst, likely to self-destruct or fall to the Yama Kings' corruption. While the Quincunx has yet to ascertain the truth of the matter, a rumor circulating in Chinatown claims an established *akuma* maintains vigilant watch for newly risen Kuei-jin so he may provide them with the corrupt learning of the Yomi lords.

TONGS

While the mortal inhabitants of Chinatown may be less willing to tolerate criminal activity than the Chinese, that

hasn't kept the Tongs from operating in the United States. Far from it. Up and down the Pacific Coast, American Tongs maintain extensive ties to their Chinese counterparts. While the Tongs in Chinatown were on the wane before the Kuei-jin invasion, that is certainly not the case any longer.

The invaders not only reinitiated many old Tong connections in Chinatown, they underwrite new ones as a means of providing an ongoing source of pawns. Owing to the Kuei-jin shortage, the Quincunx relies on their Tong Scarlet Screens far more than they ordinarily do in China — particularly in their ongoing cold war with the city's Kindred. The Kuei-jin themselves are no longer the Kindred's only adversaries in Chinatown.

In days past, before becoming a tourist Mecca, Grant Avenue was Dupont Street. It provided the setting for a seemingly endless and ineradicable procession of gambling huts, opium dens and cheap whorehouses. The Tongs frequented, ran and sometimes terrorized these establishments. Unusually enough, the Tongs originally evolved from vigilante gangs who took it upon themselves to police Chinatown against racist attacks by xenophobic Americans — typically in as violent a fashion as possible. The Tongs quickly lost their sense of purpose, however, and degenerated into warring rival factions.

During decades of vying for the West Coast's lucrative drug trade, conflict between the Tongs spilled as much blood as any feud in Gangland Chicago or Los Angeles's war between the Crips and the Bloods. These stories never made the mainstream press thanks to the enforced subtlety and quiet intervention of the Chinese community, who didn't want the scrutiny that those kinds of headlines brought.

Tong activity was dying out (or at least going deep underground) before the invasion. Then, in need of disposable thugs, the vampires pulled invisible strings to reactivate an entire network of heroin dealers, pimps and petty criminals to act as agents, "cash flow engineers," and emissaries of their displeasure.

More than a few Kindred met Final Death in recent years at the hands of mortal Chinese youth gangs wielding shotguns and Molotov cocktails filled with home-brewed napalm. The Tongs likewise made easy targets for Kindred angry about losing their pre-invasion way of life. The streets radiating out from Chinatown are now the setting for all manner of horrific violence. Tong members and ghouls increasingly play out the conflict between Kuei-jin and Kindred in shadow form during the day, while the real adversaries, out of political necessity, pretend they possess some kind of amicable arrangement.

Despite the Quincunx's backing, San Francisco's Tongs are being assailed from all sides. Ventrué pawns in city hall, Chinatown community groups and business associations and police who resent working harder than they used to all pressure various Tong members. They want them either to cease operations or return to the underground where the Kuei-jin found them. For more information on Tongs and their *modus operandi*, see **Killing Streets**, the Middle Kingdom's gritty urban street life sourcebook.

THE CIVIC CENTER

Wall Rating: 8

The Civic Center is at the heart of downtown San Francisco. It lies to the west of the Financial District and east of Golden Gate Park. To the north lies Pacific Heights and the Presidio; to the south is Haight-Ashbury. Franklin, Market and Turk Streets mark the boundaries of the triangular district.

Among the Civic Center's landmarks are City Hall, the San Francisco Main Library, the Federal Building, Symphony Hall and the Opera House. Many buildings in this district feature a neo-classical style of architecture. Experts consider Symphony Hall one of the most acoustically perfect buildings in the world. The San Francisco Main Library recently moved into a new building constructed in the wake of the 1989 earthquake while the old, refurbished Library Building became the new home of the Asian Arts Museum (see "Richmond," p. 48, for more information).

Naturally, the New Promise Mandarinate claims the Civic Center, which limits Kin-jin contact with San Francisco's mortal government while insinuating the Kuei-jin throughout the district. The Cloud Mandarins received significant aid in this effort from the Kindred currently residing in Pacific Heights. Although the Mandarinate's sway is nowhere near that of the Camarilla's at its height, it exceeds the Camarilla's current clout.

An important area of the Civic Center is Japan Center, under the control of the local *gaki*. Ostensibly they are allies of the Quincunx and the New Promise Mandarinate, though matters are not nearly as agreeable as they appear on the surface.

JAPAN CENTER

Wall Rating: 7

There was a time when San Francisco had a thriving Japanese population. They came to California in the early 20th century when they tired of working in the sugar cane fields of Hawaii. The so-called "Little Tokyo" neighborhood occupied some forty blocks of the Western Addition, and was home to a stock exchange, two large Japanese banks, three major hotels, sixteen import/export companies, twenty florists and a handful of thriving Japanese bookstores.

In April of 1942, the beautiful, carefully tended blocks of Little Tokyo became a ghost town when the United States government forced West Coast Americans of Japanese ancestry to sell everything they owned and move inland to "internment camps" in Utah, Wyoming and Idaho. To sell their property in the short time they were given, the residents of Little Tokyo had to accept a fraction of its worth, often from buyers of questionable merit. After the war, a few Japanese made their way back to San Francisco and found that the beautiful neighborhood they had sold so cheaply was now a poverty-stricken ghetto. San Francisco's Japanese community, once rivaling Chinatown in size, never recovered.

Japan Center now occupies approximately six blocks at the bottom of the poverty-stricken Western Addition. It is less an ethnic community than a neatly manicured, relentlessly tidy shopping district. There are several fine hotels in the area along with shops and restaurants, all catering to tourists who pass through looking for a taste of the exotic and unusual.

The *gaki* resent the situation bitterly. They have their own ideas for the Great Leap Outward, but are far less anchored to San Francisco than their counterparts in the Quincunx. That said, they play the hand they've been dealt to great success.

San Francisco's Japanese population, although merely a fraction of its pre-World War II numbers, is quite affluent. More so, some willingly work with the *gaki* and their Yakuza associates. Almost all the Kuei-jin based out of Japan Center owe allegiance to House Genji. Setting up shop in North America is, in their eyes, simply the next step in bringing themselves fully into the modern age. The Japanese vampires, however, don't want to take over North America and replace American vampire culture with their own. The *gaki* want to insinuate themselves as seamlessly into American culture as possible.

The *Ukiyo* "floating world" *uji* holds that Japan was punished over the last century because it deserved to be, and that America thrived because it was equally deserving. The Kuei-jin of the *Ukiyo uji* came to San Francisco in the early '60s and blended in immediately. Their intent was not to impose Asian values on American Kindred, but to figure out what local Kindred were doing that engendered such success.

When the Quincunx vampires arrived *en masse*, the *gaki* maintained a low profile and aided the Chinese Kuei-jin only when unable to avoid the situation any longer. From the perspective of the Floating World *uji* vampires, the Quincunx ruins everything they worked so carefully to build.

The Quincunx assigned the *gaki* with patrolling Japan Center, and assumes they are at least as aggressive as the Mandarinate in keeping the native Kindred in line. Their assumption is incorrect. On the contrary, many *gaki* have allies among the Kindred (particularly the Ventrue and the Toreador) and must watch helplessly while the Quincunx, arrogant as always, undermine the peaceful inroads made by the *gaki* over the last four decades.

While the *gaki* do not tolerate Kindred feeding in Japan Center, they might, under the right circumstances and for the right price, offer them sanctuary. Neither the Quincunx nor of the Camarilla knows this. Once the information slips out, however, the shape of the New Promise Mandarinate will likely change in very fundamental ways.

THE TENDERLOIN

Wall Rating: 7

Not far from the successful Civic Center or Financial District is the Tenderloin, so named because it originally housed San Francisco's meatpacking industry. In the

modern nights, the Tenderloin is a slaughterhouse of an entirely different kind.

The district is a triangle bordered by Market, Larkin and O'Farrell Streets. It's the highest crime area in San Francisco. During the day the Tenderloin is relatively safe; people work there in offices, or shop or eat at some of the local restaurants and stores. At night, the neighborhood becomes stalking ground for nocturnal predators of all kinds, both mortal and immortal. Sleazy porn theatres and stores abound, along with prostitutes, drug-dealers and other natives of the night.

Naturally, the Tenderloin is a splendid hunting ground for vampires, which is the prime reason why the New Promise Mandarinate didn't turn it into an M-T Sector. It's too low-class for the vampires residing in Pacific Heights but too well suited for the kind of degenerate scum the Kuei-jin want penned in at Bayview and Sunset. In other words, it's off limits to Kindred, though poorly patrolled in actuality since the Kuei-jin have fairly little to do with the Tenderloin. They prefer safer and higher-class areas of the city, so Kindred capable of evading the Mandarinate's sweeps exist quite well in this district. Many of San Francisco's unaffiliated vampires established their havens in the Tenderloin, while most of the Sabbat vampires and the few remaining local anarchs are found here as well.

The Mandarinate's only point of interest here is the neighborhoods' Thai community, which owns and runs several restaurants that put the Tenderloin on epicurean maps. The Kuei-jin have not yet determined if the city's Thai community is large enough and devoted enough to their traditional ways for the Quincunx to assert power and presence. Still, any potential foothold in the city is valuable. The Mandarinate maintains a close eye on the district's Asian population, despite the fact that the Thais are more closely associated with the degenerate Golden Courts (an influence the Quincunx is uncertain they want invited into the city... though they may possess little choice).

The Camarilla is less than pleased about being denied access to the Tenderloin by the Quincunx. Many believe it is just another Cathayan ploy to annoy the Kindred, goading them into a mistake. There's also some concern about the Sabbat's activities in the area, which remain almost completely unsupervised. The Mandarinate makes little distinction between Kin-jin sects. They claim to deal with Sabbat troublemakers as they do any others, but they don't know the Cainites like the Camarilla does. The Kindred worry that any trouble the Sabbat causes may be blamed on Western vampires in general, worsening an already difficult situation. The Sabbat certainly hopes so.

Of course, Kindred working for the Quincunx also appreciate the Kuei-jin's mastery over shadow games and political intrigue. In fact, Van Nuys often wonders whether the Cloud Mandarins leave the Tenderloin untouched to draw in the city's seditious element and catch the lot of them in one net. The coming nights will tell.

HAIGHT-ASHBURY

Wall Rating: 6

Haight-Ashbury conjures images of hippie love-ins, tie-dye clothing and the world seen through a haze of marijuana smoke, but the home of Flower Power and the Summer of Love has changed over the years. It lost some of its innocence while retaining much of its energy and uniqueness.

The neighborhood's heart is the intersection of Haight and Ashbury Streets in the south-central portion of San Francisco. Haight Street is the main drag, filled with cafes and restaurants, bookstores, occult shops, tattoo parlors, record stores (some of which still sell actual records), curio shops, import businesses and, of course, the occasional head shop. Corporations bought out some of the businesses along Haight, but many remain as offbeat as they've always been. The scent of incense and exotic cooking fills the air, almost covering the smell of ganja that seems to permeate the entire neighborhood.

The proximity of Haight-Ashbury to the Castro means that Kindred are the most common predators in the area, particularly since the Kuei-jin don't care much for the Haight's "freaky" attitude. The Kuei-jin keep a close eye on Kindred wandering through, but their vigilance is less diligent here. It may be their distaste for the area, the proximity to Golden Gate Park (which lies at one end of Haight Street), the neighborhood's legendary relaxed atmosphere or some combination of the above.

The Tremere possess a particular interest in Haight-Ashbury because of the number of occult shops, and therefore potential ghouls and vassals, to be found there. The area's freewheeling spirit also drew the anarchs, but most of them moved on to the Tenderloin. The Kindred also know of some mortal sorcerers and magicians in the Haight, although they're difficult to track at the best of times; since the arrival of the Cathayans, many simply vanished into the woodwork. Still, they may be potential allies, if vampires find something to offer them in exchange for their aid.

SoMa (M-T SECTOR)

Wall Rating: 8

The city's second M-T Sector is in SoMa, short for South of Market (Street), which runs along the northwestern side. The sector also borders 2nd and 8th streets to the northeast and southwest and Brannan to the northwest and southeast. It includes the Greyhound bus station, Moscone Convention Center and many hotels, theaters and other amusements to keep potential vessels passing through.

Historically, the SoMa neighborhood was industrial rather than residential, and its history manifests in the building facades along its streets. Unlike the Victorian row houses characterizing most other San Francisco neighborhoods, SoMa's streets are cluttered by enormous, featureless warehouses and rehabbed factory buildings.

While SoMa hasn't actually been an industrial area in decades, it still maintains that feel. In recent years, many



of the district's buildings became nightclubs, sex clubs and offices for the dot-com boom. Since the Internet frenzy went bust, however, many of these buildings sit vacant, providing fertile incubating grounds for the city's social ills: drug manufacture and distribution, snuff film production and assorted gang-related crimes.

For Kindred who distinguish themselves in small ways in the Mandarinate's eyes, the SoMa M-T Sector provides a socially comfortable setting that is both close to the Kuei-jin power structure in Chinatown and easily monitored by representatives of the Quincunx. It lacks much in the way of power or prestige compared to Pacific Heights. On the other hand, SoMa is the hub of San Francisco's nightlife, with no fewer than forty bars or nightclubs in the area providing Kindred here with ample feeding resources.

The Kuei-jin presence around SoMa is notable. The resident Kindred are of high enough status to warrant surveillance, but not so influential that the Quincunx exposes them to the heavy squeeze of Pacific Heights. Most high-ranking Camarilla members, except for Prince Winder, reside here.

As an additional negative element to the SoMa Empty, local Tong activity is heavy. Many Tong members make a

hefty income for themselves and their Kuei-jin overseers by providing club-goers with all the drugs they want. This makes Kindred/Tong conflict in SoMa almost unavoidable, and the number of violent incidents between the two groups has increased steadily since the Quincunx established the sector.

While the Quincunx can't ask the Tongs to cease operations in one of their most lucrative business districts, they can't continually intervene on behalf of their Scarlet Screens either. The Kuei-jin initially told Kindred to ignore the Tong members and stay out of their way, but the Tongs took that as *carte blanche* to harrow the Kindred at every turn. This led to the deaths of eight Tong members in one night and the demotion of the city's Brujah scourge to Bayview. While the Kuei-jin still protect the Tongs nominally, the gangsters now know just how much that protection is worth if they antagonize the wrong vampire.

RICHMOND

Wall Rating: 7, as low as 5 in parts of Golden Gate Park at night.

Located on the western side of San Francisco, Golden Gate Park is a rectangular area with over a thousand acres of wooded and grass-covered land cut through by roads

and walking trails. The Presidio is a similar-sized park to the north, established around a former military fort. Sandwiched between them is the western San Francisco neighborhood of Richmond. They are also, in the modern nights, among the few portions of the city that Kindred forcibly retain, mostly through the efforts of two vampires, the Gangrel Mirko Mirkonen (see p. 108) and Gustavo Morales (see p. 109).

Golden Gate Park was established in the 1870s, but was little more than a long stretch of sand dunes at the time. Scotsman John McLaren, who was Superintendent of Parks from 1887 to 1943, made it his life's work to turn Golden Gate Park into a green and fertile place. Today it is home to hundreds of plant species. It features large wooded areas along with athletic fields, a golf course, two stadiums and several museums (including the Academy of Sciences).

Just north of Golden Gate Park and the Richmond district is the Presidio. It was originally a military stronghold, the site of the original Spanish fortress established in San Francisco before the U.S. Army turned it into a military base. Much of the area became part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in the 1970s; the military eventually decommissioned the base and turned its grounds over to the park as well. The park currently occupies some 1,480 acres and includes the old military base along with the southern end of the Golden Gate Bridge. It has various trails and a golf course.

Not long after the Kuei-jin took San Francisco by storm, Gangrel Mirko Mirkonen and Gustavo Morales took up residence in Golden Gate Park. Mirkonen is a seasoned warrior; he and his ally hunt and attempt to destroy any Kuei-jin violating the park's borders. After several Cathayans fell to their claws and fangs, the two Gangrel expanded their territory into the Presidio and savaged any Cathayans they encountered.

The Quincunx initially responded by sending in larger and larger scouting parties, but the outcome was the same each time. Either the party never saw the Kindred responsible, or they simply never returned. Later scouts found their predecessors' personal effects scattered in both parks. It was initially an embarrassment to the Quincunx that later became an unacceptable drain on their already-limited resources in San Francisco. Now, rather than waging constant warfare, the Mandarinate uses Bone Flower assassins to slip into the park. Their primary targets are the two Gangrel, but more often, they locate and destroy any rogue Kin-jin who believes the area safe for their kind. The Mandarinate tries isolating the two Gangrel from any potential allies, but if they strike at the root of the problem, so be it.

The Kuei-jin don't want to advertise the loss of the parks because it draws attention to their lack of troops. If the Camarilla perceives them as unable to hold the entire city, there may be those Kindred who see that as an invitation to test the existing boundaries the Kuei-jin imposed. For that reason alone the Quincunx has not made an issue of it — yet

— except to former Prince Van Nuys, whom they continually pressure to muzzle the loose cannon Gangrel.

Van Nuys, in turn, urges Prince Winder to invoke the right of destruction and send Camarilla Kindred to destroy the Gangrel. For her part, Prince Winder takes great joy in meeting with Van Nuys, then ignoring the Quincunx toady's every word. Still, the Camarilla does not want this ongoing conflict to become known either, lest other wayward Kindred attempt something similar and further disrupt the delicately balanced status quo. Camarilla efforts to contact Mirkonen and recruit him as a formal ally have failed so far.

Were it not for the residential neighborhood between the Golden Gate Park and the Presidio, the Kuei-jin could live without the parks easily, since they are largely empty by night (save for sleeping homeless people and gay men cruising for sex). Their point of contention is the Richmond district, which has an enormous Chinese population to which they want access — and cannot easily reach. For that reason alone, they feel the district should be theirs; and it galls them that it's not.

Meantime, knowledgeable Kindred who are unafraid to venture beyond their assigned sector partake of the veritable feast that the parks provide, so long as they avoid the Bone Flowers patrolling the region. They're also perfectly content to keep their feeding grounds secret. If word of the parks' veritable font of vitae escaped, every Lick in the city would flock here for a bite. That might anger the parks' Gangrel "liberators," provoke the already-irritated Kuei-jin and antagonize the Camarilla, all in one fell swoop. Thus, those Kindred taking advantage of the situation, mostly from the nearby Castro and Sunset Empties, feed well and enjoy the brief respite from under the Cathayans' thumb. Only the random haven inspections keep those Kindred who know about the parks from relocating here, though a slow influx of Gangrel could also spark turf wars for Kindred feeding rights.

In the recent nights, Gangrel have begun to slip through the Kuei-jin net, entering the city and Richmond. Invariably, Mirkonen and Morales are Gangrel first and foremost, and thus loyal to their clanmates above all. The Kindred are well aware that their feeding prospects dwindle with each new Gangrel arrival. A few of the Camarilla's vampires have considered betraying the so-called Gangrel Pipeline to the Kuei-jin, thus putting the influx of Gangrel to a stop.

The pipeline in question is a dump truck transport company contracted on behalf of Parks and Services. The transport company brings fresh, rich earth and soil into the parks once a week from various farms in the south, supplementing any soil erosion in the local parks. The drivers also serve as Mirkonen's and Morales' ghouls, who stop at prearranged sites to pick up potential passengers. Any Gangrel passenger, whether by covering themselves under the tarp-covered dirt or through Earth Meld, hides in the dump truck soil while the vehicle is in transit through San Francisco. Because the transport company conveniently arrives near quitting time, the truck is kept

LOST TREASURES

Recently the San Francisco Asian Arts Museum moved from its previous location inside Golden Gate Park into the Civic Center's refurbished Library Building. Rumor is rife among Kindred that the Kuei-jin encouraged, if not inspired, the move to transfer the museum and its artifacts from the contested area of the park. The collection is a matter of moderate interest to the Cathayans, particularly to Tremere renegade Wan Zhu, who was a respected museum curator in life (see p. 88). It may contain items of spiritual if not occult value to the Kuei-jin, and they strongly believe in honoring and protecting their cultural heritage.

The other rumor regarding the museum is that some of its collection went missing in the move to the Civic Center, and that the Kuei-jin want the thieves. If this is true, the missing artifacts haven't surfaced yet, though all the city's factions keep watch for them. In addition to Mirkonen, the most likely suspects are the Nosferatu and Tremere. Both the tunnel-rats and warlocks claim they know nothing about the theft, but that doesn't satisfy the Quincunx.

at the Parks and Services garage in Golden Gate Park until the next morning. This allows the Gangrel to slip out directly into "safe territory."

The one group who would benefit from disseminating the knowledge that the parks and Richmond district remain hostile to Kuei-jin is the Sabbat. Whether any of that sect's vampires have stumbled onto that knowledge yet remains unknown. Given that the Sabbat mostly stay in the Tenderloin, in the opposite corner of the city, it's unlikely; information does have a way of traveling through strange channels, though....

NORTH BEACH

Wall Rating: 8

San Francisco's North Beach area lies between Russian Hill and Chinatown with San Francisco Bay to the north and east. It's one of the oldest parts of the city, dating back to the first settlements, but it hasn't had a beach in over a century. The city filled in the inlet between Russian Hill and Telegraph Hill to allow for new construction. Part of the landfill included the hulks of Gold Rush era ships abandoned in the bay, now a permanent part of San Francisco's foundation. Much of the expansion in North Beach includes office buildings and more space for the growing Financial District.

Along the seaside edge of North Beach runs San Francisco's famous wharf-lined Embarcadero Street, including Fisherman's Wharf and Pier 39. These two locales now serve as shopping havens for tourists, and bustle with people at all hours of the day and well into the evening. The bay and Alcatraz boat tours depart and

return from the wharves, along with various pleasure craft moored there. The city's fishing industry, however, shrinks steadily, owing to the bay's contamination and the rising dockside fees. This is partially why the waterfront is now more of a tourist attraction.

The Kuei-jin control North Beach for one primary reason: it is a secure and viable avenue in and out of the city. Since the Tremere established their wards around San Francisco (see p. 130 for details), water and air travel are the only safe (and public) routes for Kuei-jin entering and leaving, other than making their way south through Camarilla controlled San Jose. Therefore the New Promise Mandarinate ensures the docks remain under their control, while also keeping a close eye on all traffic and watching for Kin-jin or *akuma* trying to enter (or leave).

North Beach also includes Telegraph Hill, now something of a monument to the Mandarinate's genesis. Telegraph Hill is an exclusive neighborhood on a steep hill overlooking the bay. At its top is Coit Tower, a monument to San Francisco's firefighters built by a grant provided by socialite Lillie Hitchcock Coit in 1933. Coit Tower was the site of the historic meeting between the Kuei-jin of the New Promise Mandarinate and representatives of the Camarilla that local anarchs disrupted. The failure of that peace mission led to the Kuei-jin invasion of the city, although cynical Kindred believe it would have happened regardless the outcome.

THE CASTRO AND NOE VALLEY (M-T SECTOR)

Wall Rating: 8 during the day, 7 at night

At the bottom of Market Street is the Castro, the world's foremost Mecca for gays and lesbians over the last twenty-five years. Consequently, when the Kuei-jin broke the city into M-T Sectors, they made sure the Kindred received that neighborhood. The Kuei-jin's deeply traditional nature includes many homophobic attitudes, so in their eyes, giving the Camarilla the Castro is a subtle slight.

The Camarilla, however, is delighted. The enormous influx of gay and lesbian tourists who visit each month to buy rainbow flags and witty T-shirts earns the Castro the nickname "the cash flow;" any financial advantage the Kuei-jin extends to the Camarilla, for whatever reasons, is welcome. The district also has some of the liveliest nightlife in the city, allowing Kindred to operate more freely and with fewer difficulties in feeding.

The Castro actually comprises the neighborhoods of Noe Valley, Eureka Valley and most of the Mission District. Bounded to the north by Duboce Street, to the south by 26th street, to the east by Douglas and to the west by Potrero, this is by far the largest Munificent Transitioning Sector. It contains four parks including Buena Vista Park (a popular cruising ground more commonly known as Boner Vista), giving Kindred access to a wide array of feeding locations.

Of the five M-T Sectors, the Castro is firmly in the middle of social rankings and by far the most heavily populated with Kindred. While assignment here is the Quincunx's attempt at a slight, this is where most Kindred actually want a haven. Nobody places any political expectations on them here, nor is it particularly punitive. So long as they comport themselves appropriately, stay in their M-T and don't foment rebellion, this sector's Kindred enjoy relative autonomy for no other reason than the Quincunx's associated stigma with the neighborhood and the Kuei-jin's discomfort when visiting. The havens available in the Castro are modest compared to those in SoMa, but the streets (and frequently alleys) teem with prey at all hours of the night.

The Castro's social environment is the loosest of the five Munificent Transitioning Sectors. Burdened neither by the Byzantine nature of the more privileged sectors nor the hazards of the two more punitive Empties, the Kindred assigned here exist much as they did before, albeit with less freedom of movement and supposedly curtailed feeding options.

The Toreador are particularly comfortable here, thanks to abundant arts patrons and freewheeling decadents. The Tremere remain well represented in the Castro and relocated their chantry to this district. Luna Demian herself resides in the chantry, eschewing the political games of Pacific Heights and SoMa in favor of the relative isolation of the Castro (and its closer proximity to Haight-Ashbury). Finally, there's Prince Winder who exists here by the Quincunx's so-called magnanimity. While the Kuei-jin believed their choice in Winder's haven a clever insult, the Prince is closer to the Kindred as a whole than any other vampire residing in Pacific Heights.

SUNSET (M-T SECTOR)

Wall Rating: 8

The Quincunx uses the Sunset M-T as a warning, relocating Kindred who have drawn the Kuei-jin's ire in small ways. Punishable actions that might land someone in Sunset includes engaging in visible pro-Camarilla activism, being caught too frequently outside one's assigned M-T Sector (Castro, SoMa and Pacific Heights), showing insufficient respect for any Kuei-jin, or even referring to the Quincunx as "invaders."

The Sunset M-T Sector is the smallest of the five. To the north and south lie Lincoln Way and Taraval Street, respectively, while to the west and east lie 41st and 24th Streets. Unlike the higher-class Empties, this M-T does not contain any major tourist, transit, or nightclub districts, making it a more challenging area in which to feed. Just two blocks east of this sector is the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. The Kuei-jin patrol the intervening block relentlessly, looking for Kindred trying to prey on the music students. The Kindred assigned here all agree the Cathayans deliberately drew these boundaries to tantalize and tempt Kindred into trouble.

Far from everything and so patently "white-bread" that the Kuei-jin stick out, the Sunset district, more than

anything else, is a place of enforced banality. The sector is not large; the middle-class residential neighborhoods do not have a thriving nightlife, forcing the local Kindred to compete for relatively scarce resources.

Reports of violence, an unexpected rise in anemia cases and increases in suspected gang activity force the police and health officials to scrutinize the district more closely. This concerns the Camarilla's leaders, since they hope to weather the current situation and retake San Francisco with no breaches of the Masquerade.

As with both of the more prison-like M-Ts, the hawks of the Quincunx watch the periphery of the Sunset closely, intent on curtailing the freedoms of San Francisco's less desirable Kindred. The Quincunx carefully logs every infraction against its regulations, which it then cites as evidence against the Kindred population in general.

Within this Empty, the mood is anxious. Most Kindred assigned here know what brought them to Sunset in the first place. Some do not. In theory, those exhibiting a pattern of behaving in accordance with the Quincunx's policies stand a chance of earning reassignment to a better M-T Sector. In reality, it is unlikely anything short of abject collusion with the Kuei-jin would better the situation of any Kindred sent here. Besides, most vampires reassigned from Sunset to SoMa instantly become an object of suspicion by the Camarilla's more savvy representatives.

Sunset's Kindred are the most divorced from the city's proceedings. Some see their assignment to Sunset as further proof that the Kuei-jin are simply evil bastards. Others take their appointment here as a sign that perhaps it's time to acknowledge the new status quo and make amends with the city's new masters before the Quincunx sends them to Bayview. The rest see their relocation here as proof that it's time to leave San Francisco for a city where the Camarilla holds sway, leaving the Kuei-jin perfectly happy to see them go. It only helps nudge the balance of power a further in their favor.

Malkavians constitute a large portion of Sunset's vampires, along with the few Nosferatu who did not flee the surface world for San Francisco's extensive tunnel system (see p. 52). More staunch Camarilla supporters exist here than in any other M-T Sector; most were reassigned to Sunset because of their loyalty. Many of the less politically savvy Ventruue wind up here as well, far from their beloved Financial District.

BAYVIEW (M-T SECTOR)

Wall Rating: 9

When Kindred mention the Bayview M-T, it is with the same trepidation mortals speak of life sentences in MaxSec prisons. Those vampires who earn the true antipathy of the Kuei-jin receive relocation to the Bayview Sector—what Kindred call "the emptiest of the Empties." A step away from execution, this area comprises the Hunters Point and Bayview neighborhoods. It's the last stop for Western vampires in San Francisco. If a vampire

assigned to Bayview falls further out of Kuei-jin favor, the Mandarinate sends him to Final Death, as visibly as possible. This serves to remind rebels that San Francisco remains under Quincunx control, and they rule it as leniently or as harshly as they see fit.

Many of those assigned to Bayview are high generation neonates who simply lack the status or resources to either leave San Francisco or earn reassignment to a better Empty. Many Brujah wind up in Bayview because their short tempers and gruff mannerisms epitomize the Kuei-jin's stereotypes of "barbaric Kin-jin."

Once a run-down sector of San Francisco, Bayview and Hunter's Point were "improved" when the city tore down public housing and low-income neighborhoods to build a sprawling genetic research industrial park. By day, an army of underpaid lab techs and the scientists commanding them swarm the area. By night, however, the entire complex clears out; the compound's grounds are as sterile as its laboratories. For this reason, a vampire is lucky if she catches a lab drone working late because the other options for feeding — the occasional (strangely anemic) security guard, delivery driver, or imprudent cab driver — are sparse. Without the Herd Background, those Kindred assigned to Hunters Point go hungry more nights than not, and many risk venturing beyond the M-T for feeding purposes.

It is worse than that, however. For years, the navy maintained a base on Hunter's Point. The slow pollution and corruption of the Dragon Nest located here tainted the region both physically and spiritually, creating the beginnings of what the Cathayans call a "broken mirror," like a sore on the surface of the spirit world. Kuei-jin who venture beyond the Wall (a difficult proposition, given its local rating is never any lower than 8, and often 10 during the day) find that the Yomi World stretches its pull out over the spirit world. Worse still, the spiritual corruption manifests in the park's genetic research. Suffice it to say that vampires are not the most disturbing residents of the Bayview M-T Sector. Not all those unfortunate Kindred who disappear from here fall victim to the Kuei-jin....

Yosemite Avenue, 3rd Street and Amador Street hem in Bayview District on three sides, while the bay's shoreline to the east closes the box. This M-T is near both 3Com Park (formerly known as Candlestick Park) and Bayview park, but the Kuei-jin deliberately chose to exclude those areas, making feeding that much more difficult as a punitive gesture. The Mandarinate has Tongs and some Kuei-jin patrolling the intervening streets looking for Kindred feeding out of their assigned territory.

One element that makes Bayview such a nightmare is that the Sabbat settled in quite comfortably. Those Camarilla Kindred who report the Sabbat's presence to the Quincunx are, for the most part, ignored. They can't be bothered discerning one barbarian tribe from another. While Prince Winder knows Sabbat exist in San Francisco, there's not much she can do about it and, so long as the Sabbat maintain a low profile, she has more important matters to worry about.

Perhaps more horrifying than the Sabbat, however, is the presence of a *wu* of *akuma* in the service of Mikaboshi, Lord of the Wicked City. These demon-ridden Kuei-jin haunted the streets of San Francisco since before the New Promise Mandarinate's arrival, and the conflict between the Quincunx and the Camarilla serves their master well. The city's vampires know them only through rumors and exaggerated stories, but they are all too real, and Bayview is only a small sampling of their work. See Chapter Four and Five for more information on the Hollow City *wu*.

THE SAN FRANCISCO UNDERGROUND

While San Francisco's residents hear of the so-called "Shanghai tunnels" running under the city, only the Nosferatu truly know them. This vast network of passageways, transit tunnels, utility ducts, connected sub-basements and fissures in the earth run, in some areas, as deep as two hundred feet beneath the city streets.

Dating as far back as the late 19th century, planners in San Francisco never saw the need to run pipes, cables and transit routes *over* the city's bumpy topography when they could run them *through* the hills. Using a myriad of techniques, San Franciscans dug, bore and dynamited shortcuts through the inconvenient geography; some for pipes, others for traffic or mass-transit.

Between 1904 and 1965, San Francisco started and then abandoned no fewer than 15 different tunnel projects. The city covered up these partial tunnels and everyone ignored or long since forgot about them — except the Nosferatu. As the Sewer Rats well know, every major tunnel also spawns tens or hundreds of adjoining passages for drainage, ventilation, lighting, etc., making even short tunnels a wealth of hidden passageways. In typical paranoid Nosferatu fashion, the sewer rats hid, reinforced and booby-trapped many of these tunnels to dissuade curious trespassers.

When the Kuei-jin arrived in San Francisco in force, the majority of local Nosferatu simply retreated back into the tunnels, closing the secret doors and entrances behind them. Since then, they scurry beneath the streets, the only Kindred in the city with true freedom of movement. Much to their frustration, the Kuei-jin find there is little or nothing they can do about it currently.

The Kuei-jin presence is not large enough, nor does it have the networks of contacts or even the Scarlet Screen Tong members necessary to ferret out the Nosferatu from their many hidey-holes. Once their numbers in San Francisco increase, the Kuei-jin intend to deal with the infestation of tunnel-rats. Until then, however, they've made do with security precautions safeguarding their havens from entry from below.

Although not many Nosferatu exist in San Francisco (though their numbers rise), those here are solid Camarilla supporters who enjoy their soaring prestige since they offer something other Kindred cannot: safe space free of Kuei-jin interference. Prince Winder and other Camarilla representatives asked Kokopell Mana, the *kachina* of the Nosferatu, to provide space for occasional meetings so

Kindred can speak freely without fear of upsetting the delicately balanced tower of swords that is San Francisco. Kokopell Mana is an ardent supporter of Prince Winder and has gladly complied. She would even offer the Nosferatu's services for free, but the other Sewer Rats constantly entreaty her to "barter."

The space provided by the Nosferatu for these discussions is beneath Mt. Sutro, in a tunnel begun in 1914 and then abandoned and covered over. Those few Kindred who know of its whereabouts call the space Downtown Atlantis; it is Prince Winder's favorite place to meet with other Camarilla Kindred. Not only do the Nosferatu provide the space, they also vouch for its security from surveillance devices. Needless to say, neither Jochen Van Nuys nor any of his allies or coterie know about Downtown Atlantis. As far as Prince Winder and her primogen are concerned, telling Van Nuys about this location is tantamount to conducting a guided tour for the entire Quincunx leadership.

The other service the Nosferatu provide is their so-called "Underground Railroad," which allows other Kindred to move around the city (in and out of the M-T Sectors) with relative freedom... for a price. The Nosferatu dole out this service sparingly and only to trusted customers, but provide it free of monetary cost to Prince Winder's

and the primogen's emissaries. Needless to say, the Nosferatu and Kokopell Mana the *kachina* gain boons by the handful, though whether they will possess the opportunity to cash them in remains to be seen.

Other Kindred must pay what they can, but the tunnel-rats are shrewd traders. The Nosferatu blindfold their "passengers," assigning them a guide through the tunnels to ensure the visitors don't discover the location of important passages. The Nosferatu claim this prevents their secrets from falling into the Mandarinate's hands, but the truth is they don't care to share their underground monopoly with any outsiders. Some Kindred grouse about having to trust the Nosferatu, who take great delight in their discomfort. For those looking for a secure means of traveling across the city, however, there aren't many better options.

The tunnels and passages of the underground figure prominently in Prince Winder's strategies take San Francisco back. For now, though, they are simply one domain where Kindred remain relatively free of Quincunx control.

OUTSIDE THE CITY

Although the New Promise Mandarinate maintains a fairly stable grip on San Francisco proper, the area



surrounding the city is presently outside the Kuei-jin's reach. The Tremere-emplaced wards prevent the Kuei-jin from leaving in any large numbers, containing them in San Francisco for the time being. This allows the Camarilla to reinforce their positions around the Bay Area, in preparation for future conflicts with the Cathayans.

The Kuei-jin, however, have few reasons for leaving San Francisco aside from helping their allies consolidate Los Angeles, and are more concerned about solidifying their grip on the city at the moment. Still, there is more activity in the area around San Francisco than in quite some time.

THE ROCK: ALCATRAZ

Alcatraz was never no good for nobody.

— Frank Wathernam, last inmate to leave Alcatraz (March 21, 1963)

Wall Rating: 7

The rocky island Alcatraz is the one area outside San Francisco proper under the sway of the Kuei-jin. With their mobility limited by the Tremere wards, the Cathayans took measures to ensure the water routes in and out of the Bay Area remain under their control. Alcatraz (and nearby Angel Island) are way stations of sorts for Kuei-jin entering the city. The island is under the supervision of the federal government, however, and is also home to various spirits, so the Kuei-jin must tread carefully.

The island's name derives from the Spanish *Alcatrazes*, or "pelicans," because it was originally the nesting place for sea birds. Now in the hands of the national park service it becomes so again, with many different species of gulls, pelicans and other birds coming to nest in and around the crumbling prison walls.

The island originally held a military fort to defend the bay, which was converted into a military prison during the Civil War. It remained so until the 1930s, when Alcatraz was transferred to the U.S. Justice Department and made a civilian penitentiary. Warden James Johnston decided Alcatraz's purpose was not rehabilitation, but punishment of prisoners. He instituted draconian regulations. "You are entitled to food, clothing, shelter and medical attention. Anything else you get is a privilege," said the prison's Rules and Regulations. Alcatraz's inmates included the infamous Al Capone, George "Machine Gun" Kelly and Robert Stroud, the so-called "Birdman of Alcatraz" (who actually kept birds in the previous prison in which he was incarcerated, but none here).

"The Rock" was said to be inescapable, although there were some attempts. In 1946 a breakout resulted in a bloody siege where several guards and prisoners died. The most famous flight happened in 1962, when three prisoners (Frank Lee Morris, John William Anglin and his brother Clarence Anglin) did actually escape the island. They disappeared and were never seen again, but it remains unknown if they made it to freedom or drowned trying to swim across the bay. Not long after the famous prison-break, the federal government shut down Alcatraz, shipping the prisoners off to other facilities.

In 1969, a group of ninety Native Americans led by Richard Oakes occupied Alcatraz and claimed it as Indian

territory. They offered to buy the island from the US government for \$24 worth of beads and cloth, the same amount given to their people for a similar-sized area of land. The government refused, but the Indian occupation lasted for nineteen months before government troops finally made their way onto the island and removed the last few hangers-on (most of the others left of their own free will months before). A few years later, Alcatraz was turned over to the National Parks Service and opened as a tourist attraction.

The Kindred inhabitants of San Francisco never paid much attention to Alcatraz. It was simply a crumbling prison on a windswept rock out in the bay. Its only real use was drawing thousands of tourists to the area each year, providing some prey for Kindred walking along the waterfront at night. This made the Rock well suited to the needs of the New Promise Mandarinate. An agreement negotiated with the Golden Court of the Dragon King of the Sea (see p. 74) permitted the Kuei-jin to use the island during their initial incursions into the city, and they have since made Alcatraz a stopover for Kuei-jin leaving Frisco by water.

Kuei-jin practiced in Treading the Thrashing Dragon's Tail (**Kindred of the East**, p. 113) can run across the surface of San Francisco Bay to the island and back in the course of a night. Otherwise, they can run out to the island and from there to the beautiful Marin Headlands, Angel Island, or elsewhere. The New Promise Mandarinate maintains a small number of Kuei-jin on the island to assist visitors and ward off intruders, but Alcatraz's best defenses are its isolation and the trouble incurred in reaching it.

One difficulty Kuei-jin face on the island comes from restless ghosts in the Yin World surrounding the old prison. Necromancers hope to speak with these shades and perhaps offer them the assistance of the Mandarinate in exchange for their cooperation. It appears the old prison is something of a shelter against the storm raging in the Yin World, so Bone Flower Kuei-jin believe it is likely that other ghosts and spirits will find their way there over time; in either case, the Mandarinate must be prepared.

Gaining control of Alcatraz (or securing the assistance of its ghostly inhabitants) might give the Camarilla an edge in hemming in the Kuei-jin and in cutting potential reinforcements from overseas. Still, the island is not one of the major fronts in the Camarilla-Mandarinate conflict.

NORTH: WOLVES AND WILDS

The San Francisco Peninsula terminates in the cold waters of San Francisco Bay. The Golden Gate Bridge is the only way to cross over into Marin County by car and, unfortunately for Kuei-jin, they cannot travel across it or the two other bridges off the peninsula because of Clan Tremere's machinations.

Once across the bridge, civilization rapidly surrenders to open green space, ending San Francisco's cosmopolitan ambiance. There is not another city of any significance to the Kuei-jin (i.e., one with a significant Asian community) until Portland, Oregon, over a thousand miles to the north. The intervening territory comprises large tracts of sparsely

populated land — forest preserves, farmland and state and national parks — that are naturally hostile to the Asian vampires. Of course, the martially inclined Camarilla has made it all the more deadly through strategic countermeasures including sentries in various towns and ghouled law enforcement personnel supervising the various thoroughfares.

Why the Kuei-jin might want it: Having very effectively routed the Kin-jin's efforts to enter mainland China via their foothold in Hong Kong, the Kuei-jin recognize how insignificant one small chunk of land can be, even if it is a major city. Ideally, the Kuei-jin would like to link their holdings in Vancouver and San Francisco along an occupied corridor of control (including Seattle and possibly Portland as well). Doing so, while immensely difficult, gives them a potent base of operations from which to make headway into the rest of the continent.

What stands in their way: Between San Francisco and Portland (and again between Portland-Seattle and Seattle-Vancouver) lie vast expanses of rural and semi-rural wilderness, woodlands and farmlands. With only a handful of exceptions, the region's werewolf population is greater than almost anywhere else in the world. The Kuei-jin already sent, and lost, several Thrashing Dragon and Bone Flower "peace envoys" to the Lupines. While the werewolves hate Kindred, the Western bloodsuckers are a foe they fought for literal millennia. On the other hand, they regard Kuei-jin as a new menace and another sign of impending calamity. To worsen matters, the Lupines know Asian lumber interests deforested large tracts of the Far East, and are currently doing the same in South America through proxies. The Lupines don't want the same problems arising here through the invasion. As such, the xenophobic werewolves reserve a particular distrust for the Kuei-jin and attack them on sight.

For most Kuei-jin, however, the point is moot. They rarely worry about seeing a werewolf because the Camarilla's crusade to turn the land around San Francisco into a "Cathayan-Free Zone" effectively limits the passage of Lupines... supposedly. The Camarilla has fair influence in and around the vineyard country to the north of San Francisco, with its expensive estates and exclusive wineries. The Camarilla takes steps to maintain their influence here by ghoulng more families, and keeps a close watch for any signs of Cathayan incursions. In particular, they watch for Cathayans who might arrive from the north and try reaching San Francisco by water. Thus far there haven't been any such attempts, but the Camarilla's s hounds remain vigilant nonetheless.

EAST: HOSTILE NATIVES

Across the bay from San Francisco lies Oakland, slightly to the north of which is Berkeley. The two combined form the core of what folks typically call the East Bay (which, by the most expansive definitions, runs from Richmond at the opening of San Pablo Bay all the way down to the town of San Leandro).

The East Bay has had its own Prince for several decades; the same one, in fact. Until recently, Prince Amanda Koller was so thoroughly overshadowed by the would-be luminaries controlling the gem of San Francisco that even those Camarilla members specialized in intelligence were uncertain of her ambitions and loyalties. Now Prince Koller has the opportunity to demonstrate her diligence and cooperation to the Camarilla and the Inner Circle. She's eager to do so, since her previous support of Jochen Van Nuys makes her motives suspect to some in the sect.

Prince Koller vocally supports Prince Winder and the efforts to reclaim San Francisco from the Cathayans ... but not *too* quickly. She knows that a Camarilla San Francisco means less prestige and attention focused on the East Bay. Her domain is now haven for Kindred who fled the city, but don't want to venture too far (given the hazards of traveling in the Lupine-controlled rural areas). That makes Prince Koller a heroine of sorts to some Kindred, earning her considerable boons in exchange for sheltering homeless vampires.

Never arrogantly ambitious before, Amanda Koller realizes she likes the taste of power she's been given. She remains staunchly loyal to the Camarilla, but she wouldn't mind if Sara Anne Winder spectacularly failed to overcome the New Promise Mandarinate while still dealing it a crippling blow. Just enough so that someone else, say the Prince of a nearby domain, could move in, win a victory for the Camarilla and perhaps become Prince for the *entire* Bay Area.

Why the Kuei-jin might want it: At its most ambitious the Quincunx might — *might* — want to expand east as far as the East Bay, but not much beyond Oakland and Berkeley. There is nothing farther inland of appeal to the Kuei-jin on any level. Even the East Bay's Asian community is limited by Kuei-jin standards.

What stands in their way: The most obvious obstacles to marching east are the warded bridges and monitored waterways (though once the Kuei-jin decide to bring the wards down, it heralds a full-scale invasion). Then there are the vigilant Kin-jin of the East Bay, who are far more prepared for an assault than San Francisco's vampires were. Backed by the Camarilla, they will put up a stiff resistance.

Additionally, the farther east one ventures, the weaker the Asian clout becomes. While most of North America's West Coast has a relatively large Asian population, that presence dissipates almost completely even ten miles inland. By the time one reaches the small, very white cities of Concord, Walnut Creek, or San Ramon, it is difficult — if not impossible — for the Kuei-jin to pass unnoticed. Only those Bone Flowers and Rootless Trees adept at such tricks can effectively disguise themselves as Westerners. Those few Kuei-jin originating in the Philippines sometimes pass themselves off as Hispanic thanks to their common Spanish base, but unless they speak sans accent, that too can be problematic.

A far more likely approach, one the Kuei-jin take, is sending the occasional spy over into the East Bay (with the

PROJECT: CROSSHAIRS

Under the direction of Luna Demian, the Tremere chantries in Sacramento and Las Vegas, two cities not under immediate threat of Kuei-jin invasion, reorganized into full-time research chantries where the Warlocks take captured Asian vampires for... study.

At the suggestion of Martin Franckel, this endeavor was given the title Project: Crosshairs. Among the program's first fruits was the discovery that Cathayans cannot be blood-bound. That setback was counterbalanced, however, by the creation of the powerful Ward versus Cathayans, which the Kindred seemingly put to good use in the Ventrue's CFZ campaign (see p. 39 for details). While there is much the Tremere still don't know about Cathayan origins and physiology, some of the clan's best experimental Thaumaturgists look for weaknesses in their new enemies; their research is fruitful.

Prince Winder observed that Cathayans appear either unwilling or unable to Embrace those outside of Asian extraction. By contrast, the Camarilla has the strategic advantage of being able and willing to Embrace anyone, including ethnic Asians who could, with some effort and training in the right Disciplines, masquerade as Cathayans. The Camarilla waits for Cathayans of Caucasian descent to show up, but given recent discoveries, they consider this highly unlikely.

Project: Crosshairs' investigators recently uncovered some other astounding findings as well. By nearly exsanguinating a captured Cathayan and feeding her blood to a mortal, the Cathayan's blood created neither blood bond nor ghoul. When given to a dying mortal, the mortal did not take the Embrace. Regent Demian believes the process may either require consent on the part of the Kuei-jin or the Embrace may not be the mechanism by which Cathayans "procreate."

This windfall of information, however, remains the privilege of a handful of upper echelon Tremere, Prince Winder and the Inner Circle. The reason for their reticence

in sharing this information is two-fold. For starters, the Kuei-jin method of genesis remains unknown, and the Inner Circle is unsure if it faces an opponent who can breed like a disease, if the Embrace is a seasonal, celestial or ritual affair, or if Kuei-jin simply appear. Until they understand this matter fully, the Inner Circle will not launch a dedicated campaign against the Cathayans.

Secondly, the Camarilla's elders fear that if neonates discover the Kuei-jin do not Embrace normally, they may assume this a sign of weakness and partake of mass Embraces to generate instant armies against the Kuei-jin. The Inner Circle is horrified by the possibility of neonates partaking in Sabbat-inspired techniques to win wars and endanger the Masquerade. So, for the time being, the vampires in the know remain silent, but the matter of the Embrace is just another difference that makes the Cathayans seem absolutely alien to the Camarilla's more xenophobic members.

For the moment, Prince Winder ponders exactly how to apply this information. On one hand, the sooner she ousts the Cathayans from the city, the better. On the other hand, there's a certain strategic advantage to ensuring the Kuei-jin sufficiently weaken the anarchs, allowing the Camarilla to sweep in and retake Los Angeles once the Cathayan menace is eliminated.

In the meantime, Camarilla Kindred continue sending captured Cathayans to Project: Crosshairs for use as guinea pigs. The chantries involved in Project: Crosshairs become the two most frequently requested assignments by transferring Tremere. The opportunity for experimentation combined with the recognition from serving in an important capacity during wartime means gaining clan prestige is far easier here than most other places. Luna Demian is only accepting the most talented applicants and requesting more Cathayans for her experiments. With enough subjects, who knows what other fascinating facts the Tremere may discover about the Cathayans?

assistance of Wan Zhu's Writ of Protected Passage, see p. 130) to monitor the Camarilla's activities. These Kuei-jin (nearly always Bone Flowers or Rootless Trees) gather information and take the opportunity to sow dissent among the gathered Kin-jin in East Bay. Such actions might include spying on a vampire and arranging that his enemy receive the information or breaking into a haven and leaving behind incriminating evidence that frames someone else. This hinders the Kindred from unifying and aiding Camarilla efforts in retaking the city. Such "random acts of violence" also support the Mandarinate's need to maintain control over the city to "prevent such trouble from spreading to San Francisco."

SOUTH: THE SILICON CITADEL

The San Francisco Peninsula extends roughly forty miles south of the city before it rejoins the mainland.

Although the peninsula is never wider than thirty miles, it is dramatically divided. The peninsula's western and eastern lengths are as different as Yin and Yang. Small tourist towns, rocky cliffs, beaches, grassland and the San Francisco State Fish and Wildlife Refuge occupy 75% of the peninsula closest to the Pacific Ocean. With the exception of the occasional hardy Gangrel, very few vampires find much allure here given the looming threat of Lupine attacks.

Both Kindred and Kuei-jin occasionally use the rocky beaches along the peninsula's western side for discreet nighttime arrivals or departures, usually to avoid the watchful eyes around San Francisco's waterfront. Such a travel method has its own risks, of course, particularly with Lupines in the area. Otherwise, neither side has much interest in this region.

The peninsula's eastern quarter, on the bay side, is a five-to-ten-mile wide corridor extending from San Francisco

to San Jose fifty miles to the south. It comprises what people commonly call Silicon Valley, the immensely rich center of the world's computer industry. On paper, San Francisco is a discrete municipal entity. In point of fact, it is simply the glittering capstone in an unbroken megalopolis that extends south through no fewer than fourteen smaller cities and terminates in the San Jose metropolitan area.

Why the Kuei-jin might want it: There is no question that the Kuei-jin want San Jose. With their near-conquest of San Francisco, invading San Jose allows the Quincunx control over one of the most affluent and effectual metropolitan areas in the world. It is also a move toward establishing a corridor of power that extends down the coast to Los Angeles.

As an additional incentive, San Jose's Kin-jin population is oddly low for a city of its size. Most vampires in the region, it seems, prefer stalking the more glamorous San Francisco, and that makes San Jose an easy target.

That, however, is not the only appeal. In the '70s, San Jose was the resettling ground for thousands of Vietnamese refugees; the ancestors believe the Asian presence is large enough to support a self-renewing population of Kuei-jin. There is, however, a problem.

What stands in their way: In the over thirty years since coming to America, San Jose's Vietnamese population has done everything in its power to assume an American identity. With the exception of pho noodle houses and a few small community organizations, San Jose's Asian population is thoroughly Westernized.

The generations born in America forsook their parents' ways as "stodgy" and "antiquated" and enthusiastically dove into the MTV, Taco Bell and Western consumer culture. While these subsequent generations are ethnically Asian, they don't have enough connection to the Middle Kingdom to generate new Kuei-jin, which weakens the Quincunx's enthusiasm for San Jose considerably.

Then, of course, there's the Camarilla. San Jose's Ventrue Prince Allison Noyes is as staunch a conservative as can be found in the Camarilla. Her supporters describe her as unswervingly loyal and generous to excess. Her opponents call her the cruelest bitch this side of a Sabbat interrogator. While it is true her opposition frequently disappears, San Jose's vampires grow accustomed to the order and peace brought about by her firm control... they're almost complacent.

Unlike those cities where primogen councils change on an almost weekly basis, San Jose's primogen has remained the same for over a decade. When the Gangrel left the Camarilla, Prince Noyes asked the Gangrel primogen to continue acting as such to represent his clan-members residing in nearby parks and forest preserves. To her credit, he obliged.

To complicate matters for the Kuei-jin, the Toreador primogen Binh Nguyen and Gangrel scourge Joseph Thuc Vu (both of Vietnamese extraction) harbor a hatred of Kuei-jin that some say borders on rabid. While these two stalwart Camarilla supporters supply their sect with any information they possess on the Kuei-jin, their information is tainted from years of fighting Vietnam's Green Snake *wu*, an enemy they don't understand. Nguyen and Thuc Vu already told the Tremere that Kuei-jin blood doesn't

blood bond anyone, but the Tremere still double-checked their facts. Conversely, Thuc Vu also claims the Kuei-jin may originate from Zao-lat, who he believes is Saulot. This claim is further exacerbated by Kuei-jin practitioners of the Chi'iu Muh Discipline, which generates a third eye on the practitioner's forehead. Needless to say, the Tremere were exceedingly unhappy upon discovering this, and now pursue this potential avenue of investigation.

DRAGON NESTS AND FENG SHUI

Chinese geomancy is called *feng shui*, meaning "wind and water." It comprises a body of lore that teaches the *feng shui* practitioner (called a *fang shih*) to recognize dragon lines and nests, and to arrange other elements (people, buildings, etc.) in proper harmony. This ensures the dragon remains healthy and happy, thereby assuring those in the vicinity of a flow of good luck and protection against misfortune.

Landscapes, cities, buildings and rooms all have their proper relationship to dragon lines and nests. They all must have the right balance of the five elements to blend harmoniously with an area's Chi patterns. Likewise, the shape of certain buildings hinders or assists the flow of good fortune through a neighborhood; a building that is too angular can direct "poison arrows" of bad *joss* toward neighboring buildings or geographical features and spread disharmony. Mikaboshi's Wicked City exemplifies the resulting horrors of a city deliberately engineered to channel and focus negative energy and corrupted Chi. *Fang shih*, for the most part, try to arrange the world in harmonious accord with the great sleeping dragons.

Dragon lines and nests are aptly named; the terms aren't simply colorful metaphors describing a phenomenon, but insights *feng shui* practitioners possess into the world. The great dragons of Chinese lore are not the overgrown lizards of Western mythology, but great spiritual beings whose vast bodies are only partially visible in the natural phenomena they embody: storms, mountain ranges, tsunamis, etc.

Fang shih excel at finding the hints and traces of slumbering dragons in valleys, mountains and hills. Those untrained in the ways of *feng shui* typically cannot perceive even the most obvious dragons until the dragon rouses enough to slip from slumber and manifest in some capacity. Fortunately for humanity, this is a rare thing at the end of the Fifth Age.

The great dragons do not simply rest in a place, they *become* it by melding their bodies and spiritual essence with the landscape itself (curiously, the Tzimisce seemingly grasp this concept immediately). The bones of the Earth Dragons become the hills, while their eyes become the pools and lakes. The aptly named "dragon lines" are the flow of the dragon's spiritual essence through its body as it melds with the world. There are, of course, other dragons representing the four remaining elements. *Fang shih* can see dragons of air in the clouds, dragons of water in a pattern of waves and dragons of wood in the forests. Unfortunately, at this point in the Fifth Age, the dragons rarely stir enough to emerge from the natural world and make themselves visible to the untrained.

Fang shih claim the interaction of elemental dragons is responsible for much in the natural world: flooding, for

instance, is often the outcome of feuds between dragons of water and dragons of earth. *Feng shui*, the *fang shih* claim, can help the great hidden dragons coexist while concomitantly bettering life for those living within their spheres of influence.

Several *fang shih* Kuei-jin, Ch'in Ta and humans claim the northern half of the San Francisco Peninsula is the resting grounds for one of the great slumbering Dragon Generals of Heaven. The more experienced among them point to his outline and can tell you which of his scales are nearest the surface and easiest to access. It is his benevolent will that grants San Francisco such good native *feng shui*. Unfortunately the Trans-America Building, among other things, provokes his ire as well.

San Francisco was, from its inception, blessed with a very auspicious combination of water, wind and earth. Before its settlement by European immigrants, the Bay Area was devoid of the geographical traps that allowed negative *joss* to pool and fester. The peninsula itself benefited from a constant flow of cooling Yin Chi from the water and the fog for which the Bay Area is known. *Fang shih* claim this is due to an ancient romance between a great dragon general of earth and a great dragon general of the air.

As densely populated settlements developed in the Bay Area, the great dragon grew uncomfortable. Combined with hopeful gold miners drilling the land and the increasing drain various *shen* placed on the dragon, it shifted position and rearranged the local dragon lines. This event is known as the Great Earthquake of 1906. When a great dragon stirs, the location of all the dragon lines in the area shift as well, just as the position of the muscles and arteries change when a sleeping person rolls over. This allows tapped or interrupted dragon lines to flow freely again. Just as the earthquake of 1906 was the slow response to the mining and settlement of the region, so too was the Loma Prieta earthquake a response to the local construction of inauspicious buildings.

The great spate of Bay Area development from the end of the 19th century on was problematic for the slumbering dragon, but it simply raised its tolerances and returned to hibernation. With the construction of the Trans-America Tower in the early sixties, however, San Francisco's residents created a significantly negative impact on the city's naturally healthy *feng shui*. The Trans-America Tower is too sharp and angular for the otherwise rounded and flowing landscape, like a dagger planted in the center of the peninsula's chest. Its sharp angles created poison arrows that radiated both out and up. That single building became an enormous negative Chi generator affecting the entire region. Obviously, it took some time for the effects of one building to counter the naturally beneficial flow of Chi, but if it has had such an impact in the space of four decades, *fang shih* can only imagine the damage it will incur before it is destroyed.

High on the list of priorities for some of the Quincunx's *feng shui* practitioners is the economic undermining of businesses in the Trans-America Tower. Since it sprays its negative Chi right at Chinatown, locals erected gates,



THE WALL

As a function of its good *feng shui*, San Francisco is historically a powerful lure for benevolent spirits and ghosts. The city's "good vibe" is evident to many residing here on both sides of the Wall. Furthermore, the Wall rating in San Francisco is quite low for a populated area: Between 5 and 7 throughout the city, but not uncommonly as low as 2 in select locations at the right time. The city by the bay also exerts a strong pull for those sensitive to the spirits: artists, mediums, mystics, shapeshifters, changelings and similar bohemian and gifted folk.

Unfortunately for those same populations, the days of easy access to San Francisco's spirit world appear at an end. Throughout the nineties, human business interests (backed, at various times, by both the Ventrue and factions of tech-savvy mages) have very effectively reinforced the Wall just in time to handicap the invading Kuei-jin. The corruption of the dragon nest in Hunter's Point made reaching the Yin and Yang Worlds more difficult, while the

gentrification of the city drove away many people sensitive to the needs of the spirit world.

By the time the Kuei-jin arrived, the problem reached alarming proportions. Where once San Francisco's Wall was thin and stable, it is now thickening, though admittedly not to the degree of most major North American cities. Still, some areas grow thicker and more impenetrable scabs, as seen in the Wall Ratings of the city's various neighborhoods.

The Kuei-jin heap the blame at the feet of the spiritually blind and corrupt Kin-jin, but the Mandarinate's measures dealing with the problem only worsens the matter. With the occupation's continuation, the Wall between the worlds pushes them further apart, while the Wall between San Francisco and the Yomi World crumbles in some places.

Heaven quickly drifts away from the *shen* of San Francisco, while Hell pushes ever closer to the surface.

fountains and other edifices specifically to mitigate the Tower's bad Chi. Among the more extreme *fang shih* there exist a few dedicated to even stronger actions should their stopgap measures fail... actions of an explosive nature.

The Kuei-jin are both in awe of the region's naturally harmonious Chi and horrified that San Franciscans, human and vampire alike, can't see what they're doing to the spiritual landscape. A city is lucky if it has a single dragon nest or line running through it. San Francisco boasts no fewer than four dragon nests, a surfeit of blessings the Quincunx is eager to capitalize on.

The city's strongest and healthiest dragon nest stretches south and west from the northernmost point of the Presidio. It includes most of Lincoln and Golden Gate Parks and offers many homes in Richmond district some of the best native *feng shui* in the world. This is, in part, why Richmond contains such a large Chinese population: they knew how to read the landscape properly and align their homes with the flow of good *joss*.

Next up is the great slab of bedrock called the scale of the Great Dragon General by *fang shih*. It juts up in the topographical heart of San Francisco, and stretches west from the Castro district up to the hills called Twin Peaks. The ground here is so stable that its houses remain unaffected by even the worst earthquakes. This, claim the *fang shih*, is because the dragon nest is located at the peninsula's very center, and it is the center where harmony and balance thrives.

The third dragon's nest, and the last healthy one, is situated in the center of Chinatown. Chinatown wound up where it did for this very reason. The dragon wizard Li T'ien took note of the lines running through San Francisco

when the city was still young, and counseled his countrymen to establish their presence in that area. Although the Kuei-jin fancy themselves firmly in control of this dragon nest, the truth is they have only begun plumbing its depths; others in Chinatown (like Li T'ien) know it more intimately. If they are not careful, the Kuei-jin may find trouble in the heart of their own stronghold, especially if Li T'ien uses the nest against them.

The fourth dragon nest is in the far southeast corner of San Francisco, an area called Hunter's Point, and is horribly defiled. The American Navy controlled the region for many years, and their toxic chemicals saturated the soil, blighting the spiritual landscape for several square blocks. Unfortunately, the prognosis worsens. The Navy sold the land to the Catellus Corporation (a subsidiary of Pentex), which is now developing the enormous local biotechnology research park. Since Hunter's Point is largely built on a landfill, one strong earthquake is all that's required to liquefy and spread toxic viscera into the city and ocean.

The corrupt dragon nest also lies within the bounds of Bayview, the worst of the Munificent Transitioning Sectors. The Kuei-jin are instinctively put off by the area's bad *joss* and believe it fitting to pen the worst Kin-jin here to root about in their own filth and corruption. Unfortunately, the creation of the M-T Sector and the depredations of the Kindred only worsen the nest's spiritual corruption, leading to the formation of a "broken mirror," or rift into the Yomi World. This suits the plans of the Yama King Mikaboshi, whose servants, the Hollow City *wu*, operate in the area (see Chapter Four for more information).



CHAPTER FOUR: SAN FRANCISCO NIGHTS

The coldest winter I ever saw was the summer I spent in San Francisco.
— attributed to Mark Twain

San Francisco is a diverse place. This is even true among the local *shen*, particularly following the New Promise Mandarinate's arrival. Kuei-jin and Kindred, all of different ranks and backgrounds, rub shoulders within the city's confines. Above all, the rule of the Cloud Mandarins must maintain order among its unliving populace. The Kuei-jin gives those who violate San Francisco's peaceful facade cause to regret their actions.

THE RULE OF THE MANDARINATE

The New Promise Mandarinate is a satellite arena of the Quincunx's August Courts, with dominion over Los Angeles and San Francisco (though technically dominion over North America's Pacific coast, but its influence doesn't currently extend beyond those two cities). The Mandarinate is a matter of pride for the Quincunx's Bestowed Ancestors, demonstrating their

ability to take and hold Western territory and illustrating the feasibility of the Great Leap Outward. It's a particularly powerful banner for the Extraordinary Commission on the Rectification of Borders and the Fence-Menders led by Jiejie Li. These factions maintain a strong interest in the Mandarinate's success.

The Mandarinate seeks to provide structure and order in those cities under its mandate. It oversees all matters concerning the Kuei-jin and Kin-jin and, ideally, includes them both in its structure and its goals, though many Kindred would disagree.

THE PERFECTED HIERARCHY

The New Promise Mandarinate's hierarchy is similar to the structure of most Kuei-jin courts, with a few concessions for the unique situations extant locally, namely the inclusion of Kin-jin and the large Western populations. The Mandarinate's willingness to compromise permits them a measure of success in relation to the Kin-jin. Such allowances do not sit well

RANK AND DHARMA

Because San Francisco is a foreign court, hardly considered an illustrious position among the Kuei-jin, and because the Quincunx sustained so many losses in the invasion, many of the city's vampires hold surprisingly high ranks relative to their advancement in their Dharmas. This is good news for young, ambitious Kuei-jin stifled under the rule of their centuries-old elders. A position as minister in the New Promise Mandarinate may not be as prestigious as playing minister in, say, the Blood Court, but it's certainly a step up from playing a humble *jina* in the Middle Kingdom, according to some. Likewise, the Cloud Mandarins would not hold such a lofty position in the Five August Courts just yet.

Of course, the awarding of titles and responsibilities to such youngsters is yet another reason why August Court conservatives believe the New Promise Mandarinate is inauspicious and even dangerous. If the Cloud Mandarins fail to keep the peace and hold the Kin-jin at bay, it may be necessary to replace them with older, more experienced leaders.

with the Bestowed Ancestors of the Quincunx, so the Mandarinate walks a careful line between tradition and innovation.

THE CLOUD MANDARINS

Topping San Francisco's vampiric hierarchy are the so-called Cloud Mandarins. These are the city's highest-ranking Kuei-jin, who are responsible for their *wu* along with other important duties. Normally, an ancestor would supercede the mandarins and run the city, but the Quincunx has yet to choose one. Technically, the Mandarinate is still "pacifying" San Francisco and the Cloud Mandarins have not agreed upon a single candidate for ancestorship. Since the August Courts and the Ancestor of the Extraordinary Commission also withheld their approval for the time being, San Francisco remains without a central leader, leaving the Cloud Mandarins as the highest local vampire authority.

Unfortunately, the mandarins lack the unity of purpose provided by an ancestor. Although they work together to maintain Kuei-jin power, they otherwise pursue their own agendas (including seizing ancestorship). This means they generally overlook various small matters and rarely deal decisively with situations such as the Kin-jin control of Golden Gate Park, or the Nosferatu infesting the city's warrens. The Kindred only now realize the Cloud Mandarins are not a unified front, though they are unanimous when it comes to defending the city. The Kin-jin are unable to press any advantage as of yet.

THE MINISTERS

Below the mandarins are various ministers appointed to oversee nightly matters. The two highest

ranking officiates here are Fu Peng, the Minister of Eastern Affairs and Jochen Van Nuys, the Minister of Western Affairs (and the Mandarinate's highest-ranking Kin-jin). Minister Fu Peng is in charge of all matters involving the city's Kuei-jin, reporting them to the Cloud Mandarins and implementing their decisions. He spends significant time writing and presenting reports, as well as quashing various small fires that are beneath his superiors' valuable attention.

Van Nuys, as Minister of Western Affairs, is responsible for the Kin-jin. He acts as the Mandarinate's mouthpiece in dealing with his people and ensures the Kin-jin behave themselves and respect the Mandarinate's rules. Van Nuys likes maintaining the illusion he still has power over the Kindred, when in fact he is no longer Prince. Still, Van Nuys does wield some authority, and Kindred who want to stay in the Mandarinate's good graces would do well to heed his words. Van Nuys also implements efforts to integrate the Kin-jin into the Mandarinate by teaching them "proper" behavior based on the August Courts' system of conduct. He does this in cooperation with Kuei-jin mandarins and ministers, but finds most Kindred reluctant — though some willingly shift allegiances hoping to better their position.

Below the two main ministers are lesser (mostly Kuei-jin) functionaries who oversee particular parts of the city (such as Chinatown, Japan Center, North Bay and so forth). Kin-jin ministers under Van Nuys supervise the Munificent Transition Sectors. It's their job to ensure things run smoothly and remain free of trouble. Kin-jin ministers are actually stricter than their Kuei-jin counterparts, simply because they feel more pressure to perform well and win the Mandarinate's approval. This naturally makes them even less popular with their fellow Kindred, who consider them turncoats and boot-lickers. On the other hand, the Kindred know that further trouble in the M-T Sectors will likely involve Kuei-jin "settling" matters (probably through the Final Deaths of the agitators).

JINA AND DISCIPLES

Below the ministers are the Kuei-jin *jina* and disciples. Like their leaders, they are comparatively young for their standing in society, but not overly so. The majority of San Francisco's Kuei-jin hail from the August Courts. They came to the city for several reasons: following the banner of either the Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders or the Harmonious Menders of Broken Fences, because they sought new opportunities or because they had good reason to immigrate from the August Courts. Some are virtual exiles or political radicals, fleeing the Quincunx's growing influence. Only a minority constitutes Kuei-jin native to North America, and the Five August Courts consider most of these as *hin* (see below).

The *jina* and disciples have their duties to perform. Many were members of *wu* who arrived together and

continued working together under the guidance of a local mandarin. Others study with their teachers and handle the many tasks that need accomplishing, from accounting of the city's *shen* population to maintaining order outside the Munificent Transition Sectors. There are many local opportunities for Kuei-jin of ambition and drive.

HIN AND HEIMIN

The lowest ranks for San Francisco's vampires (other than the *chih-mei*) are the *hin* and *heimin*. As in Kuei-jin society, the *hin* conquered their shadow nature but have not yet proven their worth or learned the lessons necessary to function in society. In the Mandarinate, this includes nearly all Kin-jin, regardless their previous rank in Kindred society (with only a few exceptions). The Mandarinate accords them the same rights and expectations as Kuei-jin who emerged from their first shadow soul. The Mandarinate permits them to exist and feed, but otherwise affords them no rights or responsibilities until they learn proper behavior. Since this normally takes years, many Kindred believe this categorization is simply a means of keeping them subordinate. The Kuei-jin maintain that they act as fairly as possible, and that Kin-jin can obtain a high position within the Mandarinate if they willingly play by the rules.

There is still some debate among the Cloud Mandarins as to how to teach the Kin-jin. Strict traditionalists maintain that their regimen should include speaking proper Cantonese or Mandarin, so they can appreciate the holy sutras and texts in their original form. They hardly expect foreign barbarians to truly understand the Dharmas, but they demand that the barbarians at least try. The more practical and progressive mandarins are not so imperious, allowing instead the Kin-jin to learn in English; neither do they apply the same exacting standards they would for the Middle Kingdom's Kuei-jin. The Quincunx criticizes this as sloppy and slipshod, but then those leveling the criticisms feel there's as much point in educating a pig as there is in teaching the Kin-jin.

Given the need to invest the Kin-jin in the Mandarinate's success more rapidly along with the number of rootless Kuei-jin finding their way to San Francisco, the mandarins expanded the role of local *heimin*. As "intermediaries," the *heimin* remain largely outside the city's social structure, while still maintaining a definite place within it. Jochen Van Nuys, for example, is technically considered *heimin*, an emissary between the Kuei-jin and the Kindred (although the Quincunx overlooks this point in Van Nuys' presence). Likewise, other Kin-jin functionaries received greater responsibilities — by considering them *heimin* — that their rank as *hin* would normally prohibit. It's a temporary situation satisfying the demand of Wan Kuei culture that everyone has their place, while still permitting some flexibility.

KINDRED AND DHARMAS

The Kuei-jin do not expect Kindred educated by the New Promise Mandarinate to take up Dharmas yet. It is usually several years before any *hin* pursues the Way, and even the most optimistic teachers believe the Kin-jin require longer, if it is even possible at all. As yet, no Kindred follows a Dharma, though some Kindred are quite intrigued by them. Whether or not a Kin-jin can pursue the Kuei-jin's paths of enlightenment remains to be seen, though the answer may shake the foundations of both vampiric societies.

NIGHT TRAVEL IN SAN FRANCISCO

Two main factors hem local vampire traffic: the boundaries of the Munificent Transition Sectors and the Tremere wards limiting Cathayan traffic into or out of San Francisco. Officially, travel within the city remains unrestricted for Kuei-jin and Kindred alike. Realistically, however, the Kuei-jin confine Kin-jin to their assigned M-T Sectors, and vampires who habitually stray too far outside their zones simply vanish. Some sector ministers issue stiff warnings and reminders to their Kindred charges not to wander off, while others deal more harshly with violators. Unofficially, Kin-jin found outside an M-T Sector are fair game for the Kuei-jin, though the Mandarinate carefully keeps any incidents quiet. The point is for Kindred to know that leaving their sector means risking their own existence. Not surprisingly, this policy contributes to the pressure-cooker atmosphere within the M-T Sectors.

Some Kindred sneak out of their sections in various ways. The bold ones simply walk out, but many use their herds to transport them around in car trunks or use Obfuscate to disguise themselves. The Nosferatu run a thriving market as a sort of "underground railroad." The network of tunnels they control under San Francisco allows them somewhat free movement, and they willingly provide other Kindred passage for a price. They also require the Kindred to wear a blindfold and be led by Nosferatu guides, something the other vampires are unhappy about but have little choice in the matter.

The Cathayans know of the hazards of entering or leaving San Francisco via the bridges or the BART tunnel, particularly after the wards reduced a few Kuei-jin to bloody smears. Experiments with unwitting Kin-jin prove the wards do not affect them in the slightest. In San Francisco, the Kuei-jin don't even publicly acknowledge the existence of the wards, and act as though they aren't there (though few Kuei-jin leave San Francisco these days). With Van Nuys, however, the Cloud Mandarins threaten to execute Kin-jin until the Camarilla drops the wards.

Secretly, this ploy is merely a smoke screen to both boost Van Nuys's bargaining posture with the Inner

Circle and hide the fact that the Kuei-jin have already developed countermeasures against the wards, thanks to Tremere collaborators Wan Zhu (p. 88) and Oliver Thrace. The Writ of Protected Passage in particular must be created for a specific Kuei-jin, and it only lasts a short while. To keep the Kindred from discovering that the Cathayans bypassed the wards, the Kuei-jin use the writs sparingly and for select agents of the Cloud Mandarins. Let the Kin-jin wonder how the occasional Wan Kuei shows up outside their wards. Let them believe it's because of water routes.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The New Promise Mandarinate maintains it is a just and honorable body seeking to enforce law within San Francisco with a strict, yet fair, hand. Of course, in this case "law" means the Great Principle of the Kuei-jin (see *Kindred of the East*, p. 38-41) rather than any Kindred tradition. It's also important to note that because the Kuei-jin consider most Kin-jin as lowly *hin*, without any claims in vampire society, a Cathayan is perfectly within his rights to destroy "an offending" Kin-jin for whatever perceived slight. Few Kuei-jin are this militant, however, since the mandarins need the Kin-jin's cooperation, not their hatred.

The Cloud Mandarins maintain that the Way of Obligation requires them to treat the Kin-jin fairly and decently. They swiftly punish gross crimes committed by either side, so the watchwords in the New Promise Mandarinate are "don't get caught." The Mandarinate deals with any threats to its order and stability harshly, and overlooks anything not threatening the infant court (depending on the agenda of the mandarin(s) involved).

If a Kin-jin continually lands in trouble, however, the Mandarinate deals with the offending vampire to teach the others a lesson. Most minor punishments include transfer to a lower-status M-T Sector, a "public" caning (attended by the Kindred of a sector) or the severing of an appendage. Afterward, ambushes and destruction are in short order for any still-obstinate vampires.

THE NOCTURNAL SAN FRANCISCO

Not long ago, the evenings belonged to San Francisco's Kindred. They were its chief predators and did largely as they pleased, so long as they didn't violate Prince Van Nuys's few rules or the Masquerade. Now, with the New Promise Mandarinate in power, San Francisco's nights suffer the depredations of two poachers, the Kuei-jin and the Kindred. There's an edge of desperation to the hunting and nocturnal activities of local vampires. The war for survival is turning into a quiet holocaust, and the following months may see vampires unwilling to go quietly into these Final Nights.

THE MASQUERADE

Prince Winder makes one thing abundantly clear to San Francisco's Kindred: nobody breaks the Masquerade unless she feels it warranted. Even then, the breach must only be as much as absolutely necessary to oust the Cathayans. In the meantime, she encourages and sometimes demands the local Kindred maintain a low profile and avoid any violations of the traditions. Like so many of the Camarilla's decrees, however, the Kindred pay this one more lip service than actual practice.

Thus far there have been no blatant violations of the Masquerade, but prevailing conditions make maintaining it more difficult. Hunting, in particular, is increasingly troublesome in the crowded M-T Sectors, so Kindred cover their nightly feedings by committing violent crimes. Incidents of assault, murder and rape increase in San Francisco, while stories attribute the incidents to deranged homeless people and wandering thugs. Kindred influence with local police and news agencies sends them looking the other way, though some wonder how long that state of affairs can endure.

For their part, the Kuei-jin have long believed in the value of subtlety, so they try not to advertise their presence to mortals. Only a few people in Chinatown know of the Hungry Dead around them, and most of these are trusted vassals and Kuei-jin Scarlet Screens. Outside of Chinatown, the Cathayans don't possess as much mortal influence as the Kindred — something they plan to rectify.

THE COMMITTEE FOR PUBLIC VIGILANCE

One of Jochen Van Nuys's tools for keeping order among Kindred is the Committee for Public Vigilance, a tool the Camarilla once used to good effect against the Sabbat. Van Nuys has revived the practice and is now using against its creators. This new Committee consists mostly of ghouls and a handful of vampires, who monitor the M-T Sectors and carry the sanction of Van Nuys and the approval of the Kuei-jin. It is a kind of unofficial police force, or scourges, working directly for the Minister of the West.

Of course, the approval and sanction of the Mandarinate and the Minister of the West means little to those Camarilla members relegated to Castro or Bayview. Prince Winder considers them collaborators. Additionally, rumors claim that Sabbat spies use the Committee to infiltrate the halls of power, either to sow dissent or to attack and assassinate Camarilla members. Van Nuys rejects these claims but does little to investigate them, given the Committee is his brainchild and his private militia.

The Committee members are often thugs or even former anarchists looking for cushy positions within San Francisco's new order. Others are simply informants willing to spy and pass information along to Van Nuys or his underlings concerning subversive elements among the Kindred. They were either loyal to Van Nuys before the

Cathayans' arrival or acquired since Van Nuys became a New Promise Mandarinate minister.

The Committee's "protection" is directly proportional to the M-T Sector's importance. Thus members are almost honor guards in Pacific Heights, thus earning the full support of that sector's Kindred. In Bayview, however, they're like roving gangs, almost as bad as the Sabbat packs with which they deal. Those Kindred relegated here pursue guerilla warfare-like strikes against the Committee's members. Such actions, though, draw reprisals from Van Nuys who simply throws more brutal Committee members into the area to "bust heads" until the local vampires cooperate. Thus, the Committee assigns its vampires to the best and worst sectors (Pacific Heights & Bayview), while ghouls earn the three remaining sectors. They're only distinctive from other Kindred and ghouls in the M-T Sectors primarily because of their bluster and because they can carry weapons (discretely, of course).

The Minister of the West keeps the Committee's agendas and operating mandates nebulous, so as to provide them with the widest leeway in pursuing their duties. The Mandarinate approves simply because none of the regulations apply to them and it forces the Kin-jin to police their own kind. In simplest terms, the Committee for Public Vigilance and its members follow these basic rules:

- 1) Committee members may check and verify the identities of Kindred and search their havens to ensure the Mandarinate assigned them to that M-T Sector.
- 2) Committee members may detain and question all Kindred suspected of any subversive or questionable behavior that jeopardizes the New Promise Mandarinate or the Camarilla's accord with the Kuei-jin.
- 3) Committee members may defend themselves when threatened in a verbal or physical manner. If this results in the destruction of the offending party, the Committee for Public Vigilance determines whether its members acted properly, and punishes the guilty accordingly.
- 4) Committee members may not question or detain Kuei-jin.
- 5) The Committee encourages its members to maintain the Masquerade unless the situation necessitates otherwise.

The presence of vigilantes as well as other concerns leads to two unfortunate realities. The first is an increase in the number of ghouls created by Kindred. Everyone wants at least one reliable retainer to care for matters during the day. This, in turn, creates an additional demand for vitae, further increasing the pressure to hunt and feed one's "brood."

The second concern is one of paranoia. While some of the Committee's enforcers carry their membership like badges, others are more surreptitious with their power. They act like any other Kindred assigned to the M-T Sector and spy for the Committee. They rarely

question or detain vampires suspected of sedition, instead relying on their more brazen compatriots to draw the fire while they continue spying and reporting. A few Kindred like Prince Winder suspect these moles exist, and they even warn their allies about the potential. All this does, however, is foster an atmosphere of suspicion, where Kindred question each other's motives and the *modus operandi* of many is "trust no one."

HUNTING

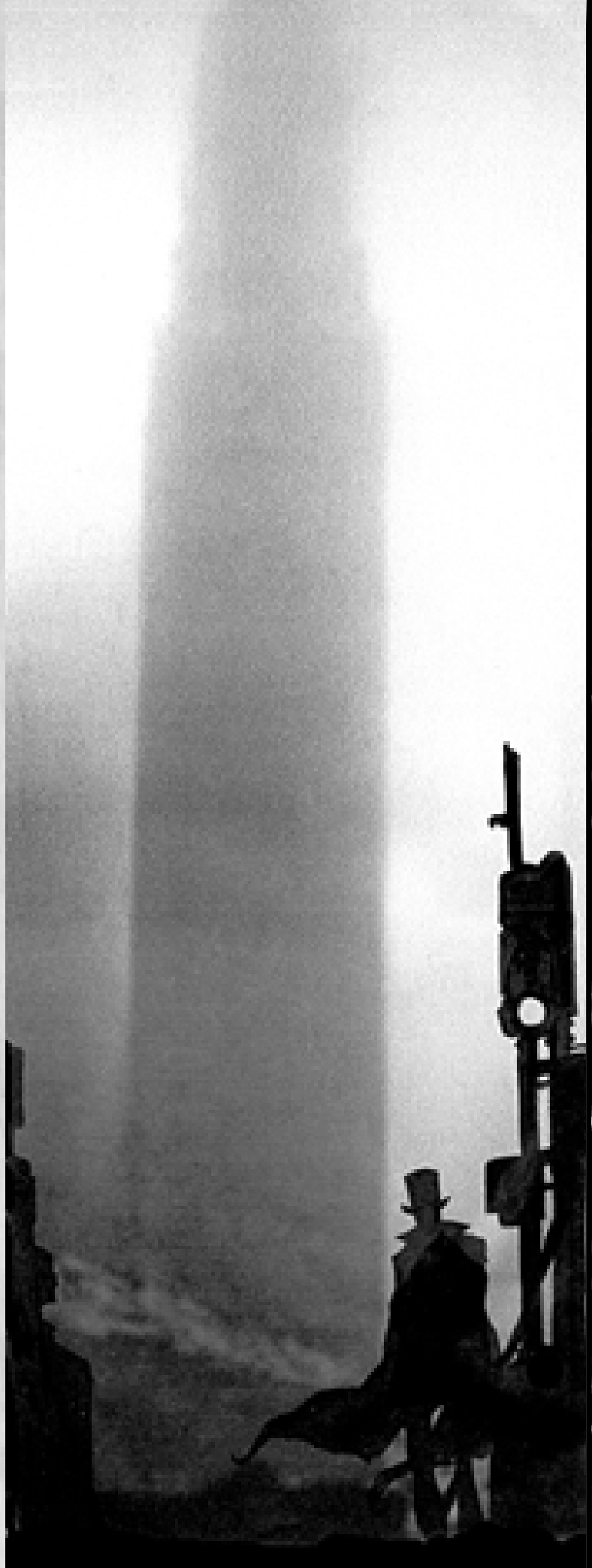
Hunting for blood is increasingly tricky for San Francisco's vampires. The growth in both vampiric and ghoulish population leads to a greater demand for vitae, while restricted hunting in and outside the Munificent Transition Sectors disrupts established Racks and domains. This leaves vampires hungrier, which in turn leads to frenzies and unexplained gruesome crimes like murder.

Generally speaking, Storytellers should increase the difficulty of hunting feats (**Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 201) by + 1 to reflect the problems vampires endure within the M-T Sectors. This penalty doesn't generally apply to Kuei-jin unless they're in unfamiliar territory, in which case Kuei-jin suffer from other hunting problems (not the least of which is running into roving groups of Cainites). A botched hunting attempt indicates an encounter with trouble: accidentally stumbling into other hungry vampires, meeting a Sabbat pack and so on.

SHARING HERDS

With prey in great demand, some Kindred fight over vitae in turf wars with expected tragic results. The Richmond district is one such place where some Kindred will betray the Gangrel for the region's ample blood. In Bayview M-T Sector, a trio of young neonates claimed dominion over several streets, residents and businesses, tithing a percentage of blood from anyone feeding on their turf; someone took offense at their demands, however, and decimated the three vampires. Their assailant remains unknown.

Currently, two turf wars are unfolding. On the Castro and adjacent areas, there is a mad scramble by local Kindred to stake out territory. The bars were the first to go, but some young vampires now claim gay and lesbian bathhouses, given the high turnover of customers cruising for sex. Two bathhouses, Deep Steam and Jack's, are currently in contention, with neonates struggling to maintain their hold on these establishments against other neonates. The second turf war is in the early stages and centered on Haight-Ashbury. The Tremere claim this area as theirs, given the number of occult bookstores, but Brujah from local Castro intrude with rising impunity. Tremere and Brujah neonates have already fought on two occasions over the matter, and Prince Winder's attempts to settle the problem only met with failure.



Fortunately, some Kindred accept their current difficulties in stride. Some will even share resources in exchange for boons and future considerations. They cluster around areas with available prey and share vessels as much as possible without entirely depleting them. Kokopell Mana the *kachina*, for example, believes the Camarilla is her family. She shares her ample herd of ghouls with neonates of various clans if they ask. Billy Wei of the Heaven Promise Society is likewise inclined, and shares his resources with others if only to convince Kindred that peaceful solutions always exist.

In game terms, vampires with the Herd Background can temporarily surrender dots for the evening, giving allies the benefit of their herd and “sharing the wealth.”

LOST IN THE FOG

One characteristic of San Francisco helping vampires in their covert activities is the heavy fog that often rolls in off the bay and blankets the city late at night and early into the morning. Most often the fog burns off an hour or two after sunrise, though it sometimes lingers. At night, it can greatly reduce visibility and provide cover for all sorts of nocturnal endeavors.

The Storyteller should increase the difficulty of actions requiring clear vision by one (for moderate fog) to two (for heavy fog). Conversely, the Storyteller may lower the difficulty of feats requiring stealth or concealment (like hunting or B&E) by a corresponding amount. The Auspex power Heightened Senses reduces this penalty by the character's dots in Auspex (two dots completely negates it). Kuei-jin ghostsight and lifesight (*Kindred of the East*, p. 88-89) negate the penalties for detecting and dealing with other beings in the fog. The fog greatly limits visibility for any character without Heightened Senses. Finally, during the day, heavy fog reduces the soak difficulty of sunlight to 8.

MIDNIGHT VASSALS AND SCARLET SCREENS

Only part of the struggle for San Francisco occurs between the Kuei-jin and the Kin-jin. Much of it happens through mortal proxies influenced by the two factions, with the Sabbat, the *gaki* and others trying to pull strings behind the scenes as well. All factions (with the possible exception of the Sabbat) are subtle in their manipulation, concealing their existence from most of their mortal agents.

KINDRED

The Kindred developed their inroads into San Francisco over centuries. Truth be told, however, they haven't taken all the opportunities they could have, something the Camarilla now regrets. Prince Van Nuys and Prince Thomas before him only influenced kine

society as much as necessary to ensure the Masquerade and maintain their own power. Many of Van Nuys' former contacts and vassals joined him, however, when the New Promise Mandarinate appointed the former prince Minister of the West. That left the Camarilla scrambling to shore up old allegiances and find new avenues of influence throughout the city, while the Kuei-jin and their allies did the same.

The Camarilla still has the pulse of a few key areas, though those resources only allow them to maintain some power under the New Promise Mandarinate rather than being effective weapons against the Cathayans.

THE POLICE

During the reign of Prince Van Nuys, the Camarilla built strong ties with the San Francisco Police Department, enough to encourage officers to overlook the occasional murder or disappearance. Unfortunately, the Kindred influence over the police was piecemeal at best. Individual vampires had their "pet" officers and personnel within the department, either through coercion, blackmail or blood bond, with a few ghouls scattered about. The higher-ranking pawns in the department belonged to Van Nuys himself, and he still wields influence.

The Police Department is "prime for the picking," but allegations of widespread corruption create two kinds of cops: the idealist looking to change the system and the cop of convenience trying to score. Finding which is which can be easy for neonates, however, especially for those with street contacts. Corrupt cops always make themselves known by their actions. Thus neonates have plenty of opportunities to "ingratiate" corrupt beat cops and patrolmen into their service through bribes or blood. The investment pays off when and if the cop earns a promotion and transfers into a new department. Of course the trouble with that practice are the other ghouls and detectives on the take in these new divisions. Specifically, Vice and Homicide are both focal points of vampiric interest, and often a mess of conflicting agendas. That's not to mention the department's unwritten arrangements with influence powerhouses like Van Nuys.

This leaves the police department largely paralyzed when dealing with local vampire activity. The Kindred try to use their influence to cause legal troubles for the Cathayans, but the department's higher-ups shut down the investigations quickly. This conflict of external interests eventually draws in Internal Affairs, who watch closely for signs of police corruption, weeding out officers "on the take." This eventually limits *shen* influence and erodes vampiric interference within the police department, which may leave all sides facing problems down the road. For now, however, the dangerous chess game continues.

THE CLUBS

The area of mortal activity where Kindred retain the greatest autonomy is in the entertainment business, namely various bars, clubs and other nightspots used by the Camarilla as hunting grounds and havens over the decades. Numerous mortals, including managers, bouncers, DJs and club-owners, are tied to the Kindred through blood, silent partnership or coercion. Since the arrival of the Kuei-jin and the formation of the M-T Sectors, the Camarilla vampires have only strengthened their grip over these places, fortifying them against the Cathayans and making them into true havens for their kind. It is not uncommon for such nightclubs or discos to maintain a basement or attic lounge for "private parties," open only by special invitation.

Within the M-T Sectors (particularly the Castro) these places are sanctuaries where Kindred tread with very little fear and most Cathayans rarely venture. Those Kindred still maintaining herds usually do so around a popular nightspot where their vessels may gather without drawing undue suspicion. That means those with the most ties into the club scene prosper (or at least not suffer as greatly) under the rule of the New Promise Mandarinate. Kindred who disdain such places now slink into them, looking to satisfy their hunger, while their former rivals act as princes of their own little fiefdoms.

Outside the M-T Sectors, popular nightspots serve as islands of Kindred influence in the New Promise Mandarinate. The Kuei-jin even co-opt some with promises of non-interference, and cultivate them as Scarlet Screens and harvest sites. Here Kin-jin maintain herds of pliable mortals for both Kuei-jin and Kindred alike. Others remain steadfastly loyal to the Camarilla or claim neutrality, which the Kuei-jin permit for now, given the current difficulties in dislodging Kin-jin influence. The Kuei-jin's elitist attitudes work against them in this area. Many believe it beneath their station to frequent mortal nightclubs (particularly the gay, lesbian and fetish clubs), so they're content to leave such places in the hands of the Kin-jin — overlooking their potential value because of distaste.

In this situation, however, nightclubs are akin to a Kindred's natural resource. Good nightclubs draw large crowds and high turnovers, creating prime feeding grounds, while less successful clubs still pull in enough clientele to net steady vitae for a vampire or two. Regardless, clubs are territory; given San Francisco's current woes, that means a source of competition. Elders and ancillae in particular vie with each other for nightclubs, either by trying to buy into the mortal partnership or by investing in the establishment.

With the feeding rights stretched thin, some vampires resort to more violent tactics. If a nearby nightclub pulls in more customers than yours does, send in a handful of ghouls to start a knife or gunfight.

NIGHTLY ENTERTAINMENT

San Francisco hosts several nightclubs and discos that prove very popular among the Kindred who can reach them. The first is in the heart of Castro Street and is called the Europa. Although definitively a gay establishment, the Europa is extremely popular among trendy teens and affluent/hip dot.com'ers looking for an exotic venue for their straight dates. The Friday night Drag Show and Fag Hag Appreciation Thursdays draw a packed house, while Imperium Rex Saturdays pits San Francisco's hottest DJs against each other in a duel of the newest techno tracks. Vampires love Europa, if only because its Mardi Gras feel and throbbing bass deceives them into believing they're actually alive for that evening.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is Hammer's in South of Market. Although part of the 40-nightclub stretch, Hammer's is a warehouse disco that is open by invitation only. Most Kindred know at least one other vampire who can provide the initial invite, however, and once invited, you're automatically a member.

Hammer's is best described as a fetish nightclub, but not in the traditional sense (if tradition and fetish were ever mutually exclusive). The dress code runs from suit-and-tie to PVC, but the entertainment is certainly "unique" and not for the prudish or those with refined sensibilities. Hammer's hosts various interest groups and clubs nightly, offering them free admission and three complimentary drinks if they "do their thing" in the nightclub's spectacle cages. Most of these groups are exhibitionist by default and always looking for new members, so they have few reservations about being on display.

On any given night, Hammer's patrons may find modern primitives in the bar conducting scarification and brandings on one another, or a local chapter of Baccae (which caters to large hedonistic men, women and their fans) who parade around naked, cavort and even lap dance for admirers. Hammer's isn't about degradation, however, but pride. The participants are all proud of their interests or bodies, and Hammer's ensures it invites patrons who appreciate their diversity. The bouncers immediately kick out anyone who insults or derides members of the showcased club. Most vampires like the place enough to keep their mouths shut.

The resulting bad press invariably siphons customers from that bar to yours. This situation already exists in the Castro and South of Market M-T, as well as the bars and strip clubs in the Tenderloin. Given the Tenderloin is technically off-limits to Kindred, however, some establishments are free of Kindred depredations... for now.

Because of the escalating war over clubs and bars, neonates often find it impossible to claim any territory

within their assigned M-T Sector. The options are 1) "invest" in a mortal with the capital to open a nightclub (but good luck holding this resource once it opens for business and the other vampires come looking for a meal) or 2) be innovative. Enterprising neonates are more attuned to modern culture, and thus more aware of the options available to them. Some neonates sponsor underground raves in SoMa warehouses, drawing in enough people to start herds or feed their entire coterie for the night with nobody the wiser. Other neonates operate illegal casinos in their homes or host ghoulcockfights, etc.

TRANSPORTATION

The Kindred retain some influence with the city's transportation industry. They learned years ago the value of maintaining contacts within local taxi companies, moving companies and public transportation, allowing for the discrete and secret conveyance of corpses (animate and otherwise) from place to place. It was a last-resort resource for most, something maintained as an afterthought, but it has proven most useful since the Kuei-jin occupation.

San Francisco has an excellent public transportation system, and the Kindred capitalize on it. The mortal "chauffeurs" distract or fly under the Mandarinate's watchful eye long enough for transport and cargo to leave an M-T Sector and return. The Nosferatu utilize the underground Muni tunnels and stations as well, along with the dozens of half-finished and abandoned corridors throughout the city's underground. These allow the captive Kindred some measure of mobility, at least until the Kuei-jin successfully seal them off.

Currently, the Nosferatu exert the most influence in transportation; their inroads with mass transit and sanitation are almost complete. Admittedly, the Nosferatu cemented their monopoly when the Kuei-jin invaded the city and many Kindred fled, leaving gaps open for the taking. Outside of the Sewer Rats, most Kindred with transportation clout rely on limousine and cab companies, leaving a wide field of venues still available (moving companies, independent cabbies, lease outlets, etc.). The Kindred have yet to tap every transportation venue. Even among taxi and limousine services, several medium-sized and many small operations remain untouched. Slowly, however, Kindred and Kuei-jin realize the importance of mobility in a city of borders, and do the utmost to secure private transport for whatever the occasion. This means that neonates and Running Monkeys still have open access to this field of influence, especially with transport companies, small cab operations, some limousine services and most car rental outlets.

An interesting development of late concerns rumors that Prince Winder will soon ask that all Kindred to contribute to locking the city's transportation network down. While this rumor's validity remains uncertain,

many Kindred conjecture that it could stem from one of two sources. The first is that if Prince Winder plans to retake the city, she needs all transportation options available to ferry troops and supplies around when the time comes. The second and equally viable reason is that by exploiting the transportation venues, the Kindred restrict the Kuei-jin from using these resources to launch further invasions or from completely securing the city. Unfortunately for the Camarilla, the Mandarinate is not oblivious to this threat; they have already secured Chinatown's transportation networks save for the tunnels and sewers, and slowly extend their sway. While Kindred fear little from internecine turf wars in this arena, they will eventually contend with the growing Kuei-jin Scarlet Screens.

ALTERNATIVE CULTURE

Kuei-jin culture is relatively conservative, especially among the Quincunx's elders. Many Kuei-jin weren't ready for the range of sub-cultures extant in San Francisco, and the sheer decadence of Westerners shocks them. These Kuei-jin want nothing to do with gays, hippies, fetishists, goths, ravers, neo-pagans and other features of the Bay Area social landscape. The Kindred, however, have had their fingers in all of these sub-cultures and many more for years. Since the Cathayans haven't even bothered challenging their influence within these movements, the Kindred move among these mortals relatively unmolested.

In San Francisco's modern nights, it is the city's most alternative and *avant-garde* side that serves as the ideal Masquerade for Western vampires. This places greater influence in the hands of young Kindred, anarchs and even Caitiffs more familiar with the modern and protean social scene than their elders. They can better blend in and extend their contacts and power base within the mortal community. Prince Winder promises rewards for loyal vampires affiliated with various counter-cultures who provide assistance in reclaiming San Francisco. Of course, the New Promise Mandarinate makes it equally clear that opportunities exist for Kin-jin tired of Camarilla rule, opportunities based on merit and achievement rather than generation or clan affiliation.

Although most Kuei-jin prefer avoiding Western decadence, they will happily use Kindred as their emissaries with these mortal communities. Some young Kuei-jin also find themselves drawn to the dazzling array of mortal cultures extant in San Francisco (to their elders' disapproval). Thus, any Kuei-jin caught frequenting a gay disco or swingers club, for example, risks losing esteem and even allies among the Quincunx. By the same token, Kindred will likely approach these individuals for support in the hopes of using the Kuei-jin's new "interests" in the Camarilla's favor.

Currently, the "alternative scene" is a hodgepodge of disparate interests snowballed into one simple descriptive. From social clubs catering to different

sexual pursuits, to tattoo and piercing parlors, to fetish nights at clubs, to weekend-long rave parties, to pagan seminars at local bookstores, to support groups for the gay/lesbian/bi/tran communities, to anything else imagination desires beyond the norm; they're all part of the so-called alternative scene and counter-culture movement according to society. Unfortunately for the Camarilla, these varied interests long-remained the recruiting grounds of anarchs and the Sabbat.

The anarchs, for example, often scout the alternative music scene to find its rebels, be it industrial or thrash bars, raves or even concerts. Sabbat shovelheads, however, often recruit their mortals from among the body alteration crowd, be it tattoo and piercing parlors or basement torture and scarification parties for those into the heavy S&M scene. Kindred and Cainites of mystic bent, like the Tremere or Sabbat Thaumaturgists, frequent occult and new age bookstores for their prey. That's not to say every tattoo parlor, magic shop and underground record store has a resident spider at the center of its web; merely that neonates and Running Monkeys exploring alternative cultures should plan on encountering vampires of different sects when trying to establish their network of contacts. Fortunately, there's a high-enough turnover in these so-called alternative cultures (both in businesses and involved mortals) that there's always room to maneuver and establish new contacts and influence.

KUEI-JIN

Kuei-jin influence in San Francisco began small but is growing rapidly thanks to several factors — the first being the Camarilla's laxity. Secure in their position locally, the Kin-jin didn't notice the Kuei-jin extending their power base out from Chinatown, through Scarlet Screens and businesses tied to Los Angeles and Hong Kong. By the time war *wu* entered the city to stake the Quincunx's claim, the Kuei-jin had reasonable pull within San Francisco as "major investors."

The second factor arose when the New Promise Mandarinate co-opted various Kin-jin, including former prince Jochen Van Nuys. These renegades brought their own contacts and influences into the Mandarinate's camp, placing them at the disposal of the city's new urban predators. This simultaneously weakened the Kin-jin while strengthening the Quincunx's hold.

Finally, the Kuei-jin aggressively recruit and create new Scarlet Screens to serve their needs in the West, following the lessons of the Los Angeles campaign. Their experience and an established foothold in the West allowed them to extend their power in pivotal enterprises and arenas more rapidly.

CHINATOWN

The Kuei-jin's throne of power resides in Chinatown, where the virtually unchallenged New Promise Mandarinate rules the night. Kindred carefully

MAJOR SAN FRANCISCO TONGS

The names and faces associated with San Francisco's Tongs change almost nightly thanks to Kuei-jin building them up and the Kindred and other forces tearing them down. In fact, if the war between the Camarilla and Quincunx is blatant anywhere in San Francisco, it is in the struggle between Scarlet Screens and ghouls.

The Storyteller may alter details as much as desired, or build an interesting series of stories (or entire chronicle) around the resurrection of local Tongs.

Gum San Tong: The "Golden Mountain Tong" is favored by the New Promise Mandarinate and currently the most powerful and influential in the city. Its prime patron is Resplendent Crane Mandarin Han Hui (p. 80) and her Violet Path Posse *wu*. The Gum San's chief money-making enterprise is heroin smuggling from the Golden Triangle into the city, but it also profits from prostitution, other forms of narcotic trafficking, protection rackets and smuggling illegal immigrants from the Middle Kingdom. The Tong's leaders know who they work for and don't much care, so long as the money keeps coming.

Heaven and Earth Association: The Heaven and Earth Association is a small Tong influenced by Mandarin Lili Zhou (p. 82). She pays it only passing attention, however, leaving most matters in the hands of the Tong's leader, James Tan. The Association ostensibly works with the Gum San Tong in most areas, though it's trying to strengthen its position, should Lili Zhou decide to replace the Gum San Tong.

Triangle Prosperity Group: The so-called Triangle Prosperity Group has associations with Mandarin Song Feng (p. XX) and the Electric Money Wickedness Club (see **Dharma Book: Devil-Tigers** for more information). It focuses attention on more "white collar" crimes like money laundering, insider trading and real-estate scams to supplement its income from drugs and vice. The Prosperity group recently hit a snag while competing with the Russian Mafiya for business in the waterfront districts, but it seems only a matter of time before the Tong overcomes those obstacles.

avoid Chinatown and most areas adjacent to it; any Kin-jin caught within this stronghold's boundary faces Final Death after a long and painful interrogation to discover their reasons for "invading" Kuei-jin territory.

The Kuei-jin slowly infiltrate every aspect of Chinatown's existence, tightening their hold over the neighborhood. It is essential to their plans, since it is the social and spiritual anchor connecting San Francisco to the Middle Kingdom. It allows them access to the

spirit worlds and is the local font where new Kuei-jin rise among the populace. Chinatown makes San Francisco an even more viable a stronghold than Los Angeles, since the Quincunx considers the traditional Asian community a part of the Middle Kingdom.

By appearances, the New Promise Mandarinate holds Chinatown in an unbreakable grip, but the truth is that a hidden power struggle the Kin-jin know virtually nothing about leaves the area contested. The presence of rebellious *kānbujiàn* and rumors of *akuma* in the very heart of their territory troubles the Mandarinate deeply. Even some perceptive mortals have noticed the Hungry Dead in their community, and may try limiting the Mandarinate's influence (see Chapters Two and Three for more details on the struggles affecting Chinatown).

THE TONGS

The New Promise Mandarinate's most vital and useful Scarlet Screens are the Tongs, Chinese criminal gangs who served the Kuei-jin well in the past, particularly in Hong Kong and Shanghai. The Tongs once exerted considerable influence in Chinatown, particularly in the 1920s and '30s. Their power diminished greatly over the course of the 20th century, however, to the point where it was almost nonexistent when the Quincunx turned its attention to the Great Leap Outward.

The Kuei-jin revived the Tongs' influence in Chinatown, providing havens for displaced Triad members from Hong Kong and encouraging the growth of Tong-related businesses like drugs, vice and protection rackets. Much to the Mandarinate's displeasure, Chinatown's populace is accepting this particular "tradition" back into their community far too slowly. Chinatown fought hard to rid themselves of the Tongs in the first place, and neighborhood anti-crime initiatives (supported by Kindred and Green Court influences within the justice system) become increasingly more common.

Still, the Tongs have returned and become a force of to be reckoned with in San Francisco. Tong members and affiliated gangs (see "The Street Scene") serve as the New Promise Mandarinate's primary mortal proxies. They operate as soldiers and enforcers, keeping watch in Chinatown day and night, dealing with territorial incursions and fighting Kindred-influenced street gangs and mortal criminals.

For more information on Tong organization and traditions, see the **Killing Streets** sourcebook.

HOTELS

When the Kuei-jin first took serious notice of San Francisco, one area they focused on immediately was the city's major hotels (and, through them, the tourist industry). They first approached these establishments through Asian-based travel agencies, promising the

hotels exclusivity on Asian tour groups visiting San Francisco. Moving subtly through these inroads, the Kuei-jin recruited hotel owners and managers initially, moving all the way down to head maids and desk *concierges*. This allowed them to watch traffic arriving in or leaving the city, since many visiting Kin-jin used hotels as temporary havens and hunting grounds. Their influence allowed the Cathayans to bypass security at some of the finest hotels, surprising Kin-jin guests before sending them off to Final Death.

The New Promise Mandarinate's inroads with local hotels help it maintain some power. Visiting Kindred have few options but to stay with associates in the M-T Sectors, rather than checking into a downtown hotel where Mandarinate representatives will likely notice and visit them. The Mandarinate can also supervise visiting mortals serving the Camarilla and Sabbat. Moreover, the Kuei-jin's presence in prestigious establishments like the Sir Francis Drake Hotel allows them to influence important mortals passing through the city, thus extending their power base beyond the city and Tremere wards.

BATTLEGROUND

Although both sides possess strongholds, the Kuei-jin and Kindred struggle for control of many other aspects of mortal society. These are battlegrounds where the war for San Francisco is fought in day by proxy and in night by vampires. San Francisco knows no peace.

THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT

San Francisco is an important hub for international finance along the Pacific Rim. It has been the Camarilla's fiscal center in western North America for over a hundred and fifty years. It is a key reason why the sect intends to maintain its hold over the city, no matter how tenuous. The Ventrue spent considerable time and money developing their holdings in San Francisco, as well as arranging for Jochen Van Nuys to help protect them. Now, with Van Nuys removed from his position and the Kuei-jin spreading their influence across the city, the struggle for San Francisco's considerable financial resources begins in earnest.

On the Kindred side of matters are the Ventrue, represented by Prince Sara Anne Winder. They subtly directed business in the city for over a century and maintain considerable local interests. Unfortunately, removing Jochen Van Nuys as prince seemingly strengthened his support for the "peace process" and the New Promise Mandarinate, compromising Ventrue enterprises. The Ventrue scramble to change the city's locks (passcodes, account numbers, etc.) to protect their assets without alerting the Cathayans to any potential vulnerabilities.

On the Kuei-jin's side are the Bamboo Princes and forces like the Electric Money Wickedness Club. Young Kuei-jin learned the intricacies of modern business and

put those lessons to work in places like Hong Kong and Los Angeles. Now the Kuei-jin move in on Kin-jin business interests and resources in San Francisco, manipulate stocks, move bonds and secret numbered accounts and try their hand at the dot.com market. Their primary advantage is easy access to the city's thriving financial district, while the Kin-jin must handle matters from afar. Conversely, the wards around the city largely keep the Cathayans away from Silicon Valley, but the Valley is nothing if not friendly to telecommuters and e-business.

While this seems like a dangerous battlefield for outsiders looking to join the action, there are still some open doors that escaped the Mandarinate's and Ventrue's attentions. The first are several ghouls who slipped through the cracks when the Kuei-jin invaded. While the Ventrue consider the Financial District theirs, they rarely operated as a cohesive unit. Instead, each Ventrue or business-minded Kindred pursued their operations secretly and without any sanction save their personal interests. The invasion, however, either destroyed some of these Kindred or they fled, leaving behind ghouls and lackeys that remain undiscovered.

While the lackeys know little to nothing about their Kindred sponsors, they made enough money on the side to enjoy their arrangement. Now they search for new sponsors who can pay them money under the table in exchange for a variety of services (insider trading, money laundering, embezzlement, creating dummy corporations, doctoring books, etc.). This means that if these opportunists find or hear about someone trying to enter the Financial District through back doors, they will make the effort to contact them first (if they have a name or contact on which they can rely).

Ghouls, on the other hand, know a little about vampires, as well as a couple of select gathering points where their Kindred allies took them. The ghouls may frequent these places, hoping to find a new blood donor in exchange for their loyalty and contacts. Alternatively, characters can try and sneak into the few bars or pubs in the Financial District catering to the business and stock market crowd. Through investigative work, they may find a ghoul here as well (a down-on-his-luck investment broker who always looks like he's in withdrawal; a bartender says he seems to have slipped around the date coinciding with the Kuei-jin invasion).

The second option into this battlefield is actually an illegal boiler room operation with offices in the Financial District, selling junk shares in companies and new technologies. Well-protected behind several dummy fronts, the operation is in no danger of being exposed just yet. Anyone with strong street ties, however, knows that the operation recruits talented hustlers and intensively trains them to become business-savvy sharks. If the characters intercept one of these up-and-comers before they leave the street, they could buy their way into the boiler room operation. From

there, there's a strong chance that another firm will hire them... it's all just a matter of patience.

THE STREET SCENE

Away from the boardrooms and banks, yet a nother struggle unfolds behind the scenes. Both the Kuei-jin and Kindred extend considerable influence over elements of the city's street-life, including both the homeless and various street gangs. Gangrel, Malkavian and Nosferatu vampires use San Francisco's growing homeless population as vessels, ghouls and sometimes even as a source of childer.

The Kuei-jin discovered similar uses for the city's derelicts, though they are more interested in denying the Kin-jin a useful resource than in cultivating it for themselves. The Cathayans know that every ragged figure crouched in a doorway or at a street corner may serve as the Kin-jin's eyes and hands, so they've encouraged efforts to "clean up" the city's homeless. Scarlet Screens advocate the creation of new shelters, which they tend and use to harvest Chi for the Mandarinate. Corraling the legions of homeless is no simple matter, however, so efforts aren't likely to meet any immediate success. In the meanwhile, every vagrant or panhandler may be a Kin-jin spy or even a disguised vampire. Fortunately, the city takes little note when vagrants simply disappear.

With the growth of the Chinatown Tongs, associated youth gangs have also risen in prominence, clashing with Camarilla and Sabbat street gangs. San Francisco police have noticed an increase in gang-related violence, similar to trends that began in Los Angeles a year or two ago. Local residents are also more careful about locking their doors and less eager to investigate any strange noises they hear from the streets. Neighborhoods adjacent to the M-T Sectors are particularly prone to gang violence, while vampire interference within the police department hampers local efforts to rein in the problem.

Given the ratio of vampires to humans, the vampires cannot account for everyone or their interests. In fact, many Kuei-jin and Kin-jin rely on large groups or organization heads, leaving these mortal proxies to handle "the small fish." Neonates and Running Monkeys work in reverse, starting with the plethora of small fish looking to make a big splash and helping them swim up the social river of their peers. Some neonates are even lucky enough to foster alliances with driven individuals, who move through the ranks like lightning and swiftly assume positions of responsibility (whether in a gang or street-level organizations). When this happens, *jina* and ancillae with stronger ties into the organization may approach neonates and Running Monkeys to "buy their contacts" from them in exchange for boons or shared influence.

In San Francisco, this more often creates friction than alliances. The street scene is a battlefield of

interests, with elder vampires in both camps forcing young vampires into one-sided alliances and lopsided arrangements favoring the already powerful. The reason is one of management: Control the head and the body follows, meaning control the vampire and he brings his interests and resources in line as well. Characters with any connections to the streets will find their resources besieged by vampire elders looking to secure their own networks with alliances. Vampires of other sects will also try to deprive their opposition of valuable commodities and contacts through brute force (often mortal in nature). So for example, the Gangrel, Nosferatu and Malkavians may dip into the old communal transient pool for blood, but they also attack each other's resources if they believe someone threatens their street herds. Already someone has sent a handful of vagrants on a rampage through a soup kitchen used by Kindred gangbangers to draw their herd.

Currently, most of the street violence originates from Kindred who carefully cover their tracks, despite the gangland strikes against one another. The New Promise Mandarinate rarely starts fights, but it always finishes them. The Kuei-jin's mortal proxies come down hard on any gang or criminal element who causes them problems, especially if their actions smell of Kin-jin interference.

THE SPIRIT WORLDS

An important element of San Francisco for the Kuei-jin is the city's spiritual landscape, long overlooked and abused by both its Kindred and mortal inhabitants. The region contains copious amounts of Chi and no less than four dragon nests — a substantial number even in the Middle Kingdom — but the area's Chi is poorly tended at best.

The city's inauspicious *feng shui* sends out "poison arrows," creating bad *joss*. According to the Kuei-jin, it is this warping of San Francisco's Chi more than anything else that led to the Camarilla's downfall here. It is also what hampers Kindred efforts to overcome the New Promise Mandarinate.

With their knowledge of geomancy and Chi, the Kuei-jin managed to blunt the effects of poisoned Chi on themselves and even benefit from it, while the Kindred can only suffer (see Cultivating Chi in Chapter Six). Most Kindred scoff at the idea of basing their decisions on *feng shui* and Chinese astrology. Even the Tremere remain dubious of this unseen spirit world influencing their existence, but they possess few explanations for the extraordinary luck the Cathayans seem to carry with them.

Normally, the Kuei-jin's access to and understanding of the spirit worlds would be a substantial advantage, as it has been in the past, but recent events and conditions in San Francisco make the spirit worlds dangerous even for the Wan Kuei. Howling storms and

angry ghosts fill the Yin World, while the Yang World holds predators both spiritual and material.

THE YIN WORLD

Since the ill-fated Kuei-jin invasion of Los Angeles, a terrible storm, greater than the mightiest typhoon the living world has ever known, wracks the Yin World. Ghostly winds tear and ravage the normally still and silent fields of the Yellow Springs, scattering the spirits of the dead far afield or sending them for shelter wherever available.

The raging maelstrom threatens the existence of any Kuei-jin who dares walk the Yin World's paths, but dare it some must, since the Kuei-jin feel deeply obligated to their ancestors' spirits. More importantly, the August Courts agreed to a pact of mutual aid with the Yellow Springs when obtaining Yu Huang's aid in taking Los Angeles. Now, with Yu Huang's kingdom in tatters, it is the Kuei-jin who must render aid in accordance with their agreement.

San Francisco is fortunate (if such a term applies to the dead) in that the 1906 fire left its mark on the Yin World by destroying significant portions of the city. The "shadows" of many buildings burned in the fire still linger, like echoes of a young San Francisco, buried for nearly a hundred years. In these dead places that co-exist alongside the living world, ghosts find shelter from the raging storm, including refugees of Yu Huang's dread fleet and spirits from surrounding areas.

These ghosts have their own concerns, but they will speak with summoners — especially in exchange for jade, chi-rich blood or other valuables. Kuei-jin necromancers use ghosts to spy for them and gather information about the city as it existed years or even decades ago. Whispers among the dead say other Wan Kuei walk the Yin World's paths; they are *akuma*, and some of them have been in the city for a long time.

EFFECTS OF THE YIN STORM

The raging Yin World storm makes travel in these domains dangerous for Kuei-jin (or anyone else, for that matter). Exposure to the storm without any shelter causes anywhere from one to ten dice of lethal damage each turn, depending on the storm's severity (Storyteller's judgement or roll one die to randomly determine the storm's strength). Brief periods of relative calm allow spirits to scamper from one place to the next, but there is no way of knowing when the storm will rage again.

GHOST STORIES

Troubles in the Yin World can be a source of stories for a **Kindred of the East** chronicle set in San Francisco. There are many restless spirits born from the city's sometimes-turbulent history. An ancestor may ask or obligate characters to journey into the Yin World to render assistance, or the characters may ask a long-departed ghost for information vital to their cause. It's

also a good excuse for Storytellers to indulge in historical roleplaying while the characters visit the ghost of Old San Francisco, the city that died in the 1906 earthquake and fire but still lingers in the Yin World. What secrets might the characters uncover about Chinatown or Kin-jin havens? More importantly, what ghosts still remain sheltered in these bygone structures, waiting out the storm?

THE YANG WORLD

The Yang World in the vicinity of San Francisco is not as troubled as the Yin World, but it is dangerous to Kuei-jin visitors for its own reasons. The powerful Chi flowing from the dragon nests make San Francisco's Yang World a vibrant and dynamic place, but disturbances in the Chi flow and bad joss make the Yang World's inhabitants angry and difficult to deal with.

The Yang World is a bright and energetic place, even at night under the full glow of the moon. Distant fires from the Burning City (below) light the night, showing the flickering shadows of figures moving through the streets. Kuei-jin report seeing *hsien*, both Asian and Western spirit folk, though the Yang World denizens most concerning the Wan Kuei are the *hengeyokai*, the Changing People. Even more than the inhabitants of the Middle Kingdom, the Western beast-people oppose the Kuei-jin. Visitors to San Francisco's Yang World quickly discover the wolf-warriors are often close at hand and likely to attack any vampire they see.

THE BURNING CITY

Part of San Francisco's dreamlike landscape in the Yang World is the Burning City, the bright counterpart to the ghostly buildings standing in the Yin World. The Burning City fills the Yang reflection of downtown San Francisco with sheets of bright, dancing flame, pure unleashed Yang Chi from the depths of the dragon nests.

For the most part, the flames are only dreams. They cannot sear the flesh of visitors, though they cast light and heat as though real. Kuei-jin must overcome wave soul when confronting them (just as Kindred must check for Röttschreck, should they somehow enter the Yang World).

The Burning City is a haven of sorts to *hsien* (both Occidental and Oriental), since Kuei-jin do not linger long in the concentrated wash of Yang energies. It appears, however, that the Chi flames slowly diminish in strength, possibly a symptom of the imbalance extant in the city's dragon nests or the greater number of Hungry Dead prowling the streets.

THE GOLDEN COURT OF THE DRAGON KING OF THE SEA

The other significant portion of San Francisco's Yang World is the Golden Court of the Dragon King of the Sea, a realm beneath the waves of San Francisco

EARTHQUAKES

Powerful earthquakes, like the 1989 Loma Prieta quake that damaged San Francisco, are relatively rare. San Francisco has suffered from only two such powerful quakes in the city's entire history. Minor upheavals and tremors, however, are extremely common in California, particularly in areas like San Francisco that adjoin the San Andreas Fault. People barely feel most of these tremors. Even the stronger ones only last for a few seconds. They may be strong enough to knock items from shelves, but otherwise they do little damage.

In the World of Darkness, earth tremors contribute to the overall sense of impending disaster in San Francisco. Since the Kuei-jin's arrival and the appearance of the Eye of the Demon Emperor in the heavens, tremors in the Bay Area have increased in both frequency and intensity. The Kuei-jin ascribe this to the awakening of the Earth Dragon in response to the poisoning of the city's Chi.

Proper *feng shui* might avert another terrible earthquake by soothing the dragon lines, but most Kuei-jin are far too busy mollifying the city to worry about pacifying the Earth itself. Doomsayers claim it's only a matter of time before "the Big One" hits, an earthquake that will make the 1906 quake pale in comparison. Then the conflict between the Kuei-jin and the Kindred will be largely moot.

Bay. It is part of the great Dragon Kingdom of the Sea, which claims dominion over the Pacific Ocean and all that it touches. Fantastic coral palaces stand in the Yang World, inlaid with gold and pearls and guarded by the fierce Same-Bito samurai of the Dragon King. *Hsien* and *hengeyokai* associated with water are found here, along with their Western counterparts (although most Western Yang folk prefer the dry land).

The Dragon King of the Sea generally does not welcome Kuei-jin into his domains. Proper respect along with a tribute of gold, jade, pearls and so forth can convince the Golden Mandarin of the Bay to permit Kuei-jin to pass unmolested, so long as their passage is brief. This allows brave vampires to travel through the Yang World across the bay to enter or leave the city, thus bypassing the Tremere's wards.

THE YOMI WORLD

The Kuei-jin carry Hell with them wherever they go. San Francisco is proof of that. The Yomi World's power has become increasingly clear since the creation of the New Promise Mandarinate, though Yomi first touched the city streets long before that. The Cloud Mandarins and their underlings watch carefully for signs of the Yama Kings and their *akuma* servants, but find only dead trails and restless omens.

Some Kuei-jin believe the local Kin-jin's presence corrupts the city and brings it closer to the Yama Kings' rule,

while others point to inauspicious *feng shui* and the befouling of the dragon nests. A few wonder if the ill-advised expansion of the Two-Fang Serpent Plan to include San Francisco aggravates the city's current condition, though they keep those thoughts mostly to themselves. No Kuei-jin wants to risk censure as *akuma* for speculating too greatly on the nature of the Yama Kings.

THE WICKED CITY

The most influential of San Francisco's Yomi World rulers is Mikaboshi, Lord of the Wicked City. He was drawn to the uncontrolled growth of San Francisco more than a century ago, when his realm began prospering and the first Chinese immigrants set foot in their so-called "golden land." They found hard work, prejudice and struggle, while Mikaboshi found a place after his own malignant heart. He resolved then to make it part of his domain.

Mikaboshi's cosmopolitan view serves him well. Now the August Courts struggle to control the city while Mikaboshi's *akuma* servants, the Hollow City *wu* (p. 98), wait and watch from the shadows, ready to accomplish his bidding. If a Wan Kuei falters, the Hollow City is there to offer their master's gifts. If the New Promise Mandarinate fails, Mikaboshi's demonic hounds will tear it limb from limb.

Already, the Wicked City bleeds and oozes into San Francisco's nighttime streets; it festers in the Tenderloin, Bayview and other places overcome by urban blight, their Chi twisted and poisoned by inauspicious *feng shui* and the subtle work of Mikaboshi's followers. Turn down the wrong alley in the Tenderloin, step through the wrong doorway in a dark and strange neighborhood, and you may find yourself looking up at the looming towers of the Wicked City under a swollen, blood-red moon.

The Kuei-jin call these places "broken mirrors" (See *Killing Streets*, pp. 105-107 for more information). Thanks to San Francisco's fog, broken mirrors seem like dreams pushed, even forced, to the surface. The threshold between worlds is subtle and instantaneous, catching the victim unaware. Only too late do they realize they are trapped in a city unfamiliar to them. Fortunately this rarely happens, but instances of transposition are rising. The broken mirrors increase in strength, drawing bakemono into this world. They haunt the Tenderloin and Bayview predominantly so far, picking up young men and women from local clubs and bars and dragging them back to their world for some hellish games. Soon they'll make the mistake of taking a member from someone's herd or Scarlet Screen, drawing an investigating Kindred or Kuei-jin into the Wicked City. That is, of course, if other events don't draw the characters first, like the case of the missing building.

San Francisco's broken mirrors are powerful, possibly more powerful than the Kuei-jin have



encountered thus far. Things slip through both ways, and the problem worsens. Already mortals and bakemono find their way into each other's realms, but recently, an abandoned building in the Tenderloin fell through a broken mirror, where it remains lodged in-between worlds like a chicken bone. The funny thing about broken mirrors is that the neighborhood's residents believe the building was torn down, but can't remember when it happened. Sometimes at night, however, the building simply reappears for a few moments in the wee hours of the morning, bringing with it another bakemono, or worse, fleeing spirits looking for bodies. Often it drags a curious bystander back to the Yomi World. Enough people have seen the building to turn it into an urban legend. Vampires,

however, should know that in the World of Darkness, some legends hold merit — especially those circulating the streets.

The New Promise Mandarinate remains largely ignorant of these festering sores because they inadvertently penned the Kin-jin into them, turning the worst parts of San Francisco into virtual concentration camps. The Kuei-jin blame bad *joss* associated with the M-T Sectors or similar locales on centuries of Kin-jin depredation. Surely once the Mandarinate is in place and restores order such problems will fade. Meanwhile, the Wicked City extends its roots deeper into San Francisco, and Mikaboshi looks forward to the day when his Hell erupts from the sidewalks and streets, raising him up to the throne of the Demon Emperor.



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CHAPTER FIVE: HONORED SHEN

*Narrator: Farewell to this world, and to the night farewell.
We who walk the road to death, to what should we be likened?
To the frost by the road that leads to the graveyard,
Vanishing with each step we take ahead:
How sad is this dream of a dream!
—Chikamatsu Monzaemon, The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*

The arrival of Kuei-jin in force and the rise of the New Promise Mandarinate bloats San Francisco's unliving population to dangerous proportions, while Kuei-jin force more Kindred into increasingly close quarters, leaving them to fend for themselves as best they can. Despite the Mandarinate's claims of equality and promotion based on merit, Kindred are still "barbarians" by Kuei-jin standards, not to be trusted or given any more authority than absolutely necessary. Only a few Kin-jin turncoats and sycophants possess any power in the new regime, and they're responsible for ensuring their peers toe the line — or else.

In addition, anarch refugees and Sabbat opportunists swell the city's vampire population. The Camarilla sends new Kindred into the region to rally their members and provide a barrier against Cathayan expansion. With the addition of the Lupines declaring open season on any blood-sucker leaving the city, the San Francisco Bay area is a pressure cooker for local *shen*, one that may explode at any moment.

THE NEW PROMISE MANDARINATE

The New Promise Mandarinate and its Kuei-jin are currently the strongest power bloc in San Francisco, but their position is a precarious one. Although the Mandarinate had some success in pacifying Los Angeles and bringing San Francisco under control, rumors say they overreached themselves. Their enemies within the Quincunx believe it is only a matter of time before the Mandarinate's Fence Menders commit a fatal mistake that will incur the displeasure of the August Courts' Ancestors. The Fence-Mender faction struggles to strengthen its position in San Francisco and Los Angeles and avoid any such blunders. So far, they are successful, but how long they can maintain their present course remains to be seen.

CHANGING THE PIECES ON THE BOARD

Although this chapter offers various ways to forge ties between the characters and San Francisco's various personalities, the Storyteller may give existing roles to players to help relate a particular story. This is perfectly valid, and the Storyteller should feel free to alter, add to or delete characters from this chapter as needed. For example, the Storyteller may run a chronicle where the members of the troupe portray San Francisco's Cloud Mandarins, forced to work together for the New Promise Mandarinate but also pursuing their own ends and the chance of becoming the city's ancestor. The Storyteller may offer players the opportunity to play supporting characters like Lili Zhou or Song Feng, adding new character interpretations to the mix. The Storyteller may also dump existing characters and ask players to create an entirely new group (putting their own stamp on the setting and chronicle).

Likewise, the Storyteller may include a regular nemesis better suited to the chronicle than Chan Te and his Hollow City *wu*, or use other *shen* for a crossover game. Changing some of the major supporting characters around can also help maintain the element of surprise for players who read this book. For more on running a high-level political game in San Francisco, see Chapter Six.

As a final caveat, many of the personalities discussed herein are the likeliest movers and shakers of San Francisco's political gumbo soup. They are not the be-all-end-all of local vampires, but they are pivot points around which everything revolves. The Storyteller has free reign to create lieutenants and foot soldiers as the need arises. Better yet, many such positions remain open to facilitate character involvement in local politics. These supporting characters merely represent the wide gamut of machinations, interests and agendas extant in tumultuous San Francisco.

THE HARMONIOUS MENDERS OF BROKEN FENCES

For the moment, the Kuei-jin political faction known as the Harmonious Menders of Broken Fences enjoys considerable success. The Quincunx reclaimed the Flesh Court capitol of Shanghai from the infesting *akuma* and made strides in regaining the Flame Court capitol of Hong Kong from Kin-jin control. They also secured the defection of a powerful Kindred, the Tremere warlock Oliver Thrace, giving them additional information about the Kin-jin and their abilities.

The Fence Menders have been successful abroad as well, perhaps *too* successful for their tastes. The faction spoke against the Great Leap Outward and the Ash Plan

of the Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders, which called for a campaign against the unrighteous Kin-jin in their own lands. The Fence Menders said that to strike against the Kin-jin while corruption and conflict riddled the Middle Kingdom's August Courts was akin to pulling weeds in the garden while one's house was on fire. Now they find themselves uprooting weeds while smoke rises back home.

The Fence Menders never intended for matters to go this far. When Righteous Crusader Hao Wei-Liang's invasion of Los Angeles faltered, his enemies eagerly stepped in and succeeded where he failed by forging an alliance with the Kin-jin and creating the New Promise Mandarinate. When Kin-jin negotiations to secure Los Angeles broke down, however, the Fence Menders discovered they had to seize San Francisco as well, giving them two foreign cities to pacify and control while still juggling agendas back home. Almost against their wills, the Fence Menders do the very things they spoke out against, and cannot stop for fear their current achievements would crumble to dust. They must go forward and hope it is not too late to avoid a collision with destiny.

JIEJIE LI

Elder Sister Plum, Bone Flower Ancestor of the Extraordinary Commission

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Visionary

P'o Nature: Slave

Second Breath: Unknown

Apparent Age: Early teens

Jiejie Li stands calmly at the center of the whirlwind of activity and controversy whipping around the Harmonious Menders of Broken Fences and the Two-Fang Serpent Plan. She betrays no hint of the incredible responsibility resting on her slim shoulders. To a cursory glance, she looks like a thin waif, barely into her teens.



Her soft voice carries the power of authority and centuries of experience behind it, however, and her eyes are as hard and cold as metal.

The Elder Sister Plum has a long history in diplomacy and politics. She served as chief lieutenant to the Jade Court Ancestor for over four decades prior to her appointment as Ancestor of the Extraordinary Commission on the Rectification of Borders. During those decades, her voice sang out constantly in Kuei-jin politics. Her writings, such as her political novel *Seven Bone Oil*, are likewise well known. Although she supports the cause of righteousness and proper action within the August Courts, she is not as reactionary as many Resplendent Cranes, nor as revolutionary as the most extreme Devil Tigers. This moderation appeals to many Kuei-jin, earning her several supporters.

The Elder Sister focuses more of her attention on the Middle Kingdom than on the Yin World. She prefers to deal with fellow Wan Kuei instead of ghosts. She makes it clear that she considers the Yellow Springs' ruler in the Yin World, Yu Huang, either a Yama King or their ally. This is not a popular opinion, given the August Courts' cooperation and alliances with Yu Huang in the past. Jiejie Li stops short of accusing the August Courts' Ancestors of consorting with the Yama Kings, but her criticisms of Yu Huang leave little to interpretation. Regardless, Elder Sister Plum makes it clear that the New Promise Mandarinate will have nothing to do with the Yellow Springs' forces following the disastrous Yin World storm that smashed Hao Wei-Liang's invasion of Los Angeles. It's clear for the time being that the inhabitants of the Yin World are not reliable.

Having successfully guided the Fence Menders faction and overseen the creation of the New Promise Mandarinate, Jiejie Li now tastes the fruits of her labor, and some of them are bitter. Although she would prefer not to waste effort and resources in claiming and holding distant foreign cities, she knows full well that any attempt to loosen the August Courts' grasping hands will turn those hands on her throat instead. She cannot show weakness, lest her enemies descend upon her like a pack of ravenous wolves.

With this in mind, Jiejie Li works towards peace and stability in Los Angeles and San Francisco, humbly claiming credit for any successes while carefully shifting blame for any failures to her underlings or even to the August Courts' Ancestors themselves (without stating so openly). As example of her cunning, she carefully defers to the Quincunx in choosing an ancestor for San Francisco. It is important the final choice comes from the Honored Ancestors, but Li carefully winnowed the field down to candidates she finds acceptable. Let the ancestors choose whom they will, so long as she controls their selection.

The Elder Sister's desire to rid herself of the responsibility of overseeing foreign cities may prove her downfall. She pays less attention to the small details of her charges, leaving such matters to her lieutenant, Chiu Bao, and to the mandarins of both cities. She is willing to

accept peace in the cities at any price and ignores the potential threat of the Kin-jin, particularly the regular interaction between Kindred and Kuei-jin within the Mandarinate. She is so certain of Kuei-jin philosophical and ideological superiority that she ignores the possibility that the Kin-jin influence her people nearly as much as the Mandarinate "civilizes" the Kin-jin barbarians.

Elder Sister Plum also faces challenges from her political rivals, who do their utmost to undermine her efforts and disgrace her in the eyes of the August Courts. The rumors claiming Jiejie Li has a taste for human flesh and engages in other degenerate acts are only one example of this. The Righteous Crusaders' efforts to draw the Fence Menders further toward the Ash Plan are another. Still, if the Elder Sister can navigate the field of thorns created by her enemies and emerge successful, she will be in a position of great power within the Courts, just in time to face what might be the greatest threat of all: the arrival of the Sixth Age. It is little surprise that Li sometimes wonders if the struggle is worth the effort.

Chiu Bao

First Oni, Devil Tiger Mandarin of the Extraordinary Commission

Nature: Perfectionist

Demeanor: Rogue

P'o Nature: Monkey

Second Breath: 1631 CE

Apparent Age: Early 30s

Jiejie Li's second-in-command and strong right hand is an experienced general, tested both on the political battlefield and in many Midnight Wars. More importantly, Chiu Bao is a capable and clever politician who knows how to pursue his goals in a deliberate and direct fashion without exposing his throat to his political enemies. Some say it's an unusual quality in a Twice-Crimson Tiger.



For the past century or so, Chiu Bao's political goals focused on making the August Courts aware of the dangers stemming from the impending Age of Sorrows. In his eyes, the Courts squander resources and effort on meaningless struggles when they should be unifying against the *akuma* and other agents of the Yama Kings, fortifying the Middle Kingdom from the coming storm. This outlook placed him firmly with the Harmonious Menders of Broken Fences; he is a vocal supporter of efforts to free the Quincunx's occupied capitol and secure the Middle Kingdom's borders, rather than whipping the Running Monkeys into a frenzy with crusades in foreign lands.

At least part of Chiu Bao's political stance stems from his role as a "family man." He makes his home in the hills of southern China with a clan of his dhampyr children. He believes local concerns far outweigh problems abroad, and that one should put one's own house in order before waging war. More volatile Devil Tigers believe Chiu Bao an inflexible bureaucrat trying to hold on to his position, but the Fence Menders and Bamboo Princes believe him eminently practical and wise. To him, even the Two-Fang Serpent Plan was too great a compromise, and he was hardly surprised when the invasion of Los Angeles faltered. When the Quincunx tasked the Extraordinary Commission with completing the work the Glorious Ocean-Crossing Warriors began, Chiu Bao's goal was to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

Co-opting the anarchs seemed an effective strategy, but Bao worries about the long-term effects of incorporating Kin-jin into the New Promise Mandarinate, and therefore into the Quincunx. The foreign barbarians are devious and untrustworthy, but it's currently impractical to wipe them out — their cooperation is necessary for the occupation to succeed. There is even a glimmer of hope that the Kin-jin can become soldiers in the struggle against the Yama Kings and Demon Emperor's rise, but only if the whole delicate house of cards doesn't crash.

The Extraordinary Commission's First Oni spends his time traveling between Los Angeles, San Francisco, Hong Kong and Beijing, putting out fires and standing on the front lines of the Fence Menders' political battles. What he sees in North America does not please him, and he currently favors harsher methods of keeping the Kin-jin in line. Thus far, Jiejie Li's cooler head prevails over her Yang-aspected general. Chiu Bao is loyal, but he's also no fool. He's aware the August Courts want to crush the Fence Mender faction and return to the status quo, so he readies for the hammer's fall. When it happens, the Elder Sister Plum will learn that Chiu Bao is a survivor above all else.

The First Oni is the elder most often seen in San Francisco. He brings news of the August Courts and deals with any outstanding problems plaguing the mandarins. He considers Jochen Van Nuys (the Kin-jin he deals with most often) a weak-willed fool, but well suited for his role in keeping his fellow barbarians behaved.

Chiu Bao rarely fits the image of a Quincunx mandarin. He wears formal robes only when protocol demands it.

The remaining time he dresses like a grunge rustic, in beat-up overalls or jeans, with tennis shoes or sandals and a t-shirt or tank top, with or without a flannel overshirt. He finds this leads many people to underestimate him, much to their regret.

THE CLOUD MANDARINS

San Francisco remains without an ancestor while the Honored Ancestors of the August Courts decide on a worthy candidate who can initiate the Quincunx's plans for the future. For the time being, the city's most senior mandarins govern its affairs. The mandarins each possess private agendas, making it more difficult for the Kuei-jin to present the Kindred with a unified front. The city's Kuei-jin and those in the Middle Kingdom now refer to San Francisco's *pro temp* rulers as "the Cloud Mandarins," a snide reference to both the city's famous fog and how their political situation seemingly changes direction with the winds.

It remains to be seen who becomes the city's ancestor, though there are some clear contenders for the position. Jiejie Li carefully avoids showing too much favor to a candidate, not knowing which way the August Courts' Ancestors might lean. Clearly, she wants someone loyal to the Fence Menders' ideals. She also wants someone suitable in the Courts' eyes and capable of doing the job, since their performance reflects on her and the Extraordinary Commission. To this end, she maintains careful ties with the front-runners, hoping to ensure the loyalty of whoever assumes the role.

On an additional note, only the Cloud Mandarins, Wan Zhu, Jiejie Li and Oliver Thrace know about the ritual to destroy the Tremere's Ward versus Cathayans (see *Obliterate the Battlements*, p. 131). The Cloud Mandarins and Jiejie Li keep it a secret in order to hem the Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders in San Francisco while they reevaluate the success of their invasion and position Van Nuys into greater power with the Camarilla. Currently, the Cloud Mandarins are set up to appear the villains, with their private threats to destroy the regional Kindred over the wards (a threat they expressed to Van Nuys to ensure he approached the Inner Circle directly about the problem).

HAN HUI

Resplendent Crane Mandarin of the New Promise

Background: Kuei-jin know little of Han Hui's life before she took the Second Breath and almost as little about the early nights of her existence, which is just as she prefers it. Rumors abound, of course, ranging from tales of her life during the Opium Wars to her death at the hands of Communist soldiers in the 1960s (which would make her an extraordinarily young mandarin). Han Hui allows these rumors to circulate without comment, since they only add to her mystique and help confuse potential enemies.

In fact, the Resplendent Crane Mandarin took the Second Breath at the end of the 19th century, in the waters off Macao's coast. Her teacher and mentor in



unlike was Tang Bei, a Resplendent Crane of the Empty Throne sect. Under his tutelage, Han Hui learned the value of subtlety, since Macao's Kuei-jin existed under the foreign rule of the Portuguese and their accompanying Kin-jin. Han Hui learned her lessons well, but eventually became disillusioned with Tang Bei's conservative and cautious ways. Subtlety was important, but so was action, and the Empty Throne sect would likely wait until the Sixth Age arrived before taking decisive measures.

In the early 1960s, Han Hui made her way to Guangdong and earned a place in the August Courts. There she found like-minded Kuei-jin among the Bamboo Princes, though she was wise enough to conceal her sympathies and not voice them too loudly. Instead, she offered her services to the Courts in the Middle Kingdom's most difficult and dangerous places. She achieved a reputation for results, which allowed the Honored Ancestors to overlook her other faults, like her disdain for convention. Her *wu*, the Violet Path Posse, comprised like-minded young Kuei-jin who rose in the August Courts' esteem for their aid in restoring Macao to the Quincunx, followed by their work in Shanghai against the *akuma*.

The Violet Path Posse traveled to San Diego at the request of the Ancestors. There they met stiff resistance from the local anarchs, forcing them to withdraw and help the Los Angeles initiative. During that campaign, Han Hui worked with other Kuei-jin progressives like Fun Toy and Monkey Trip Wu, only to discover they didn't meet her expectations. Instead, many so-called "progressives" had no interest in modernizing the August Courts. They sought to tear them down and replace them, or else were solely interested in their private agendas. Although she continued to support her peers, Han Hui distanced herself from those she found unworthy. This probably saved Han Hui when Monkey Trip Wu lost his ancestorship in Los Angeles (detailed in **Dharma Book: Thrashing Dragons**).

Han Hui became known for accomplishing tasks in Los Angeles and San Francisco, a quality the August Courts need at this time. She is not entirely loyal to the Fence Menders faction. Concerns exist about her willingness to ignore tradition in pursuit of her goals, especially when combined with her talent for subtle political manipulation (more subtle than most of her enemies realize). Still, she may prove the least problematic choice in the eyes of the Honored Ancestors. As an eager reformist, she understands and desires the influence she could wield as San Francisco's ancestor. The end result of that knowledge means that she will remove anyone who proves a threat to her ambitions. Her methods will be as subtle as possible, but no less decisive—or permanent.

Image: Han Hui is a slight woman whose size and build belies her considerable strength and stamina. She wears her hair fairly short, emulating any number of modern styles. She likewise prefers contemporary clothing—from jeans and boots to a finely tailored power suit. She often wears sunglasses, and likes long, flowing coats (the better to conceal a weapon or two). Her appearance is otherwise plain, but she radiates confidence and competence. She's gregarious rather than seductive, and has a way of sounding reasonable regardless her statements.

Roleplaying Notes: You have a vision, which you dedicate your existence to making a reality. The Quincunx's Courts are so bound by ancient tradition and political games that they've become powerless, allowing *gweilo* to ride them roughshod. Even with the Sixth Age staring them in the face, they refuse to change, but they must if they want to survive... and you will show them how. The Kuei-jin must hold on to the core of their ancient heritage and discard what does not serve them in this new age. In the past, you placed your hopes for reform in others, but they always disappointed you. Now you realize there's no one else who can do what needs to be done. It's up to you.

Nature: Architect

P'o Nature: Barbarian

Demeanor: Competitor

Balance: Balanced

Direction: East

Dharma: Way of the Resplendent Crane 5

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Leadership 5, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 5, Etiquette 3, Firearms 2, Martial Arts 3, Enigmas 3, Investigation 4, Linguistics 2, Occult 3, Politics 4, Rituals 3

Disciplines: Black Wind 2, Blood Shintai 2, Internalize 4, Obligation 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 5, Horoscope 3, Resources 4

Yin: 4, **Yang:** 4, **Hun:** 5, **P'o:** 4, **Willpower:** 8

Lili Zhou

Bone Flower Mandarin of the New Promise

Background: Near the turn of the century, Lili Zhou worked as an interpreter at Hong Kong's British Consulate. When an assistant to the consul raped and murdered her, it caused a spot of tension between the British and Chinese governments before they quietly swept the entire matter under the rug and forgot about it.

Lili, however, would never forget. Her soul suffered for months in Yomi until she escaped and took the Second Breath. She then set about avenging herself. The Kuei-jin followed the trail of murdered and half-eaten Britons and quickly found her. It was another matter handled quietly and soon forgotten — again, by everyone except Lili.

After training to master her Demon, Lili followed the Howl of the Devil-Tiger Dharma. She satisfied her thirst for vengeance on the *gweilo* as part of the Victorious Whirlwind *wu* and their fight to reclaim Hong Kong for the Flame Court. Eventually, however, her temper cooled, and she found no meaning in the ways of the Heavenly Devils. She sought to hide her confusion in blood, almost single-handedly rooting out several of Hong Kong's Kin-jin and savagely sending them to their Final Deaths. Afterward, though, she felt no triumph — only a gnawing emptiness. Finally, epiphany opened her eyes and she realized her true path. She left the Devil-Tiger Dharma behind and listened to the Song of the Shadow.

Lili faced prejudice from both former and new associates over her change of heart, but she eventually joined the Metal Dragon Talon *wu*, made up of Bone Flowers. The *wu*'s other members were less than pleased with the notion, but had little choice but accept the mandarin's decision. Lili quickly proved her worth with her dedication and skill, winning the admiration and respect of her *wu*. The Metal Dragon Talon became an effective weapon in the battle for Hong Kong, but the

ancestors decided they would be even more effective in gaining control over San Francisco.

Lili and her corpse family were among the first Kuei-jin to touch the shores of San Francisco as part of the silent invasion. Before the Kin-jin understood the unfolding danger, two of the city's primogen met Final Death and the city all but belonged to the Quincunx. As a reward for her work, Lili became a New Promise Mandarin; the August Courts, however, promoted her with an eye on keeping her in San Francisco and away from the Middle Kingdom.

Lili knows full well there are still those who view her change in Dharma with suspicion, and her rapid rise with envy and fear. She accepts the accolades of the August Courts and her "exile" to San Francisco because she sees potential in the New Promise Mandarinate, and intends to surprise those who think to "honor" her into obscurity.

Currently, Lili is Jiejie Li's favored choice as San Francisco's Ancestor. While Lili admires the Bone Flower Ancestor and respects her work, she's not a devotee of the Harmonious Menders of Broken Fences or their ideals. In truth, this serves the Elder Sister Plum well. This way nobody can accuse her of appointing a sycophant in Lili, who is more of a traditionalist — though not necessarily enough of one to satisfy the August Courts.

Image: Lili Zhou possesses the beauty — and cold touch — of a finely crafted statue. It is a beauty that brought about her death, and one she has honed into a weapon since taking the Second Breath. She has long midnight hair that usually falls in cascades around her expressionless face with its fine porcelain skin. She wears her hair up when she requires stealth or must act quickly. She is tall with a statuesque figure; lean and agile. She prefers dressing in tight black clothing for all but the most formal occasions, and even then favors black robes with accents of white, yellow and the pink of faded cherry blossoms.

Roleplaying Notes: Once you raged and screamed until your throat was bare and your spirit spent. Now you grow comfortable in your emptiness and cultivate the Cold Mind, allowing you to calm your fury and see clearly. You find it unfortunate that so many others lack your clarity of thought and vision, but you understand it is your duty to guide them toward righteous action. You see too many followers of your own Dharma trapped in inaction and indecision. The key is to still the mind so that action is effortless, in harmony with the Way. That is why you accomplish what you must, without fear or regret, and why in the end you will succeed.

Nature: Fanatic

P'o Nature: Slave

Demeanor: Judge

Balance: Yin

Direction: South

Dharma: The Song of the Shadow 5

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3



Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Dodge 4, Empathy 1, Enigmas 3, Etiquette 3, Expression 3, Investigation 2, Linguistics 4, Martial Arts 4, Melee 3, Occult 2, Rituals 3, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4, Survival 1

Disciplines: Bone Shintai 4, Demon Shintai 3, Flesh Shintai 2, Yin Prana 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Horoscope 2

Yin: 6, **Yang:** 4, **Hun:** 4, **P'o:** 5, **Willpower:** 8

SONG FENG

Devil Tiger Mandarin of the New Promise

Background: Opportunities abounded in turn-of-the-century Hong Kong for both Europeans and those Chinese willing to either work for *gweilo* masters or turn to crime. Song Feng did both. He served as an accountant for a British shipping company while secretly providing his services to the Heaven and Earth Society, an influential Triad using the company's resources to smuggle contraband in and out of Hong Kong. Song Feng enjoyed the high life bought through his illegal gains, but it caught up with him when his employers discovered his "moonlighting." Fearing the authorities, Feng ran to his criminal associates for aid; they decided it was best if the trail ended with him. Shortly thereafter, police found Song Feng executed as a warning to anyone who crossed the Triads. Not long afterwards, his unleashed P'o rose from Yomi and he took the Second Breath.

What arose in Song Feng's place was the antithesis of the scheming and weak man he had been; instead it was a marvelous devil of hatred and hunger. He fell upon the men of the Heaven and Earth Society, quickly drawing the attention of other Kuei-jin who captured him and helped leash the raging Demon. He learned from the talons and hot irons of the August Body of Sagacious Devils. It was almost a forgone conclusion he would

choose the Howl of the Devil Tiger as his Dharma upon entering Kuei-jin society.

Song Feng didn't allow his innate cleverness or knowledge to drown in blood, however. He realized they were some of the most important traits he offered the August Courts, along with a desire to punish the wicked and cast foreigners from the Middle Kingdom's shores. His rise through the ranks and his work with various Scarlet Screens drew the attention of the Electric Money Wickedness Club (see **Dharma Book: Devil Tigers**, p. 44), which recruited Feng for their operations. Feng truly found an environment where he thrived.

A combination of business sense and utter ruthlessness made Feng invaluable to the mandarins and ancestors of the club's Board of Directors. He personally handled operations abroad, and was as comfortable working via a cell phone or laptop as he was taking a direct hand in matters. He remained politically conservative enough to satisfy the August Courts but progressive enough to serve the Wickedness Club and its Board effectively. His insight exposed several Ventrue and Tremere financial weaknesses in Hong Kong that the club exploited, weakening the Kin-jin's power base.

It was that expertise that made Feng an ideal choice to handle the more esoteric business matters concerning the New Promise Mandarinate. He jumped at the chance, understanding the value of San Francisco like few others in the August Courts. Unlike the traditionalists, Song Feng has no illusions about the Middle Kingdom's imposed isolation from the rest of the world. It's too late for that. If the Kuei-jin are to survive the Sixth Age, then they must expand and strengthen their domain's borders. More so, they must have allies, while ensuring no enemies lie at their backs. Feng is uncertain about the Kin-jin, but he does see San Francisco as an important part of the future.

Image: With his thin build and unassuming manner, Song Feng doesn't fit the image of a Devil Tiger warrior. Anyone looking into his dark eyes, however, can see the burning embers of a true Heavenly Devil staring back. He usually dresses in dark, conservative business suits, always with a tie and jacket although he frequently takes the jacket off when working indoors. He wears stylish horn-rimmed glasses, but he doesn't need them. Stripping away the glasses, shirt and tie reveals the Devil beneath. Elaborate tattoos that are marked by scars adorn Song Feng's chest and back. In battle, he prefers to fight shirtless and wear only loose-fitting pants.

Roleplaying Notes: Once everyone used and then ignored you, but you will not be denied any longer. Now others obey, respect and fear you. You are confident, assured you possess an advantage because you understand the modern world and its intricacies. Your superiors often rely on you for your expertise, and San Francisco is the perfect environment to show everyone what you can accomplish. You plan to stay a while, and that means ensuring you call the shots.



Nature: Judge

P'o Nature: Barbarian

Demeanor: Competitor

Balance: Balanced

Direction: East

Dharma: Howl of the Devil Tiger 5

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 1, Athletics 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3, Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Martial Arts 3, Performance 2, Stealth 2, Torture 3, Academics 2, Computer 2, Finance 4, Law 2, Linguistics 2, Politics 3

Disciplines: Black Wind 2, Blood Shintai 3, Demon Shintai 2, Internalize 2, Yang Prana 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 4, Resources 4

Yin: 4, **Yang:** 5, **Hun:** 4, **P'o:** 5, **Willpower:** 8

FU PENG

Minister of the Office of Eastern Affairs

Background: Fu Peng is not an ambitious man. All he ever sought is to serve his betters well, even though they are not always worthy of his skill. In fact, he was once a mortal minister to the Emperor himself, until he found a new master: opium. He catered to his addiction with great attention and neglected his duties, dying a broken and disgraced man. His soul was drawn like smoke into the mouth of Yomi where he suffered in the Hell of Being Burned Alive, the chains of addiction fettering him and reminding him of his dishonor. Although he was unable to break those chains in life, his spirit proved stronger in death.

Fu Peng struggled his way out of Yomi and back to the body he left behind. For him, the hunger for Chi was a familiar sensation, and he overcame the Demon with the same sense of will and determination that won him his freedom from Hell. He stared into the depths of his own soul, felt the terrible tortures of Yomi and awakened to the Second Breath. Fu Peng dedicated his new existence to humility and service. He proved an apt student and eventually followed the Way of the Resplendent Crane, seeking perfection within himself.

Remarkably humble for a Resplendent Crane, Fu Peng found favor in the Blood Court from patrons eager for his expertise. He proved an able administrator and organizer. He was diligent and skilled and, most importantly, allowed his masters to claim credit for his successes while he accepted the blame for their failures. This led Fu Peng to his current position. When his master helped bring about the downfall of Mandarin Hao Wei-Liang by delaying reinforcements for his troops in Los Angeles, the blame fell at Fu Peng's feet. The Blood Court quietly transferred him to San Francisco while they dealt with matters. Not long thereafter, documents clearly implicating Fu Peng's master as *akuma* surfaced and he



met the Eye of Heaven. Fu Peng's only regret was that he was not on hand to see it personally.

Jiejie Li appointed Fu Peng Minister of the Office of Eastern Affairs in San Francisco, placing the quiet and humble administrator in charge of keeping order in the city and balancing the demands of the Cloud Mandarins. He took to the challenge with great zeal, though it has proven more difficult than he anticipated. Things work differently in San Francisco, and people often sacrifice time-honored techniques and traditions in the name of expediency.

In addition, there are always the Kin-jin to worry about. Fu Peng finds his Western counterpart, Jochen Van Nuys, a useful resource in this regard, and he almost enjoys the man's company. The Kindred, however, is still far too enraptured by material concerns and idle amusement for Fu Peng's taste.

Many of San Francisco's vampires would be surprised to learn that Fu Peng doesn't possess any designs on becoming the city's ancestor, nor is he even in the running. He's perfectly content with the role of minister, and intends to serve the new ancestor faithfully as the real power behind the throne. Until the Quincunx chooses an ancestor, however, Fu Peng strives to make himself indispensable to the mandarins.

Image: Fu Peng looks like he would be at home working in a small garden rather than a city. He was an old man when he died, and his use of opium aged him further. His face is deeply lined and his hair gray, but still abundant. His fingernails are yellowed and long, and he always keeps his hands neatly folded when he stands or speaks. He wears traditional Chinese clothing unless the situation demands otherwise, and it surprises many when he suddenly appears, thanks to his silent step.

Roleplaying Notes: You acted shamefully in your life but you earned the opportunity for redemption in the eyes of Heaven through service in this unlife. You do not attend to any

one person, but to the cause of righteousness and reparation, the creation of perfect order and harmony. You effect change quietly, behind the scenes. Let others step forward to claim leadership and make themselves targets. You know leaders lead, but it is their followers who pursue action.

Nature: Perfectionist

P'o Nature: Barbarian

Demeanor: Curmudgeon

Balance: Balanced

Direction: North

Dharma: Way of the Resplendent Crane 4

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Expression 1, Subterfuge 4, Etiquette 4, Meditation 2, Melee 1, Performance 2, Stealth 3, Academics 1, Investigation 3, Law 1, Linguistics 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 3

Disciplines: Black Wind 1, Blood Shintai 2, Equilibrium 2, Tapestry 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3

Yin: 4, **Yang:** 4, **Hun:** 5, **P'o:** 3, **Willpower:** 7

THE FOREIGNER-VANQUISHING CRUSADERS

Although technically a part of the New Promise Mandarinate by fiat of the Quincunx's Honored Ancestors, the Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders find themselves torn between their duties and their ambitions. The faction consists of Kuei-jin looking to repay the *gweilo* for the troubles they visited upon the Middle Kingdom, with interest. This specifically includes the Kin-jin, whom Kuei-jin blame for the August Courts' corruption.

Normally the Crusaders would deem the invasion of Los Angeles and San Francisco a success, except that a rival faction — the Fence Menders — accomplished the task, making it *their* victory. Although circumstance forces the Fence Menders to carry out plans set in motion by the Crusaders, they also earn credit for their success. Perhaps more grievous an insult, the Ancestors try to silence those voices demanding more action. It is clear to the Crusaders that the Quincunx hopes the flame of retribution will gutter and die without the fuel of more victories to keep it burning. The Crusaders' loyalists, however, do not intend to give them the satisfaction.

The Crusaders face the task of thwarting the Fence Menders' agendas while appearing loyal to the Quincunx's will, thus improving their own chances at implementing the Ash Plan (a glorious crusade against the unrighteous that will surely draw the approval of Heaven). They hope to embarrass the New Promise Mandarinate — preferably in such a way as to blame the Kin-jin, inflaming righteous wrath against them so the Ancestors will charge the Crusaders with wiping out the barbarians once and for all.

San Francisco's Kindred are partially aware of the hawks and warmongers among the Cathayans, while the Kuei-jin are fully cognizant of the Crusaders and their intentions. Jiejie Li does her best to return known and vocal members of the faction to other posts in the Middle Kingdom, but even she cannot remove all of the supporters without risking a backlash and sympathetic support for the Crusaders' cause. Already the righteous Kuei-jin displaced from their glorious crusade raise speculation and rumor back home. Why does the Elder Sister Plum want to take the Quincunx's finest soldiers and leaders off the front lines? What does she fear from the righteous devils who want only to fight corruption? The Elder Sister maintains that the New Promise Mandarinate needs diplomacy and subtlety, not warriors, but the doubts linger in the August Courts through whispers.

This is why Jiejie Li misleads the Crusaders into believing they haven't circumvented the wards entirely yet; the Crusaders do not know about the ritual Obliterate the Battlements. She uses this falsehood to keep them reined in. As long as they labor under the assumption they remain trapped, their ardor to continue their invasion across the West Coast or usurp the Fence Menders cools in turn.

MAXIMUM SUN

Resplendent Crane Mandarin of the Emerald Ministry

Background: The Emerald Ministry *wu* Mandarin has long been a rising star of the Blood Court and the Quincunx. He's ambitious but young for his position, having taken the Second Breath less than a century ago. If he had chosen his political leanings differently, he would almost certainly be one of San Francisco's Cloud Mandarins. As it stands now, however, there's little chance Maximum Sun will hold power in the city, although perhaps not so small a chance as some believe.

The highly conservative Sun quickly sided with the Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders in the Blood Court, calling for action to stem the tide of corruption propelling the world ever faster toward the Sixth Age. The Emerald Ministry *wu* was already well known for its martial outlook and abilities as it guided several client *wu*, instructing them in the arts of war. The Quincunx chose the Ministry to spearhead the Los Angeles invasion, which it did, scoring impressive victories against the Kin-jin. They also suffered heavy losses both when the anarch resistance struck back hard and in the storm paralyzing the Yin world. Currently, the Emerald Ministry controls only two other *wu*, formed from the remains of its clients. Maximum Sun looks to recruit new *jina* and disciples to the cause.

The Emerald Ministry's valiant action in battle allowed them to remain in North America after Mandarin Hao faced the Eye of Heaven and the Fence Menders assumed operations of the Glorious Ocean-Crossing Warriors. Jiejie Li could not reassign Maximum Sun so easily, and he didn't intend to allow the Fence Menders to run the show unchallenged. Instead, the Mandarin and his Emerald Ministry have become the unofficial eyes and ears of



conservatives within the August Courts. This suits the Honored Ancestors, who know Maximum Sun would gladly contribute to Jiejie Li's fall, if given the opportunity. If the New Promise Mandarinate fails, then the Emerald Ministry will gladly put it out of its misery. Such a service to the Quincunx might earn Maximum Sun a promotion, perhaps even to ancestor. He therefore watches for the loose thread that will unravel the Fence Menders' plans and leave them vulnerable.

Under normal conditions, the Mandarin of the Emerald Ministry would be content to wait and pick his opportunities. Recent events, however, have made that more difficult. During the Los Angeles conflict, Maximum Sun fell victim to a Kin-jin curse that rots his body from the inside out, filling his guts and skull with maggots that squirm unceasingly. Sun has had no success in seeking a cure for his condition, partially because there are few Kuei-jin sorcerers in North America he trusts. His balance toward Yin hindered the growth of the vermin, but not the rotting of his innards. Sun slows that process down by indulging in human flesh to replenish himself. If the truth of his condition and method of treatment were to surface, the Emerald Mandarin would not survive the night. In light of this, he carefully isolates himself and sees only his most trusted underlings.

The Tremere who cast the curse met his Final Death more than a year ago, but others (notably Luna Demain, p. 110) can undo the spell. Maximum Sun knows the price will be high, and is unwilling to even consider dealing with the barbaric Kin-jin at the moment. He's aware of Wan Zhu (p. 88) and wants to ascertain her loyalties before approaching her about his problem. Although she is a degenerate Kin-jin, she is at least Chinese with little love for the Westerners.

Maximum Sun's condition forces him — normally a creature of action — to accomplish his goals through underlings, blinds and Scarlet Screens. He has agents trying to learn more about the Kin-jin's occult secrets (supposedly to overcome threats like the wards placed around San Francisco). He also has followers watching for any sign of weakness on the New Promise Mandarinate's part, something the Crusaders can turn to their advantage and use to expose the Mandarinate as a hollow sham.

Image: Maximum Sun normally cuts an imposing figure. His composure is serene, his flesh like white jade and he dons black garments of the Eightfold Yin Mantle, pure Yin energy so dark it seems to soak up the light falling upon his form. His appearance suffers from his curse. Yin energy fills his corpse, rendering his gray flesh even more pallid and pulling it tightly over his bones. His belly swells lightly from his decomposition and from the swarming maggots, which also make his voice hoarse and sometimes send him into a coughing fit (which always dislodges a few maggots from his throat). These days he favors more traditional, loose-fitting dark robes over modern suits. Whenever possible he keeps the environment around him very cold. Stepping into his study or private limo is like walking into a refrigerator. He smokes and uses copious incense to cover the reek of decay clinging to his skin.

Roleplaying Notes: You are a righteous agent of Heaven and you will see the corruption threatening the Middle Kingdom swept away in a cleansing fire. From the ashes will arise new opportunities, when the Honored Ancestors recognize the virtue of your cause. You suffer greatly, but that is to be expected. The righteous always suffer, but you will persevere. You will overcome this curse and any other obstacle in your path. You will be there when the Quincunx stands in judgement of those who would corrupt it by making alliances with the Kin-jin and their degenerate ilk.

Nature: Deviant

P'o Nature: Barbarian

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Balance: Yin

Direction: South

Dharma: Way of the Resplendent Crane 5

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Dodge 4, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 3, Martial Arts 4, Melee 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Enigmas 1, Linguistics 2, Occult 2, Politics 3

Disciplines: Black Wind 3, Blood Shintai 3, Ghost-Flame Shintai 4, Obligation 3, Yin Prana 5

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Resources 3

Yin: 5, **Yang:** 4, **Hun:** 5, **P'o:** 4, **Willpower:** 7

Fei Chian

Resplendent Crane Warrior of the Emerald Ministry

Background: Fei Chian's mortal life left much to be desired; wealth, freedom, opportunity... all lacking. He saw the People's Republic army as his chance to better his life away from his village and to make his family proud. He was an officer by the time China entered the Korean War, and he led his men on the battlefield to the best of his ability. Chian keenly felt the loss of each casualty under his command. He considered them his personal responsibility, his personal failures. Their deaths haunted his dreams until he could no longer endure the stress of fighting. He could not live with the responsibility, so he decided to abandon his post and surrender to the enemy. Chian never really had the opportunity.

Not long after leaving camp, the enemy began their offensive. Torn by the desire to flee and the need to help his men, he went back. A sentry mistook him for the enemy, however, and shot him dead. His soul heavy with guilt, Fei Chian fell into Yomi, where devils wearing faces of men who died under his command forced him to relive every moment of their terrible deaths. Chian sank into a burning mire of shame and torment, but that small part of him that instilled responsibility and forced him to turn back rather than abandon his post ignited. His righteous anger burned fiercely and he tore free from the iron barbs digging deep into him. He fought his way from the depths of the Yomi World and back into his body, in a bag at a medical station.

The disappearance of a single corpse was not so unusual. Fei Chian's family, who were told he deserted his post, hung their heads in shame over his cowardly death. No one mourned him properly, but Fei Chian soon

learned it didn't matter. He'd been given another chance. In his time as a Blood Court *hin*, he quickly embraced the Way of the Resplendent Crane. He was unworthy, but in the end he showed a moment of true clarity and righteousness. If he cultivated those qualities, then he might find redemption. So, too, might the whole world, if shown "the Way."

Chian's dedication to his duties earned him the praise of teachers and the attention of Maximum Sun, of the Emerald Ministry *wu*. He asked the young *jina* to join the Flashing Swords *wu* sponsored by the Ministry, which Chian gladly accepted. He served the cause of righteousness and joined his brothers and sisters in supporting the Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders and their Ash Plan. The corrupt influences of the Kin-jin and other dupes of the Yama Kings had to be uprooted.

Fei Chian saw action with the Flashing Swords in Los Angeles, but only he and one other from his *wu* survived the conflict with the Kin-jin. For his valor (which saved his *wu* -mate from Final Death), Fei Chian replaced a fallen member of the Emerald Ministry with great honor. Since then, Maximum Sun depends on Chian to accomplish matters and act as his hands, eyes and voice while the Mandarin isolates himself. Fei Chian knows about Maximum Sun's condition and blames it entirely on Kin-jin as a whole. His position as envoy for the Emerald Ministry puts him into regular contact with the Kuei-jin and even the Kin-jin of San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Image: Fei Chian looks like an earnest young man in his mid-twenties, with short hair and a serious, sometimes sour, look on his face — particularly when dealing with Westerners. He often wears para-military style fatigues (without any insignia) to remind himself of his position. He rarely travels unarmed and usually carries a pistol in a shoulder holster beneath his jacket. He's polite and deferent to his superiors and stern but fair with those under him, but cold and disdainful to anyone he considers unworthy.

Roleplaying Notes: You shamed yourself in life and brought about your current state, but the Second Breath offers you another chance to redeem yourself. Through right action, you can master the Demon within you and purify your soul. Even if you remain forever damned, you can still choose the right course and keep the world from the greedy Yama Kings. You sometimes take personal responsibility for everything, even those things outside your duties. You admire Maximum Sun greatly and would do anything for him, including sacrificing your own honor to protect and preserve his. You only recently realized this, and have since begun to consider ways to help your Mandarin regain his dignity and position of strength. Perhaps the Kin-jin's corrupt sorcerers have the answers... if you can capture one unnoticed.

Nature: Martyr

P'o Nature: Slave

Demeanor: Director

Balance: Yang



Direction: North

Dharma: Way of the Resplendent Crane 4

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Leadership 2, Streetwise 1, Etiquette 1, Firearms 4, Martial Arts 3, Melee 2, Security 2, Stealth 3, Survival 1, Investigation 2, Linguistics 1, Medicine 1, Politics 1

Disciplines: Blood Shintai 3, Demon Shintai 2, Flame Shintai 1, Yang Prana 2, Obligation 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Mentor (Maximum Sun) 3, Resources 2

Yin: 3, **Yang:** 4, **Hun:** 4, **P'o:** 4, **Willpower:** 6

ALLIES

WAN ZHU

Background: Wan Zhu fled China's Cultural Revolution, knowing there would be no place for an intelligent, educated woman in the new People's Republic. Like many others, she sought refuge in Hong Kong, and eventually became curator of Wanchai's Museum of Chinese Historical Relics.

Wan Zhu made the acquaintance of a silver-haired English gentleman who visited the museum each evening shortly before it closed. He explained that he was a collector and student of Chinese culture. Wan Zhu found his knowledge and insight impressive for a Westerner. She also found his attention and interest in her opinion both flattering and attractive. Against her better judgement, she spent more time with her newfound friend, even after the museum closed for the night. It was a special part of an otherwise lonely life.

One night, Wan Zhu's gentleman friend asked to see her after-hours, claiming he possessed a new acquisition, a rare jade artifact he wanted her to authenticate before donating it to the museum. Excited by the prospect of such a find, Wan Zhu gave no thought to being in danger. When he arrived, her friend Oliver Thrace revealed his true nature and Embraced Wan Zhu. He had been studying her for some time, and she was just what he needed: an intelligent and capable Chinese woman to act as his agent. Thrace blood-bound Wan Zhu despite his clan's prohibitions to ensure her loyalty.

The following nights began Wan Zhu's education in obedience and humiliation under Oliver Thrace's tutelage. Although she felt betrayed and used by Thrace, the blood bond overwhelmed her hatred; she couldn't help but accommodate his bidding. She learned of the conflict between the foreign Kindred and the Cathayans. Thrace taught her enough to "pass" as Kuei-jin for a short time, allowing her to spy and gather information on the mysterious Wan Kuei. He also taught Wan Zhu the arts of

Thaumaturgy. She proved a promising student, so much so Thrace was careful not to teach her too much.

Wan Zhu hated her sire, but had little choice but to act as his agent in Hong Kong, learning all that she could about the Kuei-jin and their activities. She was actually a very effective actress and discovered abilities she never knew she possessed. Were it not for her enforced servitude, she might have come to enjoy her new existence. Freedom and revenge were ever Wan Zhu's companions, though. Zhu convinced herself she needed to go behind Thrace's back and study his occult tomes and grimoires. She told herself that knowing more would make her more useful to him, but deep down Wan Zhu knew she wanted more power, enough power to break his hold over her soul.

Thrace vanished one night when the war for Hong Kong shifted in the Kuei-jin's favor. Wan Zhu didn't question her good fortune. Instead, she took what grimoires and tomes she could and used resources she knew Thrace kept hidden, arranging her own escape to San Francisco. There she disappeared into Chinatown. With nothing more than patience, willpower and enforced separation from her sire, she overcame Thrace's blood bond. Finally, she had her freedom.

Unfortunately, the conflict in Hong Kong quickly followed Wan Zhu to San Francisco. When the Kuei-jin invaded the city, Wan Zhu was trapped. She knew she would not survive alone if either faction decided she was a threat; she also detested the Tremere and by extension, all Kin-jin. Instead, she offered her aid to the New Promise Mandarinate, which was wise enough to realize



her true value. They accepted Wan Zhu despite the concerns of some traditionalists. She has since given the Mandarinate valuable insights, and her mystic skills prove quite useful. One of her most important contributions has been in partially circumventing the Tremere wards.

Jiejie Li hasn't told Wan Zhu that Oliver Thrace betrayed the Kindred and is under her protection. Regardless, Wan Zhu isn't stupid. She knows about Obliterate the Battlements because the Cloud Mandarins wanted to know if she could cast it (she cannot). Wan Zhu now wonders who possesses the acumen and ability to cast a Tremere spell of that power, but Jiejie Li suspiciously circumvents her questions. Wan Zhu believes Thrace may be behind the ritual, but she has no idea how close her sire and former master is to her, or that he looks forward to binding her to his service again quite soon — a fate she would consider worse than damnation itself.

Image: Wan Zhu is an elegant, mature woman whose eyes gleam with intelligence. She normally dresses in fairly traditional Chinese clothing and carries herself with an air of quiet dignity. She's learned to stay silent most of the time, speaking only when she needs to but listening carefully to everything going on around her. She typically wears her long hair bound up. She can use her sharp hairpins as weapons or tools in a pinch.

Roleplaying Notes: Once you were a slave, taken and made into a monster by a man you liked. Now you trust no one, and you will never be enslaved again. You hate what you've become and you hate the creatures that made you. The honor and civility of Kuei-jin society attracts you, and allows you to overlook the fact they are as much monsters as the Kindred they fight. You will make a place for yourself within the New Promise Mandarinate and see some Kindred burn along the way... if the Kuei-jin don't betray you as well. The ritual Obliterate the Battlements throws you for a loop, however, because it reminds you of Thrace's handiwork. You wonder what became of your sire and tormenter. Although you would dearly love to see him burn to ash, you also fear he would awaken the feelings of loyalty and desire you hope remain buried forever.

Clan: Tremere

Sire: Oliver Thrace

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Conformist

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1974

Apparent Age: Mid 30s

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Leadership 1, Crafts (Brush-painting) 3, Drive 2, Etiquette 3, Instruction 3, Performance (Lectures) 2, Repair 3, Bureaucracy 2, Computer 2, History (Chinese) 5, Investigation (Archeological) 4, Linguistics 3, Occult (Chinese) 4, Science (archeology) 4

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Fortitude 2, Presence 2, Thaumaturgy 4 (Path of Blood)

Rituals: Communicate with Kindred Sire, Defense of the Sacred Haven, Encrypt Missive, Expedient Paperwork, Learning the Mind Enslumbered, Purge the Inner Demon, Sanguineous Phial, the Scribe, Wake with Evening's Freshness, Craft Bloodstone, Ward Versus Ghouls, Ward Versus Cathayans, Bone of Lies, Scry

Backgrounds: Resources 2

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

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 6

Notes: Thrace deliberately failed to teach Wan Zhu the Dominate Discipline in order to limit her influence.

OTHER KUEI-JIN

Of course, the Kuei-jin are by no means the only Demon People in San Francisco. In fact, they're relative newcomers. There are Kuei-jin who have existed in San Francisco for generations, many of whom resent the Quincunx's "protection." There are also new Kuei-jin arrivals interested in the Great Leap Outward, although their agendas and those of the August Courts' rarely coincide. The Kindred only now understand (and barely) that not all Cathayans follow the will of the Quincunx, something the Western vampires may be able to turn to their advantage.

THE GREEN COURTS

The vampires of Korea's Green Courts take a keen interest in the Great Leap Outward and the renewed vigor infusing the Quincunx's August Courts. For centuries, the Green Courts remained carefully nonpartisan in the politics of the Middle Kingdom, a strategy that served them well. Their neutrality made them the crossroads for Kuei-jin and other *shen* avoiding the attention of the Middle Kingdom's more active powers. The Parallel Path where Kuei-jin can find shelter netted the Courts much jade and influence.

Now the creation of the New Promise Mandarinate threatens to upset the Green Courts' long-standing monopoly as a safe haven for those on the fringes of Kuei-jin society. Many outcast or rogue vampires make their way to Los Angeles and San Francisco, either to lose themselves among the press of the mortal herd or possibly redeem themselves in their elders' eyes. Opportunities exist in the West for those willing to seize them. This decreases the number of Kuei-jin traveling the Parallel Path and therefore the tribute flowing into the Green Courts' coffers. If the New Promise Mandarinate becomes a true, stable court of the Quincunx, things can only grow worse. The Green Courts' mandarins and necromancers have reasons to ensure it never does.

THE GREEN TIGERS

The Green Tigers are a *wu* of Kuei-jin from the Green Courts. They are in North America gathering information on the New Promise Mandarinate's activities and weakening the Mandarinate when possible. If the Mandarinate succeeds, they will ensure the Green Courts gain from the Quincunx's crusade rather than losing the influence granted by the Parallel Path. The *wu* is aggressive — too aggressive according to some within the Green Courts, but they are successful thus far. The Mandarinate is not aware that some of the losses sustained by the Ocean-Crossing Warriors in Los Angeles were due to the Green Tigers; the *wu* now seeks similar opportunities in San Francisco.

The Green Tigers' tactics are simple. They carefully conceal their presence, survey the local situation and pick off stray Kuei-jin or Kin-jin whenever the chance arises. Their goal is to encourage conflict and keep the New Promise Mandarinate from becoming a viable alternative to the Parallel Path. The Tigers know they must not be caught, and they will sacrifice their unives if necessary to protect the Green Courts.

For more information on the Green Tigers *wu*, see *Killing Streets*, p. 73-76.

KIM JISUN

Devil-Tiger of the Green Tigers *wu*

Background: Like many of the Green Courts' young *jina*, Kim Jisun took the Second Breath about fifty years ago, during the Korean War. Her husband and two sons both died in the fighting and Jisun was left alone in a refugee camp. She became a communist guerilla fighter, where her capacity for ruthlessness surprised even her. Eventually South Korean forces captured and tortured her for information about the communist underground. In the end, after she broke down and told them everything she knew, they lined her up with other prisoners against a wall and executed her on a firing line.

For Kim Jisun, Hell came as little surprise, since she embarked on its road long before her death; the way she died, however, was bitter. She held on to the desire to avenge herself against her enemies and it sustained her. She freed the fierce and ruthless side of herself she'd discovered, and even Yomi could not hold her for long. Clawing her way out from the ditch where she'd been buried, Jisun took revenge on the soldiers whom she hated more than anything in the world.

It wasn't long before the Kuei-jin of the Green Courts noticed Jisun's presence and came for her. They offered her the first shelter she'd known since her family died, and they encouraged her ferocity. She chose the Howl of the Devil Tiger as her Dharma. Few who knew her in life would recognize Jisun in the fierce and determined warrior she became after the Second Breath. The war ended, as wars do, leaving the land and its people scarred; the Green



Courts went on, however, and Jisun dedicated herself to protecting them.

Jisun learned the secret ways of the Parallel Path, and how the arrogant Kuei-jin of other lands depended on the Green Courts for subtlety and protection. It brought her dead heart moments of grim pleasure watching others brought low, but also in helping them survive another night. She helped root out *akuma* and dealt with any threats to her home. In time, her *wu*, the Green Tigers, became renowned for their combat skills as well as their subtlety and stealth. Jisun quickly adapted what she had learned as a guerilla fighter and adopted modern wisdom from similar sources.

So it was that the Green Courts' Ancestors chose the Green Tigers to act on their behalf in North America. Jisun accepted the assignment with relish. It would be a pleasure turning the Quincunx's arrogance against them, forcing them into a conflict they couldn't win. In the end, she would watch the stragglers and survivors turn to the Green Courts for aid when they needed to disappear from the world for a time. Let them pose all they wanted. The Green Courts will have its desires.

Image: Jisun was always an average-looking woman, even when young. Time was not kind to her before the Second Breath. Her plain features have a hard cast to them, and she only smiles at quick moments of macabre joy. She wears her dark hair short, such that Jisun almost looks like a man if dressed appropriately. Her brown eyes are as cold as stone. She normally wears whatever

functional clothing is appropriate to the situation, most often favoring fatigues and sweats.

Ironically, Jisun's demon form is almost breathtakingly beautiful, but also terrible and savage. She becomes taller, more full-figured and athletic, with green skin as hard as jade, pointed ears and long, luxurious hair that writhes and grasps like tentacles. Her nails become iron claws and her eyes burn with hellish fire.

Roleplaying Notes: Life's a bitch, so you'd better become one if you want to survive — and you *will* survive. No matter what they throw at you, you'll show them that you're tougher. You hate Americans, Chinese, Japanese, all of the various nations and peoples who treated yours like pawns — or worse, animals for the slaughter. You derive pleasure from seeing the mighty and self-assured whittled down to nothing, and you pride yourself on the fact that few of them handle it as well as you have.

Nature: Survivor

P'o Nature: Demon

Demeanor: Masochist

Balance: Balanced

Direction: South

Dharma: Howl of the Devil Tiger 4

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2, Leadership 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge (Misdirection) 3, Firearms 4, Melee 3, Security 2, Stealth 4, Survival 4, Torture 3, Linguistics 1, Medicine 1

Disciplines: Black Wind 3, Demon Shintai 3 (Claws, Demon Armor, Tail)

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 2, Horoscope 1, Resources 2

Yin: 4, **Yang:** 4, **Hun:** 3, **P'o:** 5, **Willpower:** 7

GAKI

It is the *gaki*'s lot to forever be at the mercy of the Quincunx, or so it seems to San Francisco's Japanese Kuei-jin. From their point of view, matters progressed well before the August Courts' politics and factionalism stumbled into their midst, scattering the skittish Kin-jin like starlings. Now San Francisco is an armed camp and the *Ukiyo* or "Floating World" *uji*'s decades of slow and steady progress have all but been washed away in a tide of blood. Needless to say, the recent turn of events displeases the *gaki*, but neither are they certain they can do much about it; at least not yet.

For the time being, the Japanese Kuei-jin quietly cooperate with the New Promise Mandarinate and keep Japan Center clear of any visible infractions of the Cloud Mandarins' decrees. Out of sight, they meet secretly to discuss the current situation, and even offer shelter to the Kin-jin who need shelter from the Mandarinate's omnipresent eyes for a night or two.

HINO YORINAGA

Shining Ice Guardian, *Daimyo* of the Floating World *uji*

Background: Hino-sama lived in a Nippon clinging desperately to a way of life fading under the demands of a modern world. The opening of Nippon to the Western world and the dissolution of the ancient samurai class made his nation small in Hino's eyes, less significant in the grand scheme of things. He often wished he'd been born generations earlier, when training as a samurai truly meant something. He found himself unable to keep pace with the changing world around him, preferring the stories of the glorious past.

When the Emperor decreed that samurai could not even carry their swords in public, Hino-sama retired to his home, dressed in a white robe and prepared to commit *seppuku* in protest. He wrote his death *haiku* and made all the preparations, but when the time came he discovered he couldn't fulfill the deed. He shamed himself terribly before his family and peers. After that, he sank into an empty existence, drinking heavily and living off what little money he possessed, dreaming of days past. What he could not do with a sword, Hino accomplished with a sake cup. He died choking on his own vomit, and Yomi dragged down his dishonored soul.

At first, Hino accepted the devils' lashes tearing his flesh as just punishment for his dishonor. He suffered his torment in stoic silence, knowing that the judgement of Heaven was exact. He might be suffering in Yomi still if he had not listened to the whispers and taunts of the devils provoking him. They told Hino about the coming of the Sixth Age, when the Demon Emperor would ascend to



the throne of Heaven and the world would fall into corruption; when the maws of Yomi would yawn wide into the world of the living. Although he believed himself unworthy, Hino-sama could not be such a coward that he would allow the world to fall to the Yomi Wan. He unleashed his righteous anger, broke the chains binding him and escaped from Hell.

Returning to the flesh once clothing him was another shameful experience for Hino-sama. He satisfied his hunger on victims before the *gaki* captured him. Once he subdued the Demon, Hino became an apt student of the Kuei-jin's ways. The Second Breath burned away his former apathy and despair, and he devoted his unlife to making amends for his failures; he devoted himself to righteousness and the Way of the Resplendent Crane. He earned the praise of his teachers and took his place in House Bishamon. People knew him as a conservative traditionalist and capable, if somewhat hidebound, *jina* of his House.

The end of World War II changed Hino-sama's views as dramatically as his first vision of the Yomi World. When the bombs fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the gates of Yomi opened wide for a moment, revealing a vision of Hell on Earth. In that second, Hino awakened from his deathly sleep and became enlightened. He understood that the world he once knew was dead; clinging to the past and its ways was what brought him to dishonor, what dragged him down to Yomi, and what was keeping him from progressing along his Dharmic path.

Hino-sama became one of the most reactionary voices among the Bishamon, calling for a move into the modern world so the *gaki* could use all their opportunities to greatest advantage. His pleas fell on deaf ears, however, and his critics often used Hino's previous arguments for tradition against him. Frustrated, he turned to House Genji, which reappeared after the war and embraced the same progressive ideas. Hino left Nippon when some of his former Bishamon superiors wanted to eliminate him. He went to San Francisco with a few loyal followers where he found a tiny, demoralized *gaki* community. Under his guidance, they created the *Ukiyo* or "Floating World" *uji*. In Hino's view, America defeated Japan because Americans willingly embraced the future. Therefore, the *Ukiyo* would learn to do the same.

The *gaki* made some inroads with San Francisco's Kindred, establishing pacts of mutual non-aggression and opening up the possibility of cooperation. The Japanese Kuei-jin were still careful to maintain their independence from the rule of the Camarilla Prince, while agreeing to follow the Masquerade. All of that collapsed, however, when the Quincunx invaded San Francisco and declared it part of the New Promise Mandarinate. Still, the *daimyo* of the Floating World refuses to give up, even with signs of the Sixth Age upon him.

Image: Hino-sama is a straight-backed dignified Japanese man with a noble bearing. Grey streaks his hair, and he still wears it drawn back in a short queue at the nape of his neck. Normally, he wears modern and fairly

formal (dark suits and the like) clothing, though he still prefers a comfortable pair of *hakama* and a *kimono* when at leisure (which is increasingly rare these days). Hino speaks perfectly fluent English (as well as Spanish, Korean and Cantonese) in a deep and soothing voice that crackles with authority. The *daimyo* rarely ever wears his samurai swords, which he still keeps in his home. The local *gaki* know it is a sign of trouble whenever Hino-sama appears anywhere armed. In these dangerous times, at least two *gaki* bodyguards accompany the *daimyo* everywhere.

Roleplaying Notes: You have much to atone for, and you have learned that inaction is not an appropriate response to your troubles. You went to Hell and returned to keep the rest of the world from suffering your fate. At first you thought it was through a strict adherence to traditional ways, but you gained some wisdom over the years and now understand the old ways must change and morality must fit the modern world's needs. Those who fight change are as unyielding as stone and you must eventually wear them away. Those who become part of change are as soft as water and flow with it. You are like water: yielding and adaptable, but capable of wearing away any resistance given time and patience. So it will be with the Quincunx and the Cloud Mandarins. You only hope you still have the time to accomplish what you need in ousting them before they invite the Sixth Age in upon the robes of ignorance.

Nature: Architect

P'o Nature: Fool

Demeanor: Pedagogue

Balance: Balanced

Direction: North

Dharma: Way of the Resplendent Crane 6

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 1, Etiquette 3, Martial Arts 3, Melee 4, Stealth 1, Academics 3, Computer 1, Finance 2, Investigation 3, Law 1, Linguistics 3, Politics 3

Disciplines: Black Wind 3, Blood Shintai 3, Equilibrium 3, Internalize 4, Obligation 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 3, Horoscope 3, Resources 3

Yin: 5, **Yang:** 5, **Hun:** 6, **P'o:** 4, **Willpower:** 8

SAKURAI MITSUMUNE

Wise Centipede *shugenja*

Background: Sakurai Mitsumune was too young to fight in World War II, but he recalls the war well; particularly Japan's defeat when the atomic bombs fell. His father died during the war, leaving 13-year old Mitsumune to care for his mother and two younger siblings. When a man came to their house and offered him work, Mitsumune knew he was with the Yakuza but he didn't much care. He took the job and joined the local Yakuza *gumi*. The black market boomed and there was

plenty of money to be made. Not only that, but the Yakuza considered Mitsumune a man, not a boy, which also meant he was a fair target in the eyes of competing gangs.

A rival gangster knifed Mitsumune, leaving him to bleed out his life in a filthy tenement. His mother reported him missing and the police searched, not knowing Mitsumune was already dead. His soul was in the depths of Yomi, wandering the streets of the Wicked City. Driven by the need to return to his family and avenge himself on his killer, Mitsumune found his way out of Hell while fending off the servants of the Yama King Mikaboshi. He took the Second Breath just as police were ready to give up the search; his first business was to feed on his killer. The *chih-meï* returned home, and Mitsumune wrestled with his Demon while watching his family's shadows move through the house from the cover of darkness. He won and convinced his mother and siblings he had been held captive, and that the police could not learn "the truth."

Mitsumune hid his condition from his family, but he could not hide it from the stranger who met him as he left home one night. She explained Mitsumune had risen from the dead to atone for his past mistakes, and offered to teach him. He accepted and learned to follow the Flame of the Rising Phoenix. His teacher encouraged Mitsumune to leave the Yakuza, but he had no other means of supporting his family and little education. He continued with the *gumi*, though he did his best to take his teacher's lessons to heart.

Mitsumune's Demon made him a force to be reckoned with, and word of this fierce young Yakuza spread. A *kobun* named Orano approached Mitsumune and revealed that he too was like Mitsumune and his teacher Michiko. He, however, was not bound to his old human life. In fact, his identity as Orano and a *kobun* was just a disguise for the powerful Kuei-jin beneath. He told Mitsumune that his

sensei's teachings were flawed; the path she showed him could only lead to ruin, but neither would Orano interfere nor even tell other vampires about Mitsumune since they would surely destroy him. He told the boy to come see him if he wanted to learn.

Growing increasingly frustrated with his teacher's demands about leaving the Yakuza and her insistence for duty and obligation, Mitsumune was drawn to this new *sensei*. He went to him infrequently at first, but then more and more often. From Orano he learned detachment: the need to leave his old life behind, to experience what the world could offer him so he could learn its lessons. Under Orano's guidance, he destroyed Michiko, his old teacher. Then he returned home and broke his remaining ties by killing his family. He set fire to the house and left without turning back.

Since then, Mitsumune has been a gangster, a schoolboy, a thief, a prostitute, a small-time Japanese pop star and many other things. Along the way he studied Kuei-jin occult lore and focused on an understanding of Chi and the power of the Dragon Lines, hoping to discover a means of purging the poison from the Dragon Nests of Nippon. When his mentor Orano broke their ties and moved on, Mitsumune did the same and went to San Francisco to study the Dragon Nests there, where he has since impressed Lord Hino with his knowledge.

Mitsumune advises Lord Hino on mystical matters while maintaining several guises in the city that he uses to observe and gather information. He is most concerned with the poisoning of the Dragon Nest in Bayview, and hopes to study the problem more closely.

Image: Sakurai Mitsumune looks like a tall, thin Japanese teenager, around 15 or 16 years old. He has short black hair, which he wears in any number of styles to suit his current guise. He's a virtual chameleon, changing mannerisms as easily as he does outfits to look like a hip American high-school student, a visiting Japanese tourist or a go-go boy in the Castro. He sometimes dresses as a woman and can carry it off quite well. With his rituals (like Wear the Lesser Mask, see **Dharma Book: Thousand Whispers**, p. 56), he can appear as virtually anyone. On the occasions when he's unmasked, like at Lord Hino's court, he favors a plain kimono or jeans and a tight-fitting t-shirt, all in white.

Roleplaying Notes: You wear a thousand different masks, but within you are as still and calm as the void. You can be wantonly flirtatious, wryly charming, cuttingly sarcastic, diplomatic... whatever the situation calls for. Your only goal is balance and detachment, which currently manifests in your desire to understand the *feng shui* of San Francisco and use it to help restore the balance to this embattled city. You admire and respect Lord Hino, but find the Quincunx's Kuei-jin shortsighted and foolish. The Kin-jin intrigue you, though they too are blind. You find your unpredictability puts most hidebound Kuei-jin off balance, and you like it that way.

Nature: Pedagogue



P'o Nature: Deceiver

Demeanor: Loner

Balance: Balanced

Direction: Center

Dharma: Path of a Thousand Whispers 4

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3, Crafts (Sculpting) 2, Etiquette 1, Firearms 2, Martial Arts 2, Melee 2, Performance 3, Portents 3, Stealth 3, Academics 2, Enigmas 3, Investigation 3, Linguistics 2, Occult 3, Politics 1, Rituals 4

Disciplines: Demon Shintai 2 (Demon Armor, Demon Weapon), Equilibrium 2, Feng Shui 2, Jade Shintai 2, Tapestry 4

Rituals: Assume the Greater Mask, Wear the Lesser Mask, Ritual of a Thousand Cuts, Ashes of the Phoenix, The Gentle Repose, Center the Demon, the Earth's Embrace (see **Dharma Book: Thousand Whispers**, p. 55-59 for details of these rituals), Trace the Dragon's Blood, Behold the Spirit's Doorway, Imbuing the Jade, Rite of Supplication, Harmonious Shielding of the Guarded Home.

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Horoscope 2, Jade Talisman 3, Resources 2, Rituals 4

Yin: 4, **Yang:** 4, **Hun:** 3, **P'o:** 3, **Willpower:** 7

GRANDMOTHER MUSHIN

Bone Flower Ancestor

Background: Rumors surround Grandmother Mushin's sudden appearance, but no one knows why a Song of the Shadow Ancestor now makes her home in San Francisco's Japan Center — or at least if anyone does, they haven't said. Mushin, the Honorable Grandmother, merely arrived one night several years ago at Lord Hino's door with only a tiny handful of retainers to carry her palanquin. The *daimyo* of the Floating World hosted the Honorable Grandmother and granted her request for a place to dwell within his small domain. Since then she has kept largely to herself, only occasionally accepting audiences and leaving the Wan Kuei of San Francisco and Nippon to gossip about her presence.

The *gaki* know that the Honorable Grandmother Mushin took the Second Breath well over three hundred years ago, and that she spent nearly all of those years in Nippon until recently. Everything else is only rumor and speculation, though there is no lack of it. Stories claim Grandmother was a beautiful woman once, that she is a fearsome sorceress, that she actually traveled widely borne by ghosts of the Yin World, and that she studied the ancient arts of necromancy. Some believe her arrival involves the turbulent storm that wracks the Yin World. Others think she intends to keep watch over local *gaki*, either to keep them in line for the Quincunx or to advise

them when the time comes to deal with the arrogant New Promise Mandarin. There are even whispers that the Honorable Grandmother comes hunting for *akuma*, or that she left the home islands because of rumors intoning she was in league with the Yama Kings.

Since her arrival, Grandmother Mushin grants few audiences. She speaks with Lord Hino and Sakurai Mitsumune on occasion. Most recently, she met with Cloud Mandarin Lili Zhou (p. 82), who heard rumors of the Ancestor's presence in the city. The two met for nearly an entire night, with Madame Zhou leaving shortly before sunrise. What passed between them, no one knows, but some point out that Lili Zhou seems to have redoubled her efforts to become San Francisco's Ancestor.

Image: Grandmother Mushin is a hideous *ch'ing shih*, an old and withered hag. Her flesh is gray and tight against her bones while her eyes are like bottomless black pools sunken into her face. She wears a glossy black wig to cover the remaining wisps of brittle white hair on her head and dresses in fine traditional Japanese kimonos. When dealing with other *shen*, the Honored Grandmother wears a porcelain mask showing the smooth, impassive face of a beautiful woman (legend claims the mask was modeled after Mushin's when she was alive and young). The Honored Grandmother moves with slow, deliberate motions, and speaks in a soft voice. Although she apparently understands many languages, she only speaks Japanese, calling upon an interpreter when dealing with someone who doesn't understand her.

Roleplaying Notes: Grandmother Mushin is a mystery the Storyteller can use however desired. She rarely sees anyone and speaks in riddles and koans when she does. Portray her as mysterious and frightening. Nearly everyone defers to her, and she usually gets her way. An audience with the Honorable Grandmother can serve as a story hook or provide characters with some useful clues about



chronicle events. It might also cast suspicion on characters, whether they're actually guilty of anything or not.

Nature: Director

P'o Nature: Legalist

Demeanor: Loner

Balance: Yin

Direction: West

Dharma: Song of the Shadow 7

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 3, Manipulation 6, Appearance 2, Perception 6, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Abilities: Alertness 4, Intimidation 4, Leadership 1, Subterfuge 4, Enigmas 4, Etiquette 4, Martial Arts 3, Portents 4, Stealth 4, Survival 2, Academics 4, Investigation 3, Linguistics 4, Occult 5, Politics 4, Rituals 5

Disciplines: Black Wind 3, Blood Shintai 2, Bone Shintai 5, Cultivation 4, Ghost-Flame Shintai 3, Tapestry 5, Yin Prana 5

Rituals: Any the Storyteller feels necessary.

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Influence 3, Resources 4, Retainers 4

Yin: 7, **Yang:** 4, **Hun:** 4, **P'o:** 5, **Willpower:** 8

KÀNBUIJÌÀN

A great concern to the New Promise Mandarinate and the other San Francisco Kuei-jin is the number of *kànbuijìàn* in the city. San Francisco's Chinatown is one of the few settlements outside the Middle Kingdom large enough and with enough connections to the spirit worlds to allow Kuei-jin to arise. Over the past few centuries, the August Courts largely ignored *kànbuijìàn*, though a few dedicated *wu* traveled to distant lands in search of them, giving them proper instructions and a place within Kuei-jin society. Some *wu* also destroyed this lot as *chih-mei*; a similar injunction meted out by Kindred, shapeshifters, other *shen* or by the Kuei-jin themselves, who saw little hope for these *kànbuijìàn*. Only a few overcame their inner Demon alone and achieved even the slightest awareness of enlightenment.

One of the New Promise Mandarinate's purposes, according to the Quincunx, is providing for the Kuei-jin arising in foreign lands since the number of *kànbuijìàn* in San Francisco increased since their arrival. The mandarins and ancestors believe this an auspicious sign, though no one bothers asking the *kànbuijìàn* what they think about it. There remain some among the "blind" *kànbuijìàn* who can see what is happening quite clearly, and they're not very happy about it, whether it is their treatment at the hands of the Mandarinate or their suspected role as omens of the impending Sixth Age.

YULAN-TAO

Yulan-jin Rootless Tree and Guide of the Blind

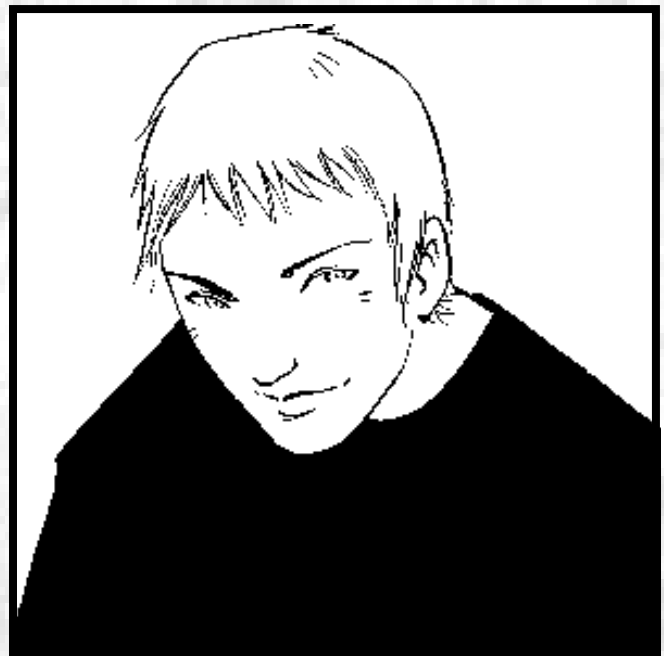
Background: Yulan-Tao has no memory of life, only of death, burning pain and his own screams. He remembers the pain stretching on forever, his soul flayed by the razor

winds of Yomi as his screams were torn away by the howling demons. He remembers the struggle to escape their tearing claws and red-hot brands as though it lasted a century. Perhaps it did. He knows only he did escape, returning to the Middle Kingdom deep in the heart of China and rising to wear a corpse not his own. He remembers the terrible hunger that drove him to attack a girl who wandered too far from her village, to devour her flesh and flee from the villagers' searching lights.

Yulan-Tao remembers existing like a beast, with no concerns save for hiding from the light and satisfying the gnawing, endless hunger. Finally, others found him and bound him. They took him and forced the Demon back, so that Yulan-Tao emerged once more... except he possessed no name then, none at all. He took the name Tao when his training was complete and he stepped onto the Path of a Thousand Whispers. He would wear a thousand masks, starting with that of the corpse he wore. Already his true face was lost to him; when he asked his *sifu* if he should mourn that loss, his teacher said, "did your mother mourn you before you were born?"

Tao stalked the Middle Kingdom, wearing many different masks. He spent some time at the Jade Court, studying with the masters there, filling the void in his mind with knowledge and understanding of his new existence. For him, the Second Breath was his first. He knew no existence other than the one he had. It was as if he had never beheld the sun before, so he did not miss the Eye of Heaven. He was curious about it, even rightfully feared it, but it was fear of something strange and terrible he had never known before. Some said Tao's forgetfulness was a blessing, while others thought it inauspicious. Tao said only time would tell — and it did.

After nearly a mortal lifetime, Tao wore a mask that entangled him in the violence of the Boxer Rebellion. He became careless and his corpse paid the price. He fell to the colonial soldiers' guns and, in that instant, his soul was torn



from the body it wore, the corpse collapsing into dust. He was borne on the hellish winds of Yomi and screamed in terror of his first memories, of his "first death."

Yulan-Tao fought his way free of Hell again, and arose in a corpse of another stranger. This time he was a woman in Korea. Tao met Kuei-jin from the Green Courts, and eventually discovered he was *Yulan-jin*, a spirit-jumper and wandering soul who found no rest, even in unlife. He carefully concealed his true nature and doggedly continued pursuing his Dharma, but fell victim to conflict once more when war broke out in Korea. While escaping the bombing of a village, Tao stepped on a landmine. Yomi beckoned again.

Three more times Tao fought his way free of Hell. Three more times he rose up in a new corpse like a discarded suit of clothes. The most recent time proved the most shocking of all. Just over ten years ago, immediately following the 1989 earthquake in San Francisco, Yulan-Tao found himself in the body of a Westerner, a young man named Tim O'Connell.

Tao quickly adapted and blended into the city's anarch underground, accepted as just another Caitiff. In time, Yulan-Tao believed Heaven ordained his coming to San Francisco, because it allowed him to understand his unliving existence from a completely different angle. The moment of enlightenment opened his eyes, and he felt the weight of so many years of struggle drop away. Here was a new mask, a new role that truly affirmed his Way.

Since then, Yulan-Tao maintains Tim O'Connell's identity as a Kindred anarch as his primary mask, occasionally adopting other identities as needed. He came into contact with Billy Wei a few years after arriving in the city and supported the cause of the largely forgotten *kānbujiàn* of San Francisco. Yulan-Tao revealed his true nature to Wei and serves as something of a teacher and guide for the Heaven Promise Society, though he does so on his own terms.

The Kuei-jin invasion and the so-called New Promise Mandarinate deeply concern Tao. He sees the Quincunx blundering into a situation it knows nothing about, full of bluster and self-importance. He's afraid that if they discover him, they will brand him a heretic (or worse, *akuma*) and deliver him unto the Final Death, the most absolute of fates. He has some sympathy for the Kin-jin, having existed among them, but he's not yet willing to help the Camarilla against the Kuei-jin. He continues working with the Heaven Promise Society while hoping another solution will present itself.

Image: Tim O'Connell was a handsome, college-age man, with short, sandy-colored hair and a gold loop earring in his right ear. Tim's eyes were blue, but Yulan-Tao's eyes are a vivid jade green (as they have been with every body he occupies). He dresses in simple, serviceable clothes; usually jeans, combat boots, a t-shirt and a leather jacket. His guileless face actually conceals a being of considerable cunning: Yulan-Tao has become a consummate actor, able to play vampire anarch, drunken

frat-boy, street con, brilliant student and more at the drop of a hat.

Roleplaying Notes: You are not what you seem, and that is your greatest strength. To most, you are all but invisible, beneath their notice. As long as you remain that way, you are safe, but it is not your nature to hide when there are experiences to embrace. Once you cursed your existence as a wandering spirit, but now you seize it as your path to enlightenment. You have learned much about Western society and the Kindred since your arrival in San Francisco, and you wish there were a way to share your experiences with Kuei-jin. You fear, perhaps rightfully so, that they are too prejudiced and set in their ways to listen. If you could somehow help the New Promise Mandarinate live up to its ideals, as a true alliance between Kuei-jin and Kindred, however, you would.

Nature: Rebel

P'o Nature: Monkey

Demeanor: Loner

Balance: Balanced

Direction: Center

Dharma: Path of a Thousand Whispers 4

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3, Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Marital Arts 3, Meditation 3, Melee 2, Performance 5, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Academics 2, Computer 1, Investigation 3, Linguistics 3, Occult 1, Rituals 2

Disciplines: Black Wind 3, Equilibrium 3, Internalize 2, Jade Shintai 3, Tapestry 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Resources 2

Rituals: Trace the Dragon's Blood, Behold the Spirit's Doorway, Way of the Lone Walker, Embrace the Spirit's Change, Harmonious Shielding of the Guarded Home

Yin: 3, **Yang:** 3, **Hun:** 4, **P'o:** 4, **Willpower:** 5

THE HEAVEN PROMISE SOCIETY

Most of San Francisco's vampires are so concerned about their own agendas that they never really pay attention to other players on the board, especially one beneath the notice of both the Camarilla and the New Promise Mandarinate. How long that lasts, however, remains to be seen. The Heaven Promise Society is a loose alliance of vampires, mostly *kānbujiàn* and a few Kindred, struggling to maintain their humanity in the face of everything unfolding around them. They seek an understanding of their unlives based on a combination of Eastern and Western philosophy. While purists on either side would find it blasphemous, it creates a degree of understanding between Kuei-jin and Kindred for perhaps the first time anywhere.

WILLIAM "BILLY" WEI

Kàn bujiàn leader of the Heaven Promise Society

Background: Ever feel like you paid full price for the last ten minutes of the movie? That pretty much sums up Billy Wei's entrance into San Francisco's nights. Billy lived his entire life, all twenty-odd summers of it, in the Bay Area. He went to Berkeley and earned a degree in Creative Writing; he became a full-time freelance writer, achieving some measure of success while publishing his first novel, titled *Life on the Golden Mountain*. The novel was a major success, hitting the New York Times bestseller list and allowing Billy an apartment not far from Chinatown with the royalties and the option for a film.

Unfortunately, success didn't sit well with Billy Wei. He hit a creative slump working on ideas for his next book, feeling the pressure to match his first success. He looked for "inspiration" at the bottom of a shot glass or in handfuls of pills, and he walked the streets late at night in that oh-so-typical writer's malaise. He grew increasingly depressed, alienating friends with his attitude and temperamental outbursts. Eventually, while out late one night at a club in SoMa, Billy met up with an anarchist passing through San Francisco after barely escaping Los Angeles. The hungry vampire drank Billy Wei dry and left him dying in an alley.

Billy Wei didn't realize his respect for his cultural heritage had deeper implications. Yomi drew his soul down, where he ran through the streets of the Wicked City, devils at his heels. He tried denying any of it was real at first, but the pain that Yomi's denizens inflicted and felt was all too lucid. Overcome with all that he'd lost, Billy fought back and out of the Wicked City, finding his way back into his body. To him it seemed like weeks had passed, but he took the Second Breath in the alley the same night. Billy Wei's first victim was another late-night club-goer who satisfied the burning hunger within him.



The shock of that terrible act, so similar to his own death, brought Billy into direct confrontation with his P'o soul. He overcame the Demon by sheer will and fled back home to his apartment. He slept through the day and rose again at night, hoping it had all been a horrible nightmare but realizing it was all true. That night he wrote again, and he alternated his nights between writing and exploring his newfound nature. He hunted to slake his thirst for Chi, though he was careful not to kill anyone or be seen. Still, it didn't take long for word of his attacks to circulate.

Fortunately for Billy, events in San Francisco snowballed fast and neither the Camarilla nor the New Promise Mandarinate had much time to investigate what might be a single rogue vampire. Instead, Billy received a visit from Yulan-Tao, a Yulan-jin dwelling in San Francisco for some years. They talked for some time; Billy learned what he was and about vampire society. He quickly decided he wanted nothing to do with either faction and he wanted to offer others that alternative as well.

Together, Yulan-Tao and he conceived of the Heaven Promise Society, a kind of "support group" for vampires, both Kuei-jin and Kindred. Here they can offer each other mutual aid and avoid the political entanglements of the various sects. Thus far, it attracts only a few *kàn bujiàn* and Caitiff vampires and remains small enough that San Francisco's nocturnal powers overlook it. The only outsiders really aware of the society are the dragon wizard Li T'ien (who silently approves) and Chan Te, the *akuma* master of the Hollow City *wu* who would like to recruit Heaven Promise's vampires.

Still, it's likely only a matter of time before the New Promise Mandarinate or the Camarilla discovers the group's existence, at which point they'll likely try and turn it into a tool for their own purposes. Their first big clue is likely to be Billy Wei's new novel, *Heaven's Promise Forsaken*, based on his experiences and marketed as fiction but containing some telling information about both the Kuei-jin and the Kindred. Mortals will dismiss it as somewhat lurid horror fiction, while vampires will either perceive a threat to their secrecy or a potential guru for those seeking enlightenment. The view that eventually predominates may determine Billy Wei's fate.

Image: Wei is a Chinese-American of average height and build, with a broad moon face and an easy smile when he's in a good mood. He cuts his dark hair short and wears narrow glasses with black plastic frames. He prefers dressing for comfort in chinos or cargo pants with polo shirts or sweatshirts, and he usually carries a cell phone. He also purchased a gun for protection shortly after encountering Yulan-Tao, though he doesn't carry it unless he's expecting trouble (he usually keeps it in his bedside table at home).

Roleplaying Notes: While you can't say you *like* being a vampire, it opens your eyes and forces you to see the world in a whole different way. This has its benefits. You're more than a little freaked by it all sometimes, but you give it a lot of thought. If you have eternity, you'd rather dedicate yourself to improving the lot of people like

you (and, yes, you still consider yourself a “person” and not some “thing”). Vampires can exist without killing people and without involving themselves in every little power-struggle. You just hope they’ll leave you alone to pursue your work.

Nature: Visionary

P’o Nature: Bandit

Demeanor: Loner

Balance: Balanced

Direction: East

Dharma: Way of Hun (see p. 131)

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Expression (Writing) 4, Leadership 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1, Drive 1, Etiquette 1, Firearms 1, Stealth 2, Academics 2, Computer 1, Linguistics 1, Politics 1

Disciplines: Black Wind 1, Equilibrium 2, Jade Shintai 1

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Contacts 2, Fame 1, Resources 4

Yin: 3, **Yang:** 3, **Hun:** 4, **P’o:** 3, **Willpower:** 8

AKUMA: THE HOLLOW CITY WU

Accusations of collaboration with the Yama Kings grow increasingly frequent and strident throughout the August Courts. The ancestors see *akuma* in every heretical new idea and rebellious Running Monkey or *wu*, though in truth the accusations are a useful political weapon. It is false more often than not, which is just what the Yama Kings and their servants want. Let the Wan Kuei fight amongst themselves while the *akuma* slide through the shadows and do their masters’ bidding.

Kuei-jin pledged to the service of Hell and its rulers are all too real, and closer at hand than San Francisco’s mandarins and elders know. The primary group of local *akuma* is the Hollow City *wu*, led by a *kānbujiān* who has escaped notice for over a century. He carefully gathers and guides other Kuei-jin at the command of his master, Mikaboshi, Lord of the Wicked City. Now the *akuma* feel the approach of the Sixth Age; they look up into the night sky at the Eye of the Demon Emperor, and know that their time is at hand.

CHAN TE

Warlord of Mikaboshi, Master of the Hollow City *wu*

Background: In the mid-18th century, the first ship of Chinese immigrants set sail to San Francisco, leaving behind a China torn by Opium Wars and conflict with European colonialists searching a new and better place to live. Those immigrants did not leave behind the spirit world of the Middle Kingdom, however, and they struggled with hunger, thirst and disease to reach their new golden land.

Chan Te was among those who succumbed to illness on the trip across the Pacific. He was nobody, a peasant and smuggler with dreams and hopes of something better. Before he even began, however, his life was cut short and his soul sent screaming into Yomi. What had he done to deserve such a fate? How could Heaven be so cruel and unjust? Chan Te was not afraid to question, but for the first time ever he questioned the very meaning of creation. He would not meekly submit to his fate. He gave his Demon free rein and escaped his imprisonment, fighting his way from Yomi Wan and returning to the flesh that failed him.

When the ship reached California, the men aboard told stories of a flesh-eating ghost stalking the decks, but people dismissed them as tall tales. Chan Te vanished among the immigrants, promising his existence in this new land would be different. His old life was truly over.

The sudden and rapid growth of San Francisco caught the eye of Mikaboshi, Yama King of the Wicked City. Never before had a city surged so quickly, the people swarming across the land like maggots over a piece of rotten meat. Mikaboshi tasted the area’s rich Chi and knew that here was something of interest to him. He also discovered one of the Wan Kuei in this newborn monstrosity of a city, one who only recently took the Second Breath and remained untouched by the Middle Kingdom’s guidance. Mikaboshi moved to make this new vampire his own.

It was not difficult. Chan Te was alone and knew nothing of his true nature save for folk tales he learned at his grandfather’s knee. When the stranger with the metal hands approached and offered to teach him about himself, Te agreed. So began the lessons that made Chan Te an instrument of the Yama King. The agreement was mutual. Chan Te wanted power and Mikaboshi offered it in exchange for favors to be negotiated later. Chan Te gave little thought to events that would arrive more than a century later.

Te learned his lessons well, becoming a true master of the Demon Arts and a useful servant of the Lord of the Wicked City. Under Mikaboshi’s guidance, Chan Te helped keep the Kindred out of Chinatown since its establishment. He helped thin the ranks of *chih-mei* when they appeared among the populace, sometimes choosing one as a disciple and creating his own Corpse Family under the guidance of his master.

The Hollow City *wu* has been the secret rot eating at San Francisco’s soul since its earliest days. They have been present while the city struggled through growth, earthquake, fire, rebuilding and more, patiently watching and waiting. Chan Te anticipates the day when the Wicked City manifests itself in San Francisco’s fog-shrouded streets. Then he will hunt Kuei-jin and Kindred alike, and Mikaboshi will raise him up as the ruler of a piece of Hell on Earth.

Image: Chan Te would hardly draw a second glance on the streets of his home city, which is just as he and his master prefer it. He's a Chinese man of slightly below average height, usually dressed in an immaculate dark suit. He is completely bald and he wears dark designer sunglasses to cover his eyes when he's outside. He has a small, neat beard and moustache. With his gold and jade bracelet, cell phone and polished leather shoes, Chan Te looks like a well-to-do businessman. When he uses his Chi'iu Muh art, a great blazing eye opens in the center of his forehead.

On other occasions, Chan Te assumes his demon form, towering nearly 12 feet tall with four arms, three eyes and red skin. His beard becomes elongated and forked, while his voice is the boom of thunder. He wields a terrible curved sword blazing with hellish fire in one hand. Mortals who see him in this form flee in mindless terror, always forgetting what they saw afterward. Chan Te's demon form haunts the nightmares of many people in Chinatown, and will soon do the same with the *shen* of San Francisco.

Roleplaying Notes: Once, you were nothing. Fate dealt you a cruel hand, but you seized Fate by the throat and used the bitch for your pleasure. You fought your way out of Hell and made yourself strong, strong enough to attract the notice of Lord Mikaboshi. Now you are a mighty warlord in service to a powerful Yama King, a force to be reckoned with. You bided your time and prepared, and now you are eager to show the arrogant vampires that slink in the shadows of "your" city what you can do. They will bow down and call Mikaboshi their master, or else you will send them to meet him in Hell, screaming.

Nature: Visionary

P'o Nature: Demon

Demeanor: Judge

Chi Balance: Balanced

Direction: Center

Dharma: *Akuma* 6



Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Dodge 4, Empathy 2, Intimidation 4, Leadership 3, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 4, Torture 4, Drive 2, Firearms 3, Martial Arts 4, Melee 4, Stealth 5, Finance 2, Investigation 3, Linguistics 2, Occult 3, Rituals 3

Disciplines: Black Wind 4, Chi'iu Muh 5, Demon Shintai 5 (Demon Weapon, Extra Arms, Horror, Huge Size, Third Eye), Hellweaving 5, Jade Shintai 3

Rituals: Trace the Dragon's Blood, Behold the Spirits' Doorway, Imbuing the Jade, Cloak the Dragon's Presence, Rite of Supplication, Harmonious Shielding of the Guarded Home, Construct the Dragon Bone Prison, Ritual of the Black Peony (see **The Thousand Hells**, p. 104), Inauspicious Object, Bakemono Rite (see **Dharma Book: Devil-Tigers**, p. 54).

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Resources 3

Yin: 4, **Yang:** 5, **Hun:** 4, **P'o:** 6, **Willpower:** 8

JOHNNY MA

Akuma of Mikaboshi

Background: When he was a boy growing up in Chinatown of the '50s, Johnny Ma hated being Chinese. He hated going to American school during the day and Chinese school at night. He hated being different from the other kids. More than anything, he wanted to be a "real American," like the guys in the movies he loved to watch... real tough guys like John Wayne and James Dean.

Unfortunately, Johnny's idea of acting tough involved joining a gang that went against the Chinatown Tongs. Instead of being the tough guy, Johnny ended up coughing out blood in an alley before expiring from a couple gunshots to the belly. If he thought he hated his Chinese heritage before, it was nothing compared to what he felt on the twisting streets of the Wicked City, where Yomi demons tortured and tormented him for his cowardice and fear. Finally, Johnny's mind snapped. He fought back and his savage P'o clawed its way up from the depths of Hell and back into his body. He would show them, he would show them all he wasn't afraid.

Johnny fed well that night and on those that followed. Eventually he struggled against his Demon, regaining some sense of self. He wasn't a coward and he wasn't a failure. He was powerful, and anyone who wanted to screw with him now had better watch out. Johnny quickly realized someone was following him; he tried laying an ambush for whoever stalked him, but he never stood a chance. Chan Te was ready for him, though he admired the youngster's audacity. The fire burning in Johnny's belly reminded Chan Te of his own first nights after taking the Second Breath.

After Chan Te slapped him down, Johnny became his student and disciple. The elder *akuma* knew exactly which strings to pull, and he didn't have to tug hard. "So there are



courts of old Chinese vampires playing at being mandarins and courtiers,” Chan told Johnny, “why the fuck would you want to hook up with them?” “There are secret clubs of *gweilo* Yankee vampires who would never let a Chinaman among them. Screw ‘em.” Johnny had enough of people trying to teach him “proper” behavior to last him his entire existence. He wanted to be powerful like Chan Te. If that cost him his soul, so what? He eagerly embraced the Downward Path and pledged himself to Mikaboshi.

Image: Johnny looks and dresses like a refugee from a ‘50s or ‘60s street-gang. He usually wears his black hair slicked back and dons dark sunglasses, along with faded blue jeans, a t-shirt, a leather jacket and motorcycle boots. He carries a pistol in a shoulder holster underneath his jacket and he’s good at finding weapons of opportunity. He’s particularly fond of pool cues, broken pieces of crates and other makeshift stakes to impale and immobilize vampires.

Roleplaying Notes: Chan Te is the Man, and anybody who says otherwise will answer to you. Truth is, Mikaboshi and his fellow Yama Kings scare the crap out of you, but they also reward loyalty. You admire Chan and you obey him to the word. Everyone else, from the Kin-jin to the Kuei-jin to the mortal herds, is a joke to you. The vampires hide and spent their time playing games, while mortals are just toys and food. You look forward to when the whole damn world goes down in flames and you watch it all from the owner’s box. If Mikaboshi decides Chan is too old and he wants new blood, well, you don’t have a problem with promotion, either, so long as you don’t have to risk your own neck to earn it.

Nature: Conformist

P’o Nature: Slave

Demeanor: Bravo

Chi Balance: Balanced

Direction: South

Dharma: *Akuma* 4

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation (Bluster) 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 1, Torture 3, Drive (Motorcycles) 3, Firearms 3, Martial Arts 2, Melee 3, Stealth 2, Investigation 2, Linguistics 1

Disciplines: Black Wind 3, Demon Shintai 2, Ghost-Flame Shintai 2, Hellweaving 2, Yang Prana 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 1, Mentor (Chan Te) 3, Resources 2

Yin: 3, **Yang:** 4, **Hun:** 2, **P’o:** 4, **Willpower:** 7

TJUN TJUN AFFIF

Penangallan akuma of Mikaboshi

Background: Tjun Tjun Affif grew up despondently poor in Jakarta. Her family sold her to a prostitution house at the age of 12. The brothel was a Scarlet Screen for the Golden Courts, used to gather Chi and flesh to satiate the hunger of the *penangallan* and their cohorts, so Tjun Tjun was introduced to Kuei-jin society at an early age while she still breathed. She did what she could to survive day after day, nurturing a hatred for men that blossomed into loathing for everyone around her. She used her sexuality as the only weapon and coin she possessed, but eventually her luck ran out.

A violent john butchered Tjun Tjun and left her mutilated body lying in an alley. The police tagged her as another random violent death while her soul, leaden with searing rage, sank into the depths of Yomi Wan. She did not abide there long. Tjun Tjun rode her Demon to freedom, savagely tearing through anything in her way, including the Wall between worlds. She pulled her corpse together by no more than force of will, clawing out of her grave and slaking her need for flesh and Chi on some unfortunate passers-by — more random deaths for the police blotter.

It didn’t take long for the Golden Courts’ Kuei-jin to track down the new *chih-mei*, though subduing her proved more difficult. The *penangallan* were torn between destroying Tjun Tjun and preserving this awesome and savage creature. They chose the latter and taught her what she needed to know. It came as no surprise that she chose the Howl of the Devil-Tiger as her Dharma, or that she devoted herself to the arts of Flesh Shintai. She even returned to her life as a whore, but now her customers became the prey.

Tjun Tjun reveled in her newfound power and regularly grew drunk on Yang chi, disdaining the cold, metallic taste of Yin. Her fury and hatred did not abate — they only burned hotter with each passing night. Several times, her elders warned her about her excesses. Although they admired Tjun Tjun’s grace and power, her restraint left something to be desired, even in the Golden Courts. Finally, she argued with a *wu* sister and, in a fit of fire soul, devoured her chi. When she realized what she had done, Tjun Tjun knew a long and painful Final Death awaited

her at the hands of the *penangallan*. She fled Jakarta and sought shelter, which she found among a band of *akuma* in service to Rangda, the Queen of Pestilence. Once again, Tjun Tjun did what she had to do to survive and pledged herself to the Yama Queen.

Tjun Tjun served well for many years, until a vengeful *penangallan* wiped out her sisters. Tjun Tjun fled again, this time to Hong Kong, where Rangda traded the *akuma*'s soul to Mikaboshi, Lord of the Wicked City. He groomed the *penangallan akuma* in his service before sending her to San Francisco to join the ranks of the Hollow City *wu*. Tjun Tjun discovered she liked the new city and the opportunities it presented; she also realized her own wicked spirit was well suited to Mikaboshi's Hell and goals.

Image: Tjun Tjun Afiff is an attractive Indonesian woman in her late teens or early 20s, with a curvaceous, athletic body, small breasts, deeply tanned skin and luxurious black hair that falls to the small of her back. Her skin is smooth and hot to the touch. Her eyes are black as night and smolder with lust, and she usually wears something skin-tight in the latest fetish styles popular in the San Francisco nightclubs: leather, rubber or latex body-paint, accented with chrome jewelry and body-piercings. Her teeth are especially white, like bleached bones.

Roleplaying Notes: There is no one in the world you can depend on or trust, which is fine by you, since you have all you need to survive. You know how to twist the emotions of mortals and even *shen*. Everyone else is just a plaything to you, a toy with which you amuse yourself before discarding it when it becomes troublesome or boring. Shame and restraint are qualities you left behind even before taking the Second Breath. Now you exist solely for pleasure, which you derive from inflicting pain. The Wicked City is your hunting ground and you lust for the day when you can hunt unfettered by any need for stealth.

Nature: Deviant



P'o Nature: Deceiver

Demeanor: Celebrant

Balance: Yang

Direction: East

Dharma: *Akuma* 4

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics (Dance) 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3, Torture 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Martial Arts 3, Melee 2, Performance 3, Stealth 3, Linguistics 1, Medicine 1

Disciplines: Black Wind 3, Flesh Shintai 3, Jade Shintai 4, Yang Prana 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Mentor (Chan Te) 3, Resources 3

Yin: 3, **Yang:** 6, **Hun:** 2, **P'o:** 5, **Willpower:** 6

PETER KWAN

Ventrue *antitribu* and *akuma* of Mikaboshi

Background: Top of his high school class, business degree from UCLA, hot prospects in Silicon Valley... Peter Kwan's future looked very bright indeed. In the early '90s, he found a job advising computer geeks how to run businesses, earning himself a nice condo in the Bay Area and living the high life. With money and success came a chance to enjoy the best clubs and restaurants, and all the pleasures that a city like San Francisco offered. Peter worked as hard as he played.

Eventually, Peter received a job offer he just couldn't turn down. The salary and benefits were amazing, but what was even more impressive was his new boss. Jochen Van Nuys was the kind of man Peter wanted to be from the moment he set eyes on him. He was smooth and in control of everything around him. Peter found himself saying yes to the offer even before thinking about it. The job was all he could have hoped: serious high-level corporate money management of the type Peter expected the Security Exchange Commission would love to know about. It also meant invitations to the best parties in town, where Peter uncovered more about his employer.

By the time Peter knew the truth, he was already blood-bound to Van Nuys. Not long after that, he was a loyal ghoul, handling his regnant's business affairs by day and helping the Ventrue gain control of certain key interests in the city. What he didn't know, at first, was that everything Van Nuys was doing didn't necessarily meet with the approval of San Francisco's Prince Thomas, but that wasn't something he needed to know. Within a year, Van Nuys was most impressed with Peter's work and offered him a promotion. Peter knew what he wanted and Van Nuys gave it to him. In his Embrace, Peter joined the Kindred.

It wasn't long before Jochen Van Nuys was Prince of San Francisco and Peter Kwan was a rising young star in the new prince's entourage. He adapted to unlife well



enough and found pleasures and challenges aplenty to keep him entertained. In fact, he enjoyed a few too many pleasures. Peter's work slipped and his sire was not pleased, but he always managed to make up for it and stay ahead of the game. The future still looked promising for Peter Kwan, until the arrival of the Cathayans.

Rumors concerning the Asian vampires circulated for months before word of their intentions came from Hong Kong and Los Angeles. Anarch survivors of the LA purge made their way into San Francisco. As a precaution, Van Nuys entrusted Peter with going into Chinatown to "assess the situation." Peter went reluctantly, but he found Kuei-jin — or more precisely, they found him. The Hollow City *wu* encountered Peter Kwan before any other Kuei-jin had found him. Chan Te showed exceptional mercy in not destroying the Kin-jin on the spot. No, the time was coming when he would need to strengthen his *wu*'s ranks, and he saw the same potential others did in the young Kwan.

Months of torture, manipulation and spiritual "adjustment" bent Peter Kwan to Chan Te's purpose. The young Ventrue increasingly felt disdain and even hatred for his sire and former mentor. In the end, he accepted Mikaboshi as his lord and master and pledged himself to the cause of the Hollow City *wu*. Then he was ready to return to his sire, with a tale of Kuei-jin scouts holding him hostage and torturing him for information. Van Nuys had by then lost his position as prince and become a New Promise Mandarinate minister. In need of allies, Van Nuys happily accepted his pupil back into the fold.

Now Peter Kwan plays a dangerous game, gathering information for Chan Te and playing the Kindred and Kuei-jin against each other. Currently no one in the Mandarinate knows of the viper Van Nuys has clasped to his bosom, and Kwan intends it should remain so until it is too late.

Image: Peter Kwan is a fairly handsome Asian man with an expensive haircut and even more expensive taste in clothes. He still looks the part of a hip, successful young businessman, and he carries all the expected *accouterment* with him: cell phone, PDA, Rolex, etc. He defers to his superiors but otherwise takes charge in any situation in which he's involved.

Roleplaying Notes: Chan Te and Lord Mikaboshi opened your eyes to the reality most Kindred don't understand. You have seen the Wicked City's streets and know it as your home. When the time comes, you'll stand inside one of its towers and survey those parts you rule in Mikaboshi's name. Those wise enough to see the inevitability of the Yama Kings' victory may be fortunate enough to serve you. Those who aren't will suffer for their short sightedness. You are poised to carry out your master's will. No one suspects you, nor will they so long as you don't give them a reason.

Clan: Ventrue

Sire: Jochen Van Nuys

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Director

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1996

Apparent Age: Mid 20s

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Intimidation 2, Leadership 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 4, Drive 2, Etiquette 3, Firearms 2, Performance 3, Security 2, Stealth 2, Academics 2, Computer 1, Finance 3, Investigation 3, Linguistics 1, Politics 1

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 1, Dominate 2, Fortitude 2, Presence 2

Backgrounds: Allies (Hollow City) 2, Contacts 2, Mentor (Van Nuys) 3, Resources 3

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

Morality: Humanity 3

Willpower: 5

CAMARILLA

The Camarilla is an organization at war, and their battleground is San Francisco. One by one, the sect has been ferrying in heavy hitters to retake the city. At the very least, this should create a kind of power inflation that will offer the Inner Circle some insight into the Cathayans' methods, habits and capacities. If it also forces the invaders out, so much the better.

Perhaps more impressive is the degree to which the clans work together. Even the crusade against the Sabbat has not, thus far, spurred this degree of active cooperation. There is little doubt, however, that this sense of solidarity stems from the various clans vying for the choice plum of San Francisco on the Pacific Coast's orchard. Participating

in the process now can only solidify their hand in what was once the Ventrue's "old boys club."

The Ventrue currently handle the administrative issues. The Inner Circle tapped some very old and very powerful generals to advise and direct the campaign against the Cathayans. The Blue Bloods assume responsibility for marshaling the so-called infantry clans (typically the Brujah, Nosferatu and sometimes Gangrel) into cohesive units. The Tremere, meanwhile, guide the Camarilla's intelligence and psychological operations.

San Francisco has traditionally been a bastion of Ventrue and Toreador influence, though many Toreador left the city in recent years, following the Bohemian crowd that was priced out of the city by the dot.com influx. Another recent phenomenon impacting vampiric demographics is the flow of anarch refugees and repentant former anarchs, which bolstered the local Brujah and Gangrel population.

While the domain of San Francisco proper has all but fallen to the Kuei-jin, the Camarilla as a whole is still relatively strong in the region. The Ventrue retain control of San Jose to the south (and they believe they know what's needed to repel Cathayans from their handling of the small influx of Vietnamese Kuei-jin in the 70s), while across the bay, Oakland is under the firm control of the Brujah and Nosferatu.

Oakland and San Jose are becoming the Camarilla's staging areas for its war on the Kuei-jin while the Inner Circle decreed Sacramento the fallback staging area should the entire Bay Area somehow fall to the Quincunx.

PRINCE SARA ANNE WINDER

Background: Sara Anne Winder was the firstborn of English nobleman Roger Winder, and she came of age in an era when such distinctions meant worlds of difference. Her touch-eccentric father insisted she be educated exactly as a young man would be. Her intellect shined like a beacon, and she possessed a hungry mind. Contemporary society considered it extremely unladylike behavior for a young woman to attend a university, but, by colluding with her father and masquerading as a young man, she graduated from Oxford with honors.

When Oxford's regents discovered they had given an advanced degree to a woman, they promptly revoked it and accused her of base dishonesty, conveniently ignoring the fact they wouldn't accept her otherwise.

Winder, wealthy enough to play a lady of leisure, didn't need the degree but was angry nonetheless. She associated with those on the fringes of English society: authors, playwrights and actors. She took up with a long-term female companion and scoffed at those who accused them of "an unusual and remarkable fondness for one another." She had an almost magical talent for extracting what she wanted from others, and rarely refrained from using her gift. By so doing, Sara Winder created something of a cult around herself. The nobility, while scandalized by her behavior, respected both her family and her obvious genius.

Charlotte Ingraham groomed Winder for immortality two years before she gave the young woman the Embrace. The first year she carefully introduced Winder to elements of what she referred to as "The Society of Night." The second year she ghouled Winder, and, just as the young woman's "radical stance" elicited serious repercussions in the mortal world (thanks to the efforts of a scandalized Anglican bishop), Ingraham gave Winder the Embrace and spirited her away to Italy.

Winder remained in touch with her family through correspondence until their deaths. She told them the political and moral atmosphere of England was repugnant to her and she would not let it bring her down (or them by association with her).

With her old, breathing life in the background, Winder set her sights on a whole new realm ripe for charming: that of the Kindred. With the guidance and instruction of her Sire, Winder became a strong proponent of Camarilla ideals. With time those ideals, backed by her formidable intellect, earned her increasing respect among the Camarilla's Kindred.

The most valuable chip in Winder's portfolio, however, was her recent performance in the war to retake New York City. As one of the strategists behind the New York *reconquista*, Winder's star rose in Camarilla circles. Too high, perhaps, for her own good. Certain old-guard Kindred still worried about her ambitions and cocky manner, and they nudged the Inner Circle to grant her fondest wish: princehood of a major city — once she retakes it from the invading Cathayans. If she fails, they'll have the satisfaction of seeing an upstart eliminated from a position of power. If she wins... well, so much the better for the Camarilla.

Truthfully, in Sara Anne Winder's mind, the city is already hers. With the information recently provided by the Tremere and the fealty of the Nosferatu Kokopell Mana, she estimates the Cathayan influence over the city could be significantly weakened within the space of two weeks and their presence eradicated entirely within a month, given the competent execution of a simple mass-Embrace campaign. For the moment, however, she waits for word from those higher up along the chain of command. A mass-Embrace is not something to be pursued lightly. Such tactics always lead to breaches of the Masquerade and always smack of a Sabbat stench. The tolerances for such things relax slightly during wartime, though, and as soon as Winder receives word, she intends to make the Cathayans suffer for every Kindred death and indignity suffered during their occupation. Then, she will truly be Prince of San Francisco. The knot in her plans, however, is that while the Camarilla knows the Cathayans do not Embrace through blood, their method of induction remains a mystery. Until they uncover the Kuei-jin's secrets, the Inner Circle will not commit to the endeavor blindly.

Image: Prince Winder is as cute as a button. She pulls her long blonde hair back in a ponytail and her eyes, blue as



ice caves, sparkle when she smiles. She dresses casually, but makes a point of wearing clothes that accent her lithe build.

Roleplaying Notes: You are a battle-hardened general in the guise of a sweet and flirtatious young lady. In public settings, you comport yourself in such a way that others cannot even imagine you behaving in a cruel or aggressive fashion. You are a smiling and gracious prince, and deal pleasantly even with those individuals you despise. Likewise, you can enthrall a target and engage him in witty banter even while your assassin moves into place behind him. You are not malicious, nor above even the most extreme and perfidious tactics if it will win you a battle.

Clan: Ventrue

Sire: Charlotte Ingraham

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1688 CE

Apparent Age: Early to mid 20s

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4, Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 4, Empathy 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership 5, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4, Drive 2, Etiquette 4, Stealth 2, Academics 4, Computer 1, Finance 4, Law 4, Linguistics 4, Politics 5

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 4, Dominate 5, Fortitude 4, Potence 2, Presence 5

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Herd 4, Resources 5, Status 5

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 5, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 8

KELVIN WEE, CAMARILLA NEGOTIATOR

Background: When Hong Kong reverted to Chinese control and the Kuei-jin hunted Asian Kindred, Kelvin Wee fled to America in the hold of a cargo ship. He resided in Seattle until his Prince informed him of the situation unfolding in San Francisco and strongly urged him to render service.

When Wee first arrived, he tried offering his services to then-Prince Van Nuys. Unfortunately, Van Nuys' "negotiations" were nothing short of the slow and methodical capitulation of San Francisco to the Kuei-jin who bluffed their way into power.

After Sara Winder assumed the Princedom, Wee took an immediate liking to her and she to him. Neither had any intention of handing San Francisco to a bunch of pompous outlanders. Since that time, Wee operates secretly on Winder's behalf with the Mandarinate as well as acting as the Camarilla's negotiator with the Kuei-jin (though he knows nothing of the Cloud Mandarins' threats, which they voiced only through Van Nuys). When Winder fails to make any headway thanks to Van Nuys, she relies on Wee as an alternative route. Wee, in turn, presents her ideas as his own to avoid any stigmas associated with her name.

Image: Kelvin is an amazingly large Chinese man. He stands just over six feet tall and, while he's not fat, he is without a doubt a man of substance. He dresses in tailored suits and fine apparel, understanding how the Kuei-jin place great emphasis on physical appearance and public face.

Roleplaying Notes: You are either a con artist posing as a negotiator or a negotiator posing as a con artist. Either way, you make deals that always work best in your favor and the Camarilla's. At the moment you try to help pull the city back from the brink of Kuei-jin control, one gracious smile at a time. Your fluency in Chinese and knowledge of Chinese business customs helps you



immensely in this endeavor. They assigned you to the Pacific Heights M-T sector, so you're clearly doing something right. On the other hand, the social repercussions and allegations of collusion with the Kuei-jin are a pain in the ass that you'd just as soon avoid. If that's the worst your existence throws at you, however, you're in good shape.

Clan: Ventrue

Sire: Robert Pedder

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1907

Apparent Age: Mid 30s

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Empathy 3, Intimidation 2, Leadership 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4, Drive 2, Etiquette 5, Academics 2, Finance 3, Law 1, Linguistics 3 (English, Mandarin, Szechwan, Japanese), Politics 3

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 1, Fortitude 5, Presence 4

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 5, Herd 3, Influence 1, Resources 4, Retainers 4, Status 4

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 5, Courage 2

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 7

JOCHEN VAN NUYS, MINISTER OF THE OFFICE OF WESTERN AFFAIRS

Background: In 1994, Jochen Van Nuys arrived in San Francisco from the East Coast. At the time, the Ventrue touted him as something of a *wunderkind*. Two years later he had taken the Princedom of San Francisco from the utterly ineffectual Prince Vannevar Thomas, leading the Ventrue to expect great things from his stewardship.

The Ventrue anticipated a turn-around of events for 4 years, but their hopes for "great things" never materialized. On the contrary, four years into Van Nuys' rule, Asian vampires invaded the city, endangering Ventrue control over one of the single most lucrative cities under Camarilla control in North America. An unflattering report by the visiting Toreador Justicar was the last straw.

In January 2001, Van Nuys received a letter from the Inner Circle informing him his skills as a diplomat and keeper of the peace dwarfed even his ability to rule as Prince. The letter thanked him for his efforts on behalf of the Ventrue and the Camarilla and informed him he had been selected as the new chief liaison between the Camarilla and the Quincunx. In the final paragraph, the letter asked he arrange a cordial welcome for Sara Anne Winder, San Francisco's *new* Prince.

To his credit, Van Nuys welcomed Winder with a warmth and hospitality rarely seen in the Kindred political world, but his options by that point were admittedly limited.

He suspected (correctly) that doing anything else would result in reassignment to an even less desirable post.

For the moment, Van Nuys plays the role of intermediary. With the Cloud Mandarins' confidential threats to destroy local Kindred in retribution for the wards, Van Nuys tries to forestall what he believes is a massacre. Fortunately, the Cloud Mandarins seem grudgingly interested in a peaceful solution, and Van Nuys relays that information to the Inner Circle (if only to appear the Camarilla's champion). Meanwhile, the former prince thinks he's earning the Mandarinate's trust, but he awaits the day when he once more rules a city. If that rule is under the Quincunx, then so be it.

Image: Van Nuys is a vaguely handsome man with straw blond hair, pale blue eyes and slightly pointy nose. Unlike some Kindred, Van Nuys does not wear his undead pallor well; it gives him a pasty, unhealthy appearance that mitigates his otherwise overwhelming charm. He dresses well, though a bit toward the foppish end of the sartorial spectrum.

Roleplaying Notes: You must succeed regardless. The last two years have seen some notable setbacks, but each disappointment gives you a deeper understanding of the system you're trying to manipulate. Now, finally, you can redeem your record by dragging the Cloud Mandarins back from a potentially catastrophic decision for all sides. It's clear to you, however, that fighting the Kuei-jin is a losing battle. When the Camarilla's war tactics fail and Sara Winder falls beneath the Mandarinate's axe, you'll be the nexus between the Camarilla and the Quincunx, and one of the most politically powerful Kindred in North America.

Clan: Ventrue

Sire: Irving Boldger

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 9th





Embrace: 1908

Apparent Age: Early 30s

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Diplomacy 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 1, Intimidation 1, Leadership 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3, Drive 3, Etiquette 4, Security 2, Academics 4, Computer 2, Finance 4, Investigation 1, Law 3, Linguistics 3, Politics 3

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 2, Dominate 4, Fortitude 3, Presence 4

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Generation 4, Herd 4, Influence 2, Mentor 2, Resources 4, Retainers 3, Status 4

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

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 5

MIRIAM CARAVAGGIO, PRINCE WINDER'S BODYGUARD

Background: A dancer when dancing was scandalous and improper, Miriam Caravaggio was used to people mistaking her for a prostitute. She was thus hesitant to follow the man who invited her to his hotel after one of her performances. She intended to refuse in no uncertain terms, but the moment she looked into his dark eyes, she said yes.

Miriam received the Embrace less than an hour later. Solomon Greene, her sire, had seen some hint of genius in her steps that he felt he needed to preserve; so he brought Miriam into the world of the Kindred.

While initially content to be a thing of beauty and refine her art, the Embrace had a curious impact on Miriam's artistic sensibilities. She extended her once-ecstatic love of dancing, now blunted by her blood thirst, into more aggressive interests. Miriam became interested in the similarities between dance and combat. Dance, gymnastics and martial arts were all techniques through

which the body became more amenable to the will, and, consequently, more dangerous. In time, her ability to turn murder into a beautiful dance form earned her some small fame among Kindred. In fact, when Prince Winder was offered either a Brujah or Assamite bodyguard, she chose neither and asked Miriam to take that role.

Since beginning her service to Prince Winder, Miriam already killed two Kuei-jin assassins in a heady rush of the feral and martial dance of combat. She also developed a taste for fighting the often apt and graceful Kuei-jin, though whether or not her lust to test her skills will endanger Prince Winder remains to be seen. To her credit, Miriam is still a professional who can control her desires... for now.

Image: An extraordinarily lithe and beautiful young woman, Miriam dresses to accentuate her form while allowing herself complete range of motion. She most frequently wears a black body suit with a brightly colored (and easily removable) sarong.

Roleplaying Notes: You aren't like others. For you, every movement is a dance, every interaction a performance. Your favorite dance is that of violence — the lunge of rage, the wheeling slap, the graceful evisceration. Others simply don't understand you, and that's fine — one cannot expect the masses to understand genius. You'd rather dance/fight than talk to them anyway.

Clan: Toreador

Sire: Solomon Greene

Nature: Celebrant

Demeanor: Thrill-Seeker

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1890 CE

Apparent Age: Early 20s

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 5, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 5, Athletics 5, Brawl 4, Dodge 5, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 1, Acrobatics 5, Drive 4, Etiquette 1, Performance (Dance) 4, Security 1, Stealth 3, Academics 2, Investigation 2, Politics 1

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 4, Fortitude 4, Potence 2, Presence 2, Protean 2, Obfuscate 1

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Herd 3, Resources 2

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

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 5

KOKOPELL MANA THE KACHINA, NOSFERATU PRIMOGEN

Background: Memory, a trick of lights and smoke, eludes Kokopell Mana. She remembers soldiers pulling filthy and diseased children from the earth hovels screaming. She remembers screaming too, and awakening to a searing pain like acid bile spilling into her blood. She awoke to terrible night thunder, a deformed and decrepit

beast; upon seeing her horrible reflection she knew was different. She bore a hunchback and two sharp front teeth like an insect's. She realized she must be Kokopell Mana, the Humpback Locust Woman and *kachina* (spirit) of the Hopi. Everything was still a blur, however. Was the Spider Clan attacking the great city Palátkwapi again? If so, where were the other *kachina* like the Warrior Mother Héhwúti or Cha'kwaina? Why weren't they defending the Bear and Corn Clans from the encroaching Spider Clan? Kokopell did not know, but she now feared the sunlight and lived in perpetual night. Was she again in the caves of the underworld, awaiting the emergence of a new and Fifth World? How else to explain an existence where only night comforted her?

Kokopell Mana wandered until she found a *pohoki*, a prayer shrine in the desert; she waited there until Hopi worshipers came to plant feathers for prayer. Kokopell Mana announced her presence with terrible glowing eyes and a form that flitted in and out of the night. She demanded to know what had happened. Where were the other *kachina*? She remembered little of the Spider Clan's attack on Palátkwapi. Stunned, the Hopi explained that their people had long left that city; the clans had spread across North America, while the *kachina* reverted back to spirits after saving them and now resided in the mountains of San Francisco. Kokopell Mana thanked them and blessed them for their kindness, then made her way for San Francisco, and the other *kachina*.

Upon arriving, Kokopell Mana discovered mortals rebuilding a giant city at the feet of the *kachina* mountain homes, like the great Ant People. She searched for her kind, but found none of the *kachina* she remembered. Gone were the Spider, Bear, Coyote, Bow, Corn, Badger and Butterfly Clans. In their place rested clans called the Toreador, the Brujah and the Ventrue. In fact, it was the Nosferatu Clan who welcomed her as a sister. Their *kachinas* were also strange. They were white and yellow and black. This did not disturb Kokopell Mana, however, for the Corn people were custodians and guardians of a legend that claimed people of four colors would come here to live in peace and harmony. Like corn, they would be black and white and yellow and red.

Kokopell Mana settled in the mountains of San Francisco, among the new clans and new *kachina*. She found their ways strange, but her clan of Nosferatu were versed in the ways of the Ant People and dwelled far beneath the Earth in fashioned caverns. In fact, this existence was growing comfortable until the *kachina* of the yellow corn became evil and took the city just as the Spider Clan had done in Palátkwapi. They even slaughtered brothers and sisters from her tribe. Kokopell Mana swore from then on that she would not allow another home to fall to the evils of another. She united with the Ventrue Clan and the *powáqa*, or sorcerers, of the Tremere Clan to fight the Kuei-jin *kachina*. Kokopell Mana found strong allies in the *kachina* Winder and Demain. She is now mother to her clan, and with the

Nosferatu controlling the great underbelly of the city, they will drive this new threat back across the ocean.

Image: Kokopell Mana the *kachina* is a wizened old woman of Hopi extraction who was Embraced as Nosferatu. Nobody is sure of her age because of her clan deformations and the muck with which she covers herself, but she appears and claims to be downright ancient. In fact, she believes herself a fertility *kachina* of the same name. Kokopell has a hunchback and uses "sewer muds" to paint her face. She looks like a Hopi *kachina* doll with wild straw-like hair and native clothing. Fortunately, as a "spirit," she uses Obfuscate to travel unseen in the normal world.

Roleplaying Notes: Your people are gone from the sacred mountains of San Francisco, perhaps left behind in the Fourth World. So you await their return and foster alliances with the clans who claim birthrights from across the eastern ocean. This pantheon called the Camarilla argues and bickers like a family, but they are still your family, and you will not abide any betrayal to them. This includes the Kuei-jin invasion. Still, the *kachina* Winder asked you to stave your fury for now, and you will respect the wishes of this new Warrior Mother.

Clan: Nosferatu

Sire: Unknown

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Survivor

Generation: 7th

Embrace: Unknown but first appeared in 1911

Apparent Age: Indeterminate

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0, Perception 6, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Abilities: Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 5, Empathy 4, Intimidation 3, Leadership 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4, Animal Ken 5, Melee 2, Stealth 5, Survival 4, Linguistics 1, Occult 3



Disciplines: Animalism 4, Auspex 3, Celerity 1, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 6, Potence 5

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Herd 5, Influence 4

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

Morality: Humanity 8

Willpower: 9

MIRKO MIRKONEN

Background: Mirko was born in Iceland in 835, the son of a Viking and a weaver. He grew up in a small village that was both ruled and protected by an ancient vampire named Stilgar. He quickly became Stilgar's favored disciple and earned the Embrace. After years of tutelage under his mentor's guidance, Mirkonen left his village to wander Europe. Wherever war broke out, Mirkonen placed himself in the middle of the fray, where the blood and glory were thickest. Occasionally, his thirst for battle earned him prolonged Torpor, but he emerged from each incident reinvigorated and ready for new challenges.

Mirkonen was only a nominal supporter of the Camarilla, but he despised the Sabbat for their practice of patricide. He carried this hatred through to the modern nights, which eventually led to his part in the destruction of a Tremere *antitribu* infiltrator named Lisa Morrison who claimed domain in the suburbs north of Chicago. After a thorough investigation, the Camarilla offered Mirkonen a position as Archon.

Politely refusing, Mirkonen wandered west, where his love of battle brought him repeatedly to Los Angeles and San Francisco; he now waits for one or the other to break into full-scale war so he can join the festivities. He partnered himself with Gustavo Morales, and from time to time the two Kindred hunt Cathayans in San Francisco's parks. While it's not the full-scale mayhem Mirkonen anticipates, it tides him over and makes him something of a cult figure among the city's Kindred. He also finds the taste of Cathayan blood preferable to that of either animals or humans. It's a vice he suspects he may someday regret.

Mirkonen's primary claim to local fame, along with Gustavo Morales, is his part in the theft of the main parks and the Richmond district from the Kuei-jin. While the Kuei-jin would love to destroy Mirkonen, his native cunning, hard-won knowledge of tactics, and lethal aptitude with his own Disciplines make that prospect difficult, if not impossible.

Image: Mirkonen is an enormous muscular man with the same three-day beard growth he died with over a millennium ago. There's a certain vulpine cunning in his eyes that makes others uncomfortable. He typically wears black steel-toed work boots, jeans and a black t-shirt. As something of a signature note, Mirkonen always wears a mangy fur vest that he made years ago.

Roleplaying Notes: Out of battle, you have nothing to prove — you're a relaxed and easy-going individual. You know you're a dangerous combatant, and there's no reason to overstate the obvious by betraying any



information to potential adversaries. Reflecting your respect for the living world, you attend to the natural order of things and try not to feed heavily from any one area. In warfare, you are a different person; every cruel urge manifests when you enter your berserker rage. You live for conflict and fancy yourself something of a tank. You're not flashy or fast, but you can both deliver and withstand enormous damage.

Clan: Gangrel

Sire: Stilgar the Reaver

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Bravo

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 851 CE

Apparent Age: Early 20s

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Blind Fighting 2, Brawl 5, Intimidation 5, Leadership 2, Streetwise 1, Animal Ken 4, Stealth 1, Survival 5, Investigation 1, Linguistics 3, Medicine 1

Disciplines: Animalism 5, Fortitude 5, Obfuscate 2, Potence 5, Protean 4

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Retainers 2, Status 2

Virtues: Conscience 5, Self-Control 3, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 8

GUSTAVO MORALES

Background: Even as a kid, Gustavo Morales loved the outdoors. He often left the teeming masses of humanity behind on his walkabouts. Growing up in the largely undeveloped suburbs of San Diego during the Depression gave him much room to explore.

In his adolescence, Morales never made many plans for life, always half-heartedly assuming he would be drafted and killed in WWII like his brother before him. When the Japanese surrendered before he could enlist, however, Morales felt denied of the opportunity to avenge his brother. He bore that nugget of anger as a general hatred for all Asians. After that, his only joy was backpacking into the desert or the mountains to escape the sweaty throngs of people that pressed him from all sides when he was anywhere near town.

It was on one of those backpacking excursions that he met Lobo Larry. Lobo took a liking to Morales immediately... more than Morales was entirely comfortable with, but there was something primal that drew him to the other man. Lobo Embraced him. They spent the next year together, with Lobo teaching Morales the basics of hunting and survival. After he fulfilled his basic responsibilities to his Childe, Lobo Larry disappeared and Morales was left alone to make sense of his existence.

Until settling in the Bay Area in 1978, Morales wandered along the West Coast from Baja up to Alaska. He patrolled the area's wildlife refuges for poachers and polluters, and when prey was hard to find he would stalk the muggers who frequented Golden Gate Park.

While San Francisco was a Camarilla city, Morales' relationship with the local sect extended as far as the Prince Thomas acknowledging him and, on a few occasions, assisting the scourge. The Kuei-jin's appearance changed that. Morales' anger over his brother's death had faded but his disdain toward all Asians had not. In Morales' eyes, this was his opportunity to seek the revenge denied him nearly sixty years ago.

Since the Kuei-jin incursion, Morales claimed San Francisco's parks — Lincoln, Golden Gate, the Presidio and Golden Gate National Recreational area in particular — as his hunting grounds. He tries killing any lone Kuei-jin in the parks and, with Mirko Mirkonen, wages a war of

attrition against the invaders. This partially frees the parks of both Kuei-jin and Tong control, though the Kuei-jin rarely fear pushing back harder when there's cause for it. Fortunately for Morales, their numerical deficit prohibits any large scale-action against him... for now.

While certain elements of the Camarilla appreciate Morales' enthusiasm, the current delicate balance of diplomacy makes Morales something of a loose cannon and a lightning rod for the Quincunx's hawks looking for examples of Camarilla non-compliance. Prince Winder, however, is loath to invoke the right of destruction. As soon as the Inner Circle agrees, she intends to launch a massive strike against the Cathayans. Both Morales and Mirkonen are just the kind of infantry she needs when the situation degenerates into open warfare, and she neither wants to lose a good fighter nor further alienate the already disenfranchised Gangrel. Every time an Asian vampire vanishes in or near one of San Francisco's parks, the Kuei-jin pressure her to issue a blood hunt.

Image: Morales is a tall, thin, but still-attractive Hispanic vampire who typically wears cargo pants and sturdy shirts. His lean appearance belies his fighting skills, as evidenced by his tally of Kuei-jin victims.

Roleplaying Notes: You do your own thing. Sometimes other folks like it, sometimes they don't. If they really don't like it, and they're tougher than you, they'll stop you. Otherwise it's in their best interests to leave you alone.

Clan: Gangrel

Sire: "Lobo" Larry Vasquez

Nature: Loner

Demeanor: Loner

Generation: 11th

Embrace: 1949

Apparent Age: Early 20s

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Empathy 1, Streetwise 3, Animal Ken 5, Stealth 3, Survival 4, Academics 1, Investigation 1, Law 1, Linguistics 2

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Celerity 2, Fortitude 4, Obfuscate 2, Protean 3

Backgrounds: Mentor 1, Resources 1, Retainers 1

Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

Morality: Humanity 9

Willpower: 8

TREMERE REGENT LUNA DEMIAN

Background: In the fall of 1760, a fiercely intellectual spinster named Luna Demian was traveling from Prague to Basel, Switzerland, collecting the belongings of her recently deceased father. Another passenger joined her in the cab shortly after sundown on the second night, and the two women had an unusually lively discussion on



matters academic and philosophical. It was the first time in her life that bookish Demian felt truly understood. The passenger left the carriage not long before dawn and Demian, disappointed, resolved herself to enduring the journey to Basel alone. The next night, however, her companion Eve returned and the conversation continued. Again, they spoke until just before dawn when Eve took her leave. When Eve returned on the third night, Luna asked her what it was like to be a vampire. Eve extended an invitation to Demian to find out for herself, and the brilliant spinster — with nothing looming in her future but a solitary life and a lonely death — accepted.

The encounter was not the accident it appeared. Demian's Sire, Eve Cavanant was a Pontifex of Clan Tremere who had been watching Demian's father. When the elder Demian became too feeble-minded with age, Eve turned her attentions on his daughter. The meeting aboard the carriage was an interview to certify the woman's intellect warranted her Embrace by so powerful an individual as Cavanant. She was deemed worthy.

Demian's talents with research and the occult were even greater than Cavanant dared hope; her political talents, however, were not. While her Thaumaturgical skills were finely honed, she failed to elevate herself greatly in the Tremere's hierarchy.

In the intervening years, Demian devoted herself to the cloistered life of a mystical researcher to the best of her ability, steering clear of her clan's notorious political games as much as possible. While this prevented her from rising through the ranks, it benefited her magical studies immensely. Owing to her relatively low rank, however, Demian was powerless to avoid reassignment from Europe to the far western backwaters of the United States. Against her wishes, she was made Regent of San Francisco.

To her credit, it was Demian who developed the Ward Versus Cathayans that the Camarilla effectively used in the CFZ campaign. Demian, however, consciously transferred her anger at the Tremere council (over her unwanted reassignment) to the Kuei-jin, whom she now works against with tireless antipathy. Under her direction, Clan Tremere goes to even greater lengths than the Ventrue to retake San Francisco and oust the Asian invaders.

In recent years, Demian has assumed a kindly professorial role in relation to Martin Franckel. He learned a great deal about Thaumaturgy from her, and she appreciates another Tremere above clan politics. Owing to her predecessor's demise and the general state of martial alert, Demian has grown paranoid since her transfer to San Francisco. At any given time, she is likely to command between five and 12 well-armed and armored decoy ghouls dressed in her exact likeness. She assigns these Demians to her various haunts around the city or with her to protect/substitute for her at a moment's notice. At Franckel's suggestion, they stay linked by discreet two-way radios, not unlike those used by the presidential secret service. Given her dramatic appearance, Demian's arrival with her entourage of pallid clones is an



impressive spectacle, even in a city as accustomed to drama and artifice as San Francisco.

Image: Luna means "moon," and Luna Demian takes her name very seriously. She was middle aged when she received the Embrace and her hair had already turned silver. Furthermore, death has given her a smooth white alabaster-like appearance, and she has a notable penchant for wearing white and silver lace dresses. Those elements, when combined, project an image that others find vivid and unforgettable, as befits a woman of her vast learning and achievement.

Roleplaying Notes: You have no time for social niceties. When possible, you avoid interacting with others in favor of conducting mystical research on whatever hapless Kuei-jin you captured. When others interrupt you, you make sure they know it, though you are chillingly polite when chastising them.

Clan: Tremere

Sire: Eve Cavanant

Nature: Perfectionist

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1760

Apparent Age: Mid 40s

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6, Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3, Perception 5, Intelligence 6, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 5, Dodge 2, Intimidation 1, Leadership 4, Subterfuge 4, Crafts 1, Drive 1, Etiquette 5, Security 1, Stealth 3, Academics 6, Computer 1, Finance 1, Investigation 2, Linguistics 5, Occult 5, Politics (Tremere) 4

Disciplines: Auspex 5, Celerity 2, Dominate 5, Fortitude 4, Obfuscate 3, Presence 1, Serpents 1, Thaumaturgy 5, Valeran 1

Thaumaturgical Paths: Path of Blood 5, Path of Shadowcrafting 5, Lure of Flames 3, Hands of Destruction 3, Path of the Levinbolt 5, Spirit Manipulation 2

Thaumaturgical Rituals: Bind the Accusing Tongue, Blood Mastery, Bureaucratic Condemnation, Deny the Intruder, Encrypt Missive, Scent of the Lupine's Passing, Ward Versus Cathayans, Incorporeal Passage, Bone of Lies, Escape to a True Friend, Ritual's Recognition, Shaft of Belated Quiescence, Soul of the Homunculus, Unweave Ritual, Ward Versus Spirits

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Herd 3, Resources 4, Retainers 3, Status 4

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 5, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 9

MARTIN FRANCKEL

Background: Martin Franckel was born and reared in Los Angeles. He was not particularly popular in high school and took refuge in math, astronomy and other interests that his peers labeled "nerdy." His interest in intellectual pursuits served him well, however, and he attended college solely on scholarships. He was an engineering graduate student at UCLA, planning a long and comfortable life as a computer systems engineer when he received the Embrace.

His sire was Almiro Suarez, one of the rare anarch Tremere, a Lick only a few years into his unlife who assumed (rightly, as it turned out) that Franckel's talents and obsession with computers would translate well into skill with Thaumaturgy. Suarez taught Franckel the fundamentals of unlife and the two became, if not exactly friends, then comfortable acquaintances. That ended one night when Franckel asked his Sire what grand cause his Embrace served. He wanted meaning in his newly nocturnal existence — and he didn't receive it. When Franckel discovered his comfortable future had been taken from him on a whim as part of an experiment, he went berserk and diablerized the physically weak Suarez.

Franckel's immediate response was "OhmygodwhathaveIdone?!" He fled Los Angeles and, after a while existing around California, came to San Francisco. To his surprise, there existed a whole community of relatively savvy vampire magicians. The woman in charge of the region's Tremere, Luna Demian, took Franckel in and judiciously ignored the spiritual diablerie marks on his aura. Franckel now acts as her research assistant into Thaumaturgical matters. He is even accredited with staging a faux movie shoot to cover the closing of the bridges around San Francisco long enough to ward them against the Kuei-jin.

Of final note, Franckel knows how to cast Ward versus Cathayans when he shouldn't. The Tremere have been very careful to minimize the number of people who possess the ritual within San Francisco to prevent it from falling into Kuei-jin hands. As Demian's assistant, however, Franckel secretly studied and memorized the ritual. Only Demian and he know how to cast it, aside from the Tremere in the Las Vegas Chantry where the ritual's script is



actually kept. Should the Cathayans learn this, they may arrange for Franckel's abduction and interrogation to determine what steps the Tremere will take after the wards to imprison or inconvenience them further.

Image: Martin Franckel is a handsome man with curly dark hair and large eyes, though his nose might be just a bit too large for his face. He does not dress with any distinction whatsoever, and may wear the same rumpled clothing for several days.

Roleplaying Notes: What the geek with big glasses and a pocket pen protector is to computers, you are to Thaumaturgical ritual. Your entire life centers on magical theory. You don't like socializing with non-Tremere because you can't talk to them, and if you do, they just don't understand what you mean. Even basic Cabbalistic concepts like the Holy Sephiroth — which absolutely everyone should know — appear beyond them. It drives you nuts.

Clan: Tremere

Sire: Almiro Suarez

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Geek

Generation: 12th

Embrace: 1992

Apparent Age: Mid 20s

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 4, Dodge 1, Empathy 3, Leadership 1, Subterfuge 3, Animal Ken 1, Drive 3, Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Security 1, Stealth 1, Academics 4, Computer 5, Investigation 4, Medicine 3, Occult 4, Science 2

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Dominate 2, Thaumaturgy 4

Thaumaturgical Paths: Path of Blood 4, Path of Technomancy 4

Thaumaturgical Rituals: Purity of Flesh, Donning the Mask of Shadows, Telecommunication, Ward Versus Cathayans

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Contacts 1, Herd 1, Resources 3, Retainers 1

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

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 5

SABBAT & ANARCHS

There was a time when the Sabbat carried great hope for the American Southwest. They believed the Camarilla's overwhelmingly Eurocentric outlook would, in the course of time, cause them to overlook this "rugged frontier." Once the Camarilla's conflict against the anarchs was in full swing, the Sabbat hoped that either the anarchs or the Camarilla would weaken, allowing the Sabbat to move in, mop up and fortify its Mexican holdings.

Such was not the case. The conflict between the Camarilla and the anarchs was more akin to a father and his wayward son. While there was much frustration and anger on both sides, the conflict never became as bloody as the Sabbat hoped. It was a cold war more than anything else. Both sides built up their forces and pitched their ideologies, but their skirmishes were token at best, ultimately leaving the Sabbat in a worse situation than before.

With the Kuei-jin incursion, the Sabbat again anticipate a bloody conflict that will leave the Camarilla weakened and ripe for annihilation. Thus far, the situation has not developed to their liking. The Camarilla's and Quincunx's diplomatic tactics result in a state of relatively tolerant *détente*, in which both sides simply rattle sabers and struggle to bolster their forces. In the Camarilla's case, the build up brought in relatively powerful ancillae, leading many Sabbat strategists to advise forgetting about America's West Coast indefinitely unless they can bring significant force to bear against the city.

As far as the Sabbat can tell, the Quincunx willingly plays the Camarilla's game of "Let's Ignore the Antediluvians." The two powers could, with little difficulty, decide they possess more in common with one another than with the Sabbat, and work in conjunction to destroy local Sabbat efforts. On the other hand, if the Sabbat can somehow scuttle the Camarilla's peace process or otherwise instigate full-scale war between the Camarilla and its Asian invaders, then the Sabbat might yet have a chance.

Needless to say, the only agenda the Sabbat has for San Francisco is sabotage the peaceful coexistence between the Camarilla and the Quincunx. To that end the Sabbat sent in a highly trained, highly motivated Templar and her pack, Killing Spree. Her role is to study the diplomatic tactics used by the very different Camarilla and Quincunx and undermine them. While she has not yet succeeded, the Sabbat hierarchy is willing to give her time. By and large, the Sabbat feels San Francisco is lost to them. If Templar Martinez succeeds, however, the Sabbat's

approach to all of North America could change dramatically. Needless to say, the Sabbat's powers-that-be watch quietly.

Likewise, San Francisco's anarchs currently maintain an extremely low profile and transitory existence. While several maintain temporary havens in San Francisco, they use the Bay Area as a waypoint for travel, rest or negotiations with local vampires. There is no permanent anarch population, and at this point they are hesitant to antagonize the Camarilla for fear of alienating one of the few potential allies in their struggle against the Kuei-jin. That said, an ethic of autonomy and free will forged the anarch movement, and how individual anarchs comport themselves is entirely of their own choosing.

CONSUELA MARIA MARTINEZ, PACK LEADER OF KILLING SPREE

Background: Consuela Martinez's highest ambition in her living days was to marry well. It was what she had been taught. It was what she knew. When she was seventeen, a handsome Spaniard passed through her village and paid her parents a large sum simply to dine with her. It was an odd request for many reasons. Firstly, there was no reason a rich nobleman need speak with the lady Martinez. Secondly, in the eyes of her parents, the young woman wasn't pretty enough to warrant such attention. In hopes the dinner would somehow lead to a higher quality of life as the in-laws of nobility, they consented.

As the nobleman's servants brought in course after course, Martinez ate. The nobleman, Don Guzman, merely watched and occasionally asked her questions. When the time came, he walked her back home and asked her parents how much money they wanted for their daughter. The parents did not ask why; they simply quoted him an exorbitant figure. If he accepted, they were rich. If he refused, they could simply tell their daughter they had dissuaded him with their outlandish price.

Don Guzman grew very grave and asked Martinez to wait for him at his coach. When she left, the nobleman rebuked the girl's parents for their cruelty and hypocrisy. Then he fed on them.

Guzman Embraced Martinez that night, and from then on tutored her aggressively in the arts of leadership and strategy. While there was no doubt Martinez was a part of the Sabbat, she was about as connected to the nightly excesses of Tzimisce-led war packs as a pampered elite military advisor to the shock troops in a ground war. Or at least, that was the case until San Francisco.

Nearly three years ago, Guzman (and the Sabbat hierarchy) assigned Martinez the task of breaking down diplomatic discussions between the Camarilla and the Quincunx. Guzman bred her specifically with the skill to fight the Camarilla at their own games. Her first attempt — using a turned Camarilla archon — failed. Since then, Martinez studies the diplomacy tactics of both the Camarilla and the Quincunx. While her primary goal at

the moment is information gathering, she finds it difficult given that her pack, Killing Spree, is eager for bloodletting. Their strategies call for mass Embrace and war parties, while Martinez's approach demands subtlety and patience. Fortunately, The Misery Lords pack is proving closer to her needs. Martinez finds herself relying more on their skills than those of her own pack.

Regardless, the time for study and waiting is over. Martinez's next strike must be within six months, otherwise her superiors will become impatient. Martinez is nothing if not motivated: Guzman told her should she successfully pit the Camarilla and the Quincunx against one another, the Sabbat will pick her to be San Francisco's Bishop once the smoke clears.

Image: Martinez dresses with austere conservatism. She prefers long black skirts to pants and her blouses cover her neck and wrists in a way reminiscent of Victorian sensibilities. Otherwise she is a woman of obvious Hispanic extraction with a beauty only brought to the fore through her death.

Roleplaying Notes: You are regal and stern. As a dead thing, there is no room for laughter left. More to the point, there is no room in your existence for anything but tactics. Everything you say and do is calculated and deliberate; there are few accidents or slips in your life.

Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Sergio Guzman

Nature: Perfectionist

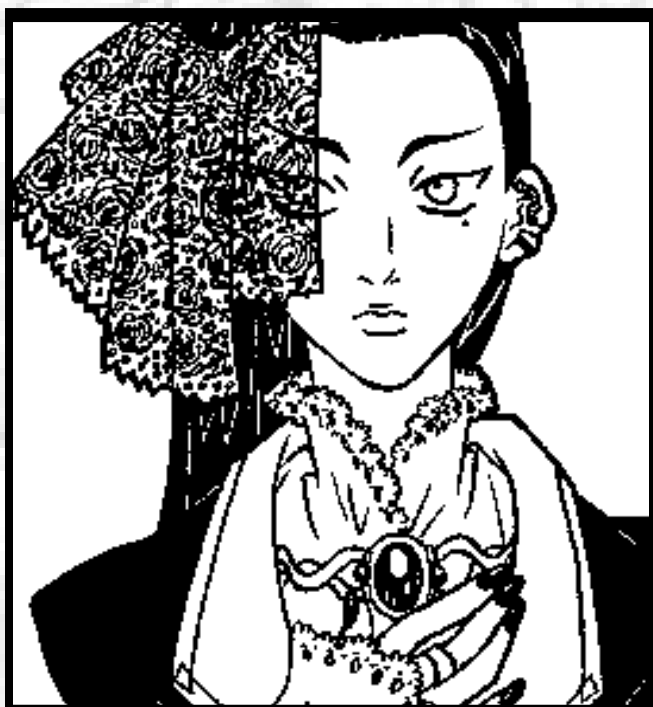
Demeanor: Autocrat

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1754

Apparent Age: Late teens

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4



Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Empathy 1, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Leadership 5, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4, Drive 3, Etiquette 3, Firearms 3, Performance 2, Stealth 3, Academics 2, Bureaucracy 1, Camarilla Lore 2, Enigmas 2, Finance 3, Investigation 3, Law 1, Linguistics 2

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Celerity 3, Dominate 4, Fortitude 3, Obtenebration 5, Potence 5

Backgrounds: Contacts 5, Resources 4, Sabbat Status 3

Virtues: Conviction 5, Instinct 3, Courage 4

Morality: Path of Power and the Inner Voice 7

Willpower: 8

CARLOS GRIFFOULIERE

Background: In his youth in Puerto Rico, people knew Carlos Griffouliere for his excesses. His vices were a thing of legend, as were the men and women he bedded.

Griffouliere was a frequent associate of Puerto Rico's underworld as well, and many of its more active figures were his friends. It would be difficult to discuss Griffouliere without his friends, in fact, because they played a large role in his life. Indeed, when he partied with his associates, it was he who watched out for them.

He made one too many acquaintances, however, when he took the charismatic Antonio Molina into his confidence. Unfortunately, none of Griffouliere's friends were there to protect him when it turned out Molina was a vampire. Molina was a scout for the Sabbat, and believed Griffouliere a perfect candidate for the Embrace. The young man possessed the social bent and lack of firm ethics that the sect valued.

Within a month of meeting the enigmatic Molina, Griffouliere was a vampire.

Despite his Sire's predictions, the Embrace did not agree with Griffouliere; while his ethics were nebulous, his morals were not, and the Sabbat's nightly exploits appalled and nauseated him. His Vinculum to his pack, however, kept him in line. Griffouliere's Embrace did nothing to quash his nurturing tendencies; if anything, he became more attentive to those who needed him as a means of atoning for the carnage his kind and he wrought every evening.

Griffouliere's pack leader, a Tzimisce called Viridian, recognized the young Lasombra's streak of rebellious humanity. He made certain the pack underwent the Vinculum far more often than actually necessary. The idea was to keep Griffouliere firmly bound to his pack, and through them, the Sabbat. Under most circumstances, the plan would have worked, but in this case, it did not. Within a decade, Griffouliere grew immune to the vitae's bonding effects. Since then, he grew increasingly distant from the sects' goals and ideals.

Amusingly, while Griffouliere's connection to the Sabbat waned, the sect's appreciation of his leadership and information gathering skills increased substantially. When Consuela Martinez assembled Killing Spree to scout out

San Francisco, she chose Griffouliere early on—an awkward development considering the only thing currently keeping him in the Sabbat is his fear of his clan's treatment of its *antitribu*. Once Griffouliere gathers enough information on the Sabbat's various California efforts (particularly in San Francisco), nothing will keep him from defecting to the Camarilla with his information save for destruction.

Image: Griffouliere is an attractive man with precisely trimmed facial hair. He typically dresses formally, but when he goes out to party he wears clothing that shows off his chiseled body.

Roleplaying Notes: You do not share your sect's views on mortals. On the contrary, you rather like them, because they—unlike most vampires—have a sense of humor. You are oddly jovial for an undead, and this makes you seem harmless. Among your associates everyone confides in you. You may as well be your pack's confessor, because you serve that function frequently and well. You are also friendly with strangers. You believe strangers are just contacts not yet made, and humans and vampires alike may become further nodes in your ever-expanding web of informants.

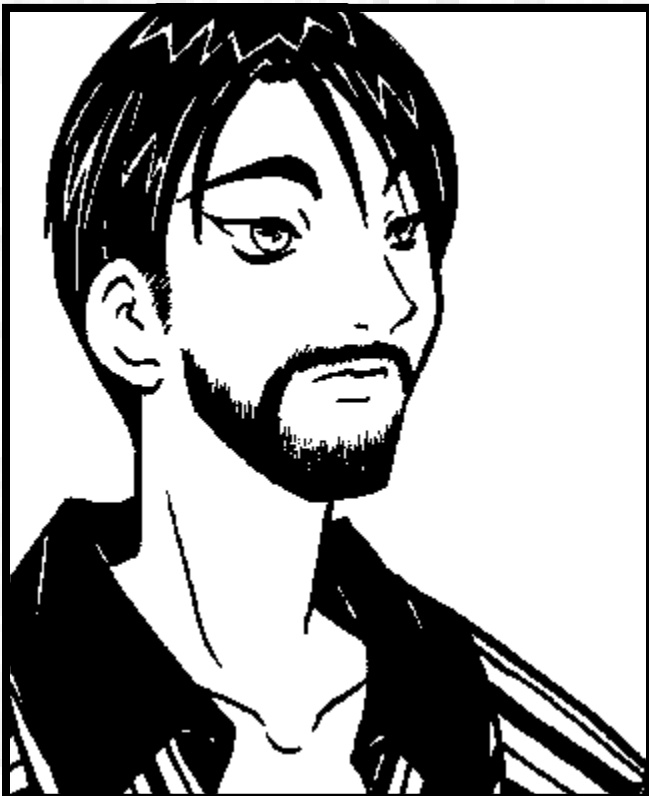
That said, you do not like your *de facto* commander in this conflict. To you, unlife should be a never-ending party. To Consuela Martinez and Killing Spree, it is an eternal struggle. When the time comes, betraying her will be a pleasure.

Clan: Lasombra (soon to be *antitribu*)

Sire: Antonio Molina

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Bon Vivant



Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1961

Apparent Age: Mid 30s

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 4, Empathy 4, Leadership 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3, Drive 3, Etiquette 2, Performance 2, Security 2, Stealth 4, Survival 2, Academics 1, Investigation 3, Law 1, Linguistics 2, Medicine 1

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Dominate 2, Fortitude 2, Obtenebration 4, Potence 3

Backgrounds: Generation 3, Herd 4, Contacts 5

Merits: Unbondable

Virtues: Conscience 5, Self-Control 3, Courage 3

Morality: Humanity 5 (and rising)

Willpower: 7

SCARLET CARSON O'TOOLE

Background: Growing up in Boston as the child of Irish immigrant parents, Scarlet Carson O'Toole was a product of the Baby Boom following World War II. Spoiled by her parents, O'Toole was a brat who learned the arts of manipulation early. She managed to exploit her parents, and when she left them for college, she charmed other people into serving her.

O'Toole met Rudy Scruggs at a New York nightclub; when she saw he was rich, she decided he would be a good toy for a while. It was a game she played quite successfully throughout college, and by that point she was quite adept at it. Unfortunately for Scruggs, the Embrace does not impart intellectual ability; he was not the brightest vampire around. With her sweet looks and coy mannerisms, O'Toole wrapped him around her finger. Within a week, he told her about his nature. A month beyond that and he introduced her as his ghoul (which she wasn't). After nearly six months, O'Toole charmed Scruggs into giving her the Embrace. Once she realized Scruggs was no longer useful, she skipped town before he thought of blood bonding her.

From New York, O'Toole fled home to Boston, where she lived in her parent's basement. Judging from their daughter's behavior, her parents believed she'd become a heroin junkie in New York. She fostered their belief until their eventual deaths; while it was a difficult burden to bear, it was far easier than telling her staunchly Catholic parents she drank blood and cavorted with creature of darkness.

Without her parents to shield her, O'Toole was alone and forced to fend for herself for the first time. She returned to New York hoping to find Scruggs, but discovered he had been destroyed. His pack,

The Misery Lords, however, welcomed her warmly and made sure she took part in the Vinculum.

O'Toole has been a charm machine for the Sabbat ever since. Extracting information from Camarilla Kindred whenever possible, O' Toole made herself useful in whatever ways served her family best. By the time New York fell to the Camarilla, however, O'Toole was a veteran information gatherer and a pack leader.

The Misery Lords consist entirely of vampires trained in information gathering, and with all the Camarilla's emphasis on the Cathayans, their guard slips just a bit around Caucasian vampires — a weakness O'Toole and her pack exploit to the best of their abilities. Neither have their efforts gone unnoticed by Consuela Maria Martinez, the pack leader for Killing Spree and the war bishop supervising Sabbat efforts in San Francisco. O'Toole knows that if she and The Misery Lords can prove their usefulness to Martinez, they may earn positions of power when the city falls to the Sabbat.

Image: Scarlet Carson O'Toole is a petite woman just over five feet tall. Her short red hair and freckles make her seem childlike in a wholesome, all-American way. O' Toole moves in a deliberate and graceful manner that also lends her a sexy and slightly arrogant appearance.

Roleplaying Notes: You're cute. You trade on cute. Folks applied words like "spunky" and "perky" to you when you were alive. Though you certainly don't feel that way anymore, it has become clear that the impression of childish naiveté makes them

dismiss you as harmless — a misconception you find invaluable in gathering intelligence.

Clan: City Gangrel

Sire: Rudolph Scruggs

Nature: Child

Demeanor: Trickster

Generation: 11th

Embrace: 1967

Apparent Age: Early 20s

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Dodge 1, Empathy 4, Expression 3, Subterfuge 4, Drive 3, Etiquette 3, Stealth 3, Survival 2, Academics 2, Camarilla Lore 2, Investigation 3, Politics 2, Science 1

Disciplines: Celerity 4, Fortitude 1, Obfuscate 2, Presence 1, Protean 3

Backgrounds: Generation 2, Contacts 4, Resources 2, Status 1

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

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 6

OTHER SHEN

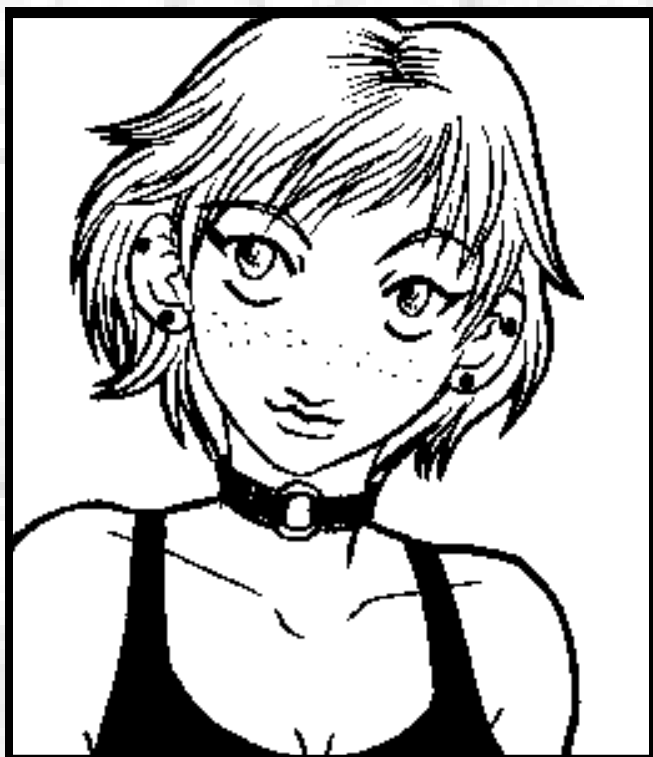
MADAM XIU PING

Background: Xiu Ping was orphaned at the age of fifteen when she saw her family ripped apart by a marauding Devil Tiger. A week later, Chu Fang, one of the Middle Kingdom's solitary devil hunters, slew a Devil Tiger before her eyes.

Having no family, Xiu Ping asked to travel with the man, who instructed her comprehensively in the arts of the Shih. All Xiu Ping had to do in return was sleep with the old man. While it was not a relationship she sought out, it served its purpose. Xiu Ping acted as Chu Fang's child bride for seven years before he rescued another girl, took her for his child bride, and cut all ties with Xiu Ping.

At the age of twenty-two with no social ties to any community, Xiu Ping became a wandering devil slayer herself. Her rage at Chu Fang's betrayal was enormous, but she channeled it into her fights against unbalanced *shen*. When she heard that Chu Fang and his concubine had met their demise at the claws of a trio of vicious old Kumo, she rejoiced — and then she avenged their deaths by slaying the spider devils.

Xiu Ping's wanderings led her across most of China, but after slaying one devil too many, Xiu Ping was done with the Middle Kingdom and its nocturnal denizens. At the age of forty-six, after nearly thirty years of living in the shadowy world of the Shih, she effectively "retired." Paying an enormous sum of money to a Shanghai Triad to smuggle her into San Francisco on an





overcrowded and leaking cargo ship, Xiu Ping thought she had ended her years as an active Shih.

The Reagan administration had just dismembered the American economy when Xiu Ping arrived in the United States. Compared to slaying monsters, working three minimum wage jobs was nothing. After two solid years of work and an extremely impoverished lifestyle, Xiu Ping earned enough to rent a small storefront, which she turned into a private Kung Fu studio. News of her speed and powerful techniques spread throughout San Francisco's martial arts community. Within six months her school, the Xiu Ping Academy of Kung Fu, had a waiting list nearly sixty names long waiting to enroll.

It was, Xiu Ping thought, a pleasant way to finish out this lifetime.

Then she noticed the Kuei-jin.

Xiu Ping went out on long nocturnal walks, watching the siege of San Francisco's nights unfolding around her. It was that experience that prompted her to turn her best Kung Fu student into a Shih apprentice. If the Kuei-jin were as prone to excess as they were in China, America would need its own defender against the Ten-Thousand Devils. Since then, Madam Xiu undergoes great effort to ready her adopted Western son in his mastery of the Shih arts.

Image: Xiu Ping approaches her seventies, but she looks and comports herself like a woman in her early fifties. She dresses simply and traditionally, so resembling the other women of her apparent age that she is almost invisible within the confines of Chinatown.

CH'IN TA

Although matters changed drastically in the last five years, San Francisco has been a refuge for the eccentric will-workers called mages for decades. The relatively low Wall rating combined with San Francisco's liberal attitudes and somewhat mystical native bent simplified life for magic practitioners.

Even the hostilities between the mystical traditions and the Technocracy are relatively low key. Now that the Technocracy has won the war — in the Bay Area more than almost any other place on Earth — it is in a position to show a certain *noblesse oblige* to the quaint eccentrics who insist on dancing to a different drum.

FATHER LI T'ien

Background: Li T'ien's father was a dragon wizard who raised his son with the intent he too would become a dragon wizard. By the time of Li T'ien's "capping," or coming of age ritual when he received his formal hat and robes, he was already a mage of some ability.

In all ways, Li T'ien appeared an admirably orthodox young man. When he announced he was moving to the United States to watch over his countrymen who had gone to work there, it was a shock to all who knew him. He persisted and argued his position by stating that the North American Chinese needed sages, judges and ministers as greatly as those who remained at home. So saying, he sailed to San Francisco where he has lived since.

That was over one hundred and fifty years ago.

Li T'ien stays alive and healthy through alchemy, and he looks better than many men a third his age. With time, Li T'ien ensconced himself in the very



heart of Chinatown in a small house that looks transplanted from China itself.

True to his word, Li T'ien has advised Chinatown's inhabitants on issues of law, religion, proper behavior, medicine and mysticism since the 19th century. In his own mind and in those of many Chinatown's inhabitants, he is a spiritual authority as important to his constituency as the Pope is to Catholics. Li T'ien is a one-man anchor of traditional Chinese culture in America. As such, the Kuei-jin have much to thank him for; it is Father Li T'ien and others like him who transported enough of the Middle Kingdom to this side of the Pacific and preserved it well enough for new Kuei-jin to arise here.

On the other hand, despite a certain acceptance for other Chinese *shen*, Li T'ien himself is not fond of vampires of any variety, East or West. He believes no amount of preying on his friends and family is acceptable. Kuei-jin may approach Father Li T'ien for conversation, but if that individual feeds from anyone of Asian ancestry in North America, the old man punishes the supplicant upon uncovering the

truth (and if the individual is *akuma*, Li T'ien knows and he will destroy the demon).

Over the years, Li T'ien worked with a variety of community groups, police task forces and other watchdogs to eradicate Chinatown's Tong presence. Until recently, he was quite certain the gangs were on the wane, but increased local drug peddling reversed that trend. Father Li T'ien currently prepares to rectify the problem.

Image: Father Li T'ien is a very old man, but he is no less formidable for that. His aura of bearing and control in itself is enough to make others listen to his words. When he is outside, he always wears a large black hat with beads hanging from the brim, covering his face.

Roleplaying Notes: You view yourself not as an individual but an institution. You fill many roles for San Francisco's Chinese residents: confessor, doctor, psychologist, mystic and judge. Decades of determined study made you worthy of such responsibility, and while you are not arrogant, neither are you humble. You consider yourself a sage, with all the benefits and responsibilities pertaining thereto.



CHAPTER SIX: STORYTELLING SAN FRANCISCO

There are eight million stories in the naked city. This was one of them.

— *The Naked City* television series

As the setting where the future relations between Kuei-jin and the Kindred hang in the balance, San Francisco is full of stories for a **Kindred of the East** (or **Vampire: The Masquerade**) chronicle. This chapter examines the different kinds of stories waiting to be told, their major themes, various conflicts within the city and how to handle them. It also provides game information on some matters specific to the San Francisco setting and the conflict between the New Promise Mandarinate and the Camarilla.

SAN FRANCISCO STORIES

Storytellers can use this sourcebook to run a single story or two set in San Francisco, to run a short series of stories based in and around the city (a “mini-series”), or to set an entire chronicle in the Bay Area before, during or after the Kuei-jin invasion. The type of story partially dictates how the characters become involved and what aspects of the city the Storyteller should emphasize.

ONE-SHOT STORIES

The simplest San Francisco story and one that is easy to drop into an existing chronicle is a one-shot, in which the characters visit San Francisco, become involved in local events for a while, then return home. A one-shot provides a change of scenery for an ongoing chronicle, gives the characters a hint of what’s happening elsewhere in the world and involves them in events of importance.

For either a **Kindred of the East** or **Vampire: The Masquerade** chronicle, the standard one-shot assumes either the characters’ superiors send them to San Francisco or that they have a reason to visit the city on their own. In the former case, the characters may be experts or “troubleshooters” (a war- or espionage-trained *wu*, Justicars, diplomats, etc.) dispatched to handle a particular problem. The August Courts, for example, might send a *wu* to deal with the Gangrel in Golden Gate Park (see p. 49). The Camarilla might send envoys to contact the Gangrel and ask them to ease up

in their campaign against the Cathayans in order to stave off further conflict. Matters become more interesting if both groups arrive around the same time....

Alternately, being sent to San Francisco might be a punishment of sorts. The city is certainly dangerous territory; one misstep can mean Final Death at the hands of edgy and paranoid vampires. Kuei-jin who displease their elders or earn reputations as troublemakers might be chosen for “a glorious mission in the Great Leap Outward,” simply to excise them from the August Courts and ensure they don’t return. The ancestors are particularly renowned for sending agitators like the Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders to “aid” the New Promise Mandarinate as a means of testing the Cloud Mandarins and the Fence-Menders faction, ensuring they don’t become too powerful. By the same token, San Francisco is a suitable environs for Kindred to send neonates, either to test their mettle or to stir up trouble in hopes of forcing a confrontation with the Cathayans sooner.

Since a one-shot story doesn’t offer much time to develop a complex plot, it’s best to offer the players a quick “snapshot” of the city and its situation. Give them the chance to interact with a major supporting character or two (see Chapter Five for inspiration), then focus their attention on a particular area of the city. Allow them to develop a feel for what it’s like for local vampires existing in a fragile state of peace. In the above example, you could focus the story around Golden Gate Park and its environs, stressing the isolation of the park and how no one else ventures there. Each neighborhood offers its own unique flavor for a quick San Francisco adventure.

Alternately, Storytellers can give players a fast sampling of everything — a whirlwind tour that takes them to several prominent locations. They start out meeting someone on a foggy night on top of Telegraph Hill, proceed to a nightclub in the Castro, then a gambling parlor in Chinatown, followed by a chase up through Nob Hill involving a cable car, before finally arriving at the waterfront. This approach packs as much flavor into the story as possible, but it can overwhelm players if it isn’t kept under control. Try and use enough of the city to offer the players a taste in a one-shot story, but don’t over-season.

Mini-Series

A “mini-series” is several (anywhere from two to eight or more) stories linked together, but with a definite resolution in mind. Storytellers can insert a mini-series into a regular chronicle or it can be a mini-chronicle unto itself, with a beginning, middle and end.

The pre-determined ending is the key to a mini-series. Not that the Storyteller should force players along a fixed storyline toward an inevitable ending, but it’s important there be *conditions* that will end the series. For example, a mini-series could be based around a *wu* sent to San Francisco

on a mission for an August Courts ancestor. When the *wu* completes or fails its assignment (which may take several sessions), they return home and series is over. A longer mini-series could be depend on the conflict between local Kuei-jin and Kindred; when one side wins a decisive victory, the series is over. This type of series, however, is likely long enough to be a chronicle on its own.

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLES

Finally, Storytellers should find everything they need in this book to design and run an entire **Kindred of the East** or **Vampire: The Masquerade** chronicle set in San Francisco. A chronicle offers in-depth use of the setting’s various supporting characters, backdrops and themes over the course of many stories. The chronicle can be open-ended (running for as long as the Storyteller and the players remain interested) or of a pre-determined length (either a set number of sessions or with a “trigger” event that wraps up matters).

San Francisco is a particularly good setting for introducing **Vampire** players to **Kindred of the East** since many familiar elements are present, with the addition of the Kuei-jin and the New Promise Mandarinate. A Storyteller could even end an existing chronicle or run a short mini-series where the players play Kindred characters. They meet the Cathayans and must deal with them. Then in the new chronicle they assume the role of Kuei-jin in a strange and foreign land, seeing everything from the other side of the fence. The city’s relative isolation from the August Courts and the Middle Kingdom means the Storyteller can use as much or as little of the **Kindred of the East** background as desired. Once the players are more familiar with the setting, perhaps a visit to the Middle Kingdom is in order, sending them to Hong Kong (for example) to receive a taste of events back home.

EXISTING CHRONICLES

Storytellers with **Kindred of the East** or **Vampire** chronicles already set in San Francisco may want to integrate the material and supporting characters from this book into their games. Naturally, it’s up to the Storyteller to decide what to include and what to change or ignore. If the chronicle diverges considerably from the plot described here and in other **Kindred of the East** books, then the Storyteller may ignore all but the general background, changing the specifics to suit the chronicle’s needs.

Some Storytellers may want to play out events described in Chapter Two, perhaps running the associated adventures from books like **Nights of Prophecy**. In this case, the events may play out somewhat differently, changing conditions in San Francisco. The characters might blunt some of the Kuei-jin invasion, or ensure it is even more successful. Perhaps the *wu* assassinates Jochen Van Nuys, eliminating him as a local player and placing more authority in the hands of Sara Ann Winder. Characters

KEEPING IT MYSTERIOUS

An element of horror is dealing with the unknown. It's frightening when you face an unholy creature returned from the dead to feast on human blood. It's even *more* frightening when you're unsure exactly what that unholy creature can do and, more importantly, what you must do to stop it. That kind of uncertainty disappears when players completely memorize (or have easy access to) the **Vampire: the Masquerade** and **Kindred of the East** rulebooks and sourcebooks. So here are some ways Storytellers can keep the supernatural antagonists of a chronicle more mysterious.

- **Show, Don't Tell:** When a supernatural being uses its abilities, don't say "The *akuma* uses Goblin Scorch against you." Say instead something like, "Your opponent's jaws open wide, wider than should be possible and breathes a gout of cold, dark flame at you." The players don't know they face a Kuei-jin (much less an *akuma*) or the intent of her actions. Describe the effects of a Kuei-jin (or Kindred) Discipline rather than falling back on the standard names from the rules. Even experienced players can't always tell the difference between, say, Bone Shintai and Protean. Don't offer the players more information than their characters know and they'll be more cautious in dealing with situations.

- **It's Magic:** Kindred Thaumaturgy and Kuei-jin Rituals are great and mysterious powers simply because they can accomplish almost *anything*, given enough time, materials and arcane knowledge. Throwing the occasional curse or other occult effect at the characters can help keep them from growing too complacent. It's also easy to introduce entirely new rituals into the chronicle that the characters have no way of fathoming (unless one of them possesses Occult 5 and rolls really well).

- **Closed-Book Play:** Don't allow players to look up information on their opponents (or allies, for that matter) during the game. Storytellers should be flexible about letting players check game information needed for their characters, but generally people shouldn't be flipping through books during the game anyway. Encourage players to resist the temptation of reading about their character's antagonists, or at least not to use that information if there's no way their characters would know about it.

- **Change the Rules:** When all else fails, a sure way of maintaining the chronicle's mystery is to change the rules without telling the players. Storytellers shouldn't do this to their characters, only to things their characters wouldn't necessarily know. The Storyteller may decide the effects of Flame Shintai or Vicissitude look entirely different from their descriptions in the books, or that different dots grant different abilities. When the players ask, "What the hell was that?" Just smile and say, "I don't know, you've never seen anything like it before."

with prolonged involvement in San Francisco may be power-players following the arrival of the New Promise Mandarinate. See "Playing the Political Game" (p. 129) for more ideas on running a high-powered, high-influence chronicle set in San Francisco.

Storytellers with existing San Francisco chronicles may also "skip over" over the events described in Chapter Two, moving the chronicle ahead several months and starting anew with the situation as described in this book. Be careful to consult with the players, however, before making a unilateral decision to jump the chronicle forward. This could rob players of the opportunity to involve themselves in unfolding events.

Finally, a Storyteller may end an existing San Francisco chronicle and start anew with the material in this book. The Kuei-jin invasion certainly makes a good "break point" for ending one chronicle and starting another, particularly if the old characters are destroyed or flee the city. Maybe some old characters are still around as supporting cast in the new chronicle (with their players' permission, of course).

FEAR AND IGNORANCE

An important mood element in a San Francisco chronicle is the atmosphere of fear and ignorance surrounding the Kuei-jin and the Kindred regarding

their opposite numbers. Although both types of vampires existed for untold millennia, there has been fairly little contact between them and almost all of it hostile. It's hardly been a good learning environment.

Over the recent years, the Kindred and Kuei-jin have discovered more about each other, but they each possess complex cultures, histories and mystical natures completely alien to their counterparts. Add to the equation that vampires are often blinded by their own arrogance and selfishness, and one can see why useful factual information is slow in coming. Still, scholars and researchers on either side made progress in understanding the opposition, usually by torturing and vivisectioning captured vampires and even squeezing their captured souls for information. Not all of this data is reliable, but it gives vampires a more complete picture of their rivals.

Unlike the players, however, vampires don't have access to books where everything about their kind is neatly and succinctly arranged. Even within their own culture, vampires still don't know about many matters (many Kindred know little about the culture and Disciplines of some clans, for example). This is doubly true where a completely foreign culture is concerned. Storytellers should remind players not to mix their "book knowledge" and "character knowledge" too



greatly. It detracts from an environment of exploration and demystifies the fear factor.

WHAT THE KUEI-JIN KNOW

Between the need to understand more about the foreign barbarians invading the Middle Kingdom and many Kuei-jin given to scholarly pursuits, like the Bone Flowers, the Kuei-jin are gathering a respectable body of knowledge about Western vampires. They also learned more recently, thanks to Kin-jin defector Oliver Thrace and from other Kindred expatriates like Wan Zhu (p. 88). Of course, Thrace knows his knowledge makes him an asset to his Cathayan "hosts," so he hasn't told them everything, ensuring that he remains valuable for the time being.

Most Kuei-jin knowledge of the Kindred comes from second-hand information, direct observation and occasionally the interrogation of Kin-jin prisoners or "guests" of the August Courts. Information obtained under duress or second-hand isn't always reliable, but the Wan Kuei have still created what they believe a fairly accurate picture of their enemy.

The Curse: The most important fact the Kuei-jin know about the Kin-jin is that their condition is a curse of some kind. They have no ties to the glory of the Ten Thousand Immortals or the time before the Age of Beautiful Sadness. The Kin-jin do not come into existence as a result of karma or the needs of a particular soul; they are more akin to a disease that strikes randomly. This strengthens the Kuei-jin view of Kindred as corrupt and diseased beings. Some believe they can still turn Kin-jin toward useful ends (indeed, the New Promise Mandarinate attempts to do so) but few believe the Kin-jin possess any potential for enlightenment, even if they understood the wisdom of Xue.

The Power of Blood: Kin-jin blood carries power within it, but it is toxic Chi, polluted by the corruption in their bodies. Observation and experimentation show that Kin-jin blood possesses several properties. Most importantly, it can pass corrupt Chi on to others. Mortals who drink Kin-jin blood gain strength from it, but they also become addicted. Mortals drained of their Chi and fed corrupt Kin-jin blood become Kin-jin themselves. This is perhaps the most terrifying fact about the Kin-jin: Kin-jin can inflict their curse on others in defiance of karma's natural cycles. It also means that Kin-jin can spread like a plague if the Kuei-jin don't contain them.

Given the corrupt nature of Kin-jin Chi and the properties of their blood, Kuei-jin are extremely reluctant to feed on them. The Eastern vampires do not believe drinking Kin-jin blood will transform one of them into Kin-jin, but they suspect (correctly) that Kin-jin blood could have the same "addictive" effects on them that it has on mortals. Masters of Blood Shintai study Kin-jin blood closely, hoping to find a means of protecting their kind against its effects, as well as perhaps a weakness they can exploit.

Disciplines: The Kuei-jin know the Kin-jin have various supernatural powers at their command, some of them similar to the Arts of Bone and Flesh Shintai as well as Kuei-jin Soul Arts. Overall, Kindred Disciplines appear crude by Kuei-jin standards, focusing primarily on strengthening or altering the corpse, or influencing the minds of others. They have seen no evidence the Kin-jin possess or understand the more advanced Soul Arts, Chi Arts, or the like. Kin-jin Disciplines create disturbances in an area's chi, powered as they are by the corrupt energy flowing through their blood. Kuei-jin sensitive to the Chi flow can sense the use of Kin-jin Disciplines in their presence if they actively try. This is only available to Kuei-jin versed in the Chi Arts or Chi'iu Muh who possess three or more dots in any one of these five Disciplines. By spending a Willpower point, the Kuei-jin may roll Perception + Meditation (difficulty 8) to detect the recent use of Disciplines (within the last two hours) in the immediate area (like within a house or room).

Generally speaking, the Kuei-jin know about the major and more common Kindred Disciplines like Celerity, Fortitude and Potence. They are aware of abilities like Auspex, Dominate, Presence and Protean, but know fairly little about more esoteric (and mainly Sabbat) Disciplines like Obtenebration, Serpents, or Vicissitude.

Rites: That the Kin-jin have sorcerers among them is clear to the Wan Kuei. They don't know these foreign warlocks' and magicians' exact abilities, however. Thanks to Tremere turncoats like Oliver Thrace, the Kuei-jin know that the power of Kindred Thaumaturgy roughly equals their own rituals, though it apparently draws upon the corrupt power in their blood rather than the flow of Chi throughout the world. The body of Western occult lore is so vast that Kuei-jin only now understand the surface of its ocean (enough to consider it as corrupt and misguided as everything else about the Kin-jin). They know their rituals can affect those of the Western Demons' and vice versa, but it is considerably more difficult dealing with foreign magic and its alien precepts.

The Clans: Having studied them, the Kuei-jin know the Kin-jin organize themselves into "bloodlines" that trace their lineage back to a mythical ancestor. Unfortunately, misinformation and even varied philosophies among the Kin-jin clouds the origins of Western Vampires. Lilith, Caine, Osiris, Set, Vlad Tepes, Alkavian-May and a score of other names appear throughout Kuei-jin research and interrogation sessions. Rather than confuse the matter further, the Kuei-jin currently theorize that the bloodlines organize themselves into clans that harken back to a particular "ancestor" after whom the clan is named. They also know that the Western vampires generally owe allegiance to either the Camarilla or Sabbat, and that the latter is all but impossible to negotiate with (all Kuei-jin contact with the Sabbat ends in violence).

There is clearly considerable struggle, not only between the Camarilla and Sabbat, but between the various clans as well. Since most of the Kuei-jin's Kindred allies thus far have been anarchs and caitiffs, their knowledge of the clans is limited. The New Promise Mandarinate hopes to learn more and use their knowledge to drive wedges between the Kin-jin, and perhaps recruit more as supporters.

Weaknesses: The Kuei-jin learned much about destroying Kin-jin over the past few years and carefully seek out any weakness they can use against the foreign barbarians. They know the Kin-jin are vulnerable to fire, making Yang Ghost-Flame Shintai a useful weapon against them. They also quickly grasped that, as Yin-aligned creatures, Kin-jin are vulnerable to wood. Staking Kin-jin then burning the body is a fairly standard means of destruction for the Kuei-jin. They also know that Kin-jin burn when exposed to the sun, and have arranged for many to face the Eye of Heaven.

WHAT THE KINDRED KNOW

Kindred knowledge of the Cathayans lags behind because of a particular conceit. Western vampires long assumed that Cathayans were simply a "lost" or undiscovered bloodline descended from Caine; they believed Asian vampires were essentially the same as them. This proved to be a serious mistake. Although scholars rectified this assumption, most still commit the fundamental error of assuming the Cathayans are similar to the Kindred unless proven otherwise, whereas the xenophobic Kuei-jin began with the assumption that the Kin-jin could not be similar to them. This allowed the Quincunx to discern the differences between them much more quickly than the Camarilla has done.

Most of what the Kin-jin (mainly the Camarilla) has discovered about the Cathayans is what they are not. They only now touch upon the truth of their opponents' natures, and it's something that sends a small chill through their cold flesh. The Las Vegas Tremere perform most of the research into the Cathayans these days (see the description of Luna Demain on p. 110 for more information).

Spirits from Hell: A recent and very important discovery about the Cathayans is they apparently are not Embraced and do not create other Cathayans through the Embrace, at least as far as the Kindred can tell. Unfortunately, they haven't yet figured out how Cathayans come into existence. All they managed to extract from Kuei-jin prisoners talk about dying and going to Hell. This raises questions about the Asian vampires being ghosts or demons of some sort, but doesn't clearly explain where they originate from or (more importantly) how quickly they can replenish their losses.

Thus far, it seems reasonably safe to feed on Cathayans, and Kindred who do so report that Cathayan vitae is potent, though it doesn't appear to carry the kind of power one obtains through diablerie. The

Kindred are also uncertain if Cathayan blood can create a blood bond, so they are careful not to feed on a particular Cathayan more than once. Apparently, Cathayan blood does not make mortals into ghouls or maintain existing ghouls.

Mysterious Powers: Among the great mysteries concerning Cathayans is the extent of their powers. It's clear they possess formidable Disciplines at least equal to those wielded by Kindred, perhaps even more so. Kindred report having seen Cathayans transform their bodies into hideous forms, burst into flames, vanish into thin air, cloak themselves in darkness, create weapons and even creatures from their own blood and numerous other feats. There are so many that it is difficult to tell what is true and what is terror-induced exaggeration. The simple truth is the full extent of Cathayan powers remains unknown. The Kindred assume they have abilities similar to their own, plus their own esoteric arts.

The Tremere are particularly interested in learning more about Cathayan Thaumaturgy. It's clear the Asian vampires practice their own brand of magic, but it otherwise remains a mystery. Some Kindred observers speculate that a few Cathayan powers may stem from rituals, but there is currently no way to be sure.

Diverse Ways: The existence and purpose of the Dharmas is largely unknown to Western vampires. They are aware of numerous divisions within Cathayan society, but not clear on the distinctions between Dharma, direction, Court, *wu*, rank and the many other definitions the Kuei-jin use for themselves.

Kindred think of the Courts as similar to clans or factions like the Camarilla and Sabbat. Indeed, the Camarilla hopes this is true, since it might mean the other Courts that they know exist outside the Quincunx might be rivals of the August Courts and therefore willing to consider alliances with the Camarilla. Unfortunately, efforts to establish any kind of contact with Japan's or Korea's vampires, much less Indonesia, meet with failure (and usually the Final Death of their envoys).

Weaknesses: A priority for Kindred is discovering as much as possible about the Cathayans' weaknesses. All evidence thus far is confusing and inconclusive at best. Experimentation shows that Asian vampires are almost as vulnerable to the sun as their Western counterparts. They rot away to dust rather than burning, and can withstand sunlight for longer than Kindred (a matter of minutes). Still, there are ghouls who claim to have seen Cathayans active during the day, suggesting they possess a means of protecting themselves from sunlight, perhaps a ritual of some sort.

Likewise, some Cathayans are paralyzed when staked, while others remain unaffected. Most Cathayans appear vulnerable to flame, though some are more resistant than others; some even breathe flames or surround themselves in fire! Fortunately, conventional

weapons seem to affect them at least as well as they do Western vampires. For the time being, the Kindred resort to the tried-and-true methods of vampire slaying, knowing that sometimes they aren't as effective as they might expect.

Story Ideas

- The Cloud Mandarins task a *wu* with uncovering more about the nature of the Kin-jin and their vulnerabilities. This requires subtlety, some careful research and possibly finding one or more Kin-jin they can abduct without raising suspicions in the city. Characters with disguise capabilities may also try to infiltrate Kin-jin hangouts or havens to learn more.

- The characters are all of Asian descent, and Embraced (and possibly blood bound) by Camarilla vampires to create Kindred capable of infiltrating Kuei-jin society and learning more about the Cathayans. At least one character is Tremere (probably with knowledge of the Contact Kindred Sire ritual). Even skilled actors aren't likely to fool the Kuei-jin for long, but the characters may learn some useful information. They might also attract the attention of the rogue Tremere Wan Zhu (p. 88) who feels some sympathy for their plight, the *akuma* Chan Te (p. 98), or the dragon-wizard Li T'ien (p. 117).

CONFLICTS

There is no lack of conflict brewing in San Francisco. The Storyteller must simply decide which to focus on in the chronicle. To give the story more depth and verisimilitude, it's useful to focus on one conflict as the center of the chronicle while leaving other conflicts in the background, or as the occasional change in the game's pace. A chronicle focusing on the Quincunx/Camarilla conflict, for example, can still occasionally feature political struggles within each faction, reminding players there are other events transpiring around them all the time.

KUEI-JIN VS. KINDRED

The most prominent conflict in San Francisco is the struggle between the Quincunx's Kuei-jin (notably the Harmonious Menders of Broken Fences faction) and the city's Kindred. Both sides want to control the city and few believe that any kind of lasting peace between them is possible. The New Promise Mandarinate's success or failure may change some opinions about that, however.

One important fact to understand about the Kuei-jin/Kindred conflict in San Francisco is that the two factions are not technically at war with each other. In fact, the city maintains a fragile peace that both sides have good reasons to maintain for the time being. The Kuei-jin stretched themselves thin by taking both San Francisco and Los Angeles. They need time to regroup, reinforce their numbers and become more firmly entrenched in the cities. The New Promise Mandarinate

needs time to stabilize and create order from the conflict's chaos.

The Camarilla needs time to regroup from the defeats suffered in San Francisco and from their campaign to retake New York City from the Sabbat. They focus more attention on dealing with the "Cathayan problem," but require more information before they can take action. The peace gives them the time they need to study their new enemy and learn as much as possible (see "Fear and Ignorance") for some details on what the Kindred know about the Kuei-jin).

For the time being, peace exists between the Eastern and Western vampires, at least in theory. San Francisco is more akin to a Cold War-era city occupied by two opposing factions rather than a city torn by open warfare. The Kuei-jin and Kindred do not routinely fight in the streets, though isolated skirmishes occur from time to time as tempers fray from the constant stress of existing in "enemy" territory (for both sides). Both factions possess good reason to maintain peace and order, so they frown upon overt conflict. Instead, agents of the Mandarinate and the Camarilla sneak, spy and gather information, each hoping to be ready for action before the other.

This means opportunities exist for Kuei-jin and Kin-jin to meet and interact without matters coming to blows immediately. Of great concern to both sides is that their lowermost ranks, the neonates and Running Monkeys, interact on an almost nightly basis. In time, they may discover they share more in common than they suspect, and sympathy with the enemy is something neither side can afford. Even the New Promise Mandarinate, which hopes to incorporate Kin-jin into its structure, raises concerns among more conservative Kuei-jin regarding Western "contamination" of their culture and traditions. So the two sides carefully dance around each other, not approaching too closely, but not letting their guard down either. They simply wait for the moment when all Hell breaks loose.

Story Ideas

- An elder tells a prominent *wu* or coterie of vampires that they must accept an "observer" from the other faction as a show off "good-faith and understanding." The truth of the matter is that the other faction wants to monitor the activities of prominent vampires and gather information. The observer might be guarded but sympathetic, or may have plans to deliberately provoke the characters into a violation of the peace, thus embarrassing their faction. The observer might even harbor hidden loyalties, either testing the characters to determine their allegiances or working for a third party like the Sabbat, the *gaki*, or the Yama Kings.

- Characters are asked or ordered to enter a prohibited part of the city to uncover what's happening there. They must move carefully, and it's made clear

their elders will disavow them if they're caught. See Chapter Three for all sorts of places where vampires from either side can land into trouble. This becomes more interesting if another faction tries sabotaging the characters without tipping their own hand too greatly.

KUEI-JIN VS. KUEI-JIN

As much as they struggle to present a unified front to the barbaric Kin-jin, San Francisco's Kuei-jin are far from unified. Politicking and power struggles threaten to tear the New Promise Mandarinate apart from within. The conflict takes place on three levels.

The first is the struggle within the New Promise Mandarinate for control of San Francisco. Several mandarins are in contention for the ancestorship, and each seeks to prove him or herself worthy to the August Courts and the Ancestor of the Extraordinary Commission. Each also has a particular agenda for the city's future and the August Courts. Arrayed around them are various allies, Scarlet Screens, potential rivals and political enemies. Nearly every local Kuei-jin hopes to back a winner and come out on top when the dust finally settles and an ancestor assumes control. Even then, the new ancestor will need capable and experienced mandarins to help run the city, so no one can afford to completely alienate a possible future ally.

The second is the struggle within the Quincunx between the Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders and the Harmonious Menders of Broken Fences. The Fence Menders are currently in favor with the August Courts for their successes, while the Crusaders have suffered some setbacks. Still, they dedicate themselves to their ideal of carrying the battle to the unrighteous, agitating nightly to press their advantage in San Francisco and sweep away the corrupt and barbaric Kin-jin.

The other conflicts are between the Kuei-jin of the Quincunx's August Courts (who control the New Promise Mandarinate) and Kuei-jin from outside the August Courts. They maintain their own agendas, which are not always in agreement with the Great Leap Outward and the Two-Fang Serpent Plan. This also includes the *kànbujiàn*, Kuei-jin who took the Second Breath outside the Middle Kingdom and whom the Quincunx considers nearly as barbaric as the Kin-jin.

The Gaki: San Francisco's Japanese Kuei-jin suffered at the hands of their Chinese brethren, who treated them as second-class citizens for some time. Now the New Promise Mandarinate finds itself in desperate need of allies and the *gaki* find themselves bargaining from a position of strength. They can also make things difficult for the Quincunx and the occupying Kuei-jin, if they wish.

For the time being, the *gaki* deliberately remain on the Quincunx's good side in hopes of finding a place for themselves within the New Promise Mandarinate. Still, they haven't forgotten the past offenses committed against them. The *gaki* could just as easily turn against their allies, if offered a better opportunity.

The Green Courts: The Kuei-jin of Korea's Green Courts worry about the effects of the Great Leap Outward on their own position in the Middle Kingdom. For a long time, the Parallel Path through the Korean peninsula was the final refuge of Kuei-jin, who brought much jade into the Green Courts. Now Los Angeles and San Francisco are popular destinations for Kuei-jin exiled from the August Courts or seeking shelter from their enemies. If the occupation of those cities is successful, then the flow of jade into the Green Courts may dry up entirely. This is not acceptable.

The Green Courts therefore dispatched agents to North America to ensure the conflict between the Quincunx and the Kin-jin remains fierce enough to dissuade Kuei-jin from traveling there. They also hope to keep the August Courts embroiled in foreign conflicts and away from exerting their influence over places closer to home (like Korea). Finally, the Green Courts' necromancers seek support among the scattered and demoralized ghosts of the Yin World; they want more information about the rituals and lore of the Kin-jin, particularly the Giovanni Clan, though the Tremere are a close second.

Kànbujiàn: Kuei-jin who take the Second Breath outside the Middle Kingdom are rare, while those who lived their mortal lives in the West are rarer still. More *kànbujiàn* exist in San Francisco, however, than any other Western city. Long considered a minor problem by the Middle Kingdom's Courts, the *kànbujiàn* prove a more serious matter for the New Promise Mandarinate. On the one hand, they are Kuei-jin, having escaped from the Yomi World to reanimate their corpse. On the other hand, they are uneducated, undisciplined and little more than barbarians. The very fact that *kànbujiàn* don't follow a recognized Dharma is enough to rally most Kuei-jin against them. Add the fact that *kànbujiàn* often turn to the Yama Kings and become *akuma* is reason enough to simply wipe them out according to conservative Wan Kuei. Although there is no place for them in Kuei-jin society, the Mandarinate may have no choice but to welcome them lest they risk losing these wayward vampires to the Kin-jin.

Since the arrival of the New Promise Mandarinate, the number of *kànbujiàn* taking the Second Breath in San Francisco is rising. The mandarins must deal with these new *chih-mei*, pacifying them and teaching them properly as well as protecting them from predators like the Kin-jin and *akuma*. Since the Mandarinate needs steady reinforcements, the mandarins willingly cut some corners when educating these *kànbujiàn*, offering them a place in the hierarchy as soon as possible. Critics say that entrusting anything to poorly educated Running Monkeys is an invitation for disaster. The Bamboo Princes, however, are interested in these new *hin* familiar with the Western world and not yet "corrupted" by years of indoctrination into the August Courts.

For their part, the *kànbujiàn* face the unending struggles of their unlives, torn between their heritage and the realities of their existence. They feel little loyalty to the foreign Courts who brand them barbarians, and in many ways have more in common with the Kindred. Some want to learn and become a part of Kuei-jin society, while others remain fiercely independent. There are even some who try bridging the gap between East and West, though there is little hope of doing so as an outcast of both societies.

Story Ideas

- A mysterious group of Kuei-jin attacked (but did not destroy) several San Francisco Kindred. Although the New Promise Mandarinate knows nothing of these Wan Kuei, the pressure to deal with the problem is great. The Kindred are becoming restless with these attacks, claiming the Cathayans intend to torture and pick them off like animals. Clearly these Kuei-jin are outsiders looking to cause the Mandarinate trouble. They may be from the Green or Golden Courts, disgruntled *gaki*, or members of a rival sect from the August Courts, like the Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders, who would love to ensure the Mandarinate's failure.

- The Mandarinate dispatches a *wu* to gather information on all *kànbujiàn* in San Francisco and the surrounding area. The *wu* must recruit as many of these rouge Kuei-jin as possible while dealing with any who refuse the Cloud Mandarins' hospitality. Neutrality is not an option. The *wu* can encounter Billy Wei and his Heaven Promise Society (p. 97), the mysterious Yulan-Tao (p. 95) and possibly even touch upon the existence of the Hollow City *wu* (p. 98).

KINDRED VS. KINDRED

Although the Kuei-jin threat helps unify the Bay Area Camarilla, other Kindred factions still pursue personal goals. Not all vampires in the Camarilla like Prince Winder and the Inner Circle's handling of the Cathayan situation, or even the appointment of the city's new prince.

Former Prince Jochen Van Nuys doesn't have many supporters left among San Francisco's Kindred, but he has some. He still considers San Francisco "his" city and is not about to let some upstart displace him. Van Nuys willingly does what is necessary to ensure he comes out ahead, including betraying the Camarilla, if it comes to that. He cannot allow Sara Anne Winder to oust the New Promise Mandarinate. If anyone must do it, it has to be him. To that end, he cooperates with the Mandarinate and watches for weakness on both sides of the fence. The first faction that becomes a viable target gains Jochen Van Nuys for an enemy.

The Tremere: Clan Tremere has a strong interest in retaking San Francisco. Although they cooperate with the Prince for now, the Warlocks haven't forgotten the Cathayans' assassination of their primogen in San Francisco; they take their frustrations out on any

THE KÀNBUIJÀN CHRONICLE

One interesting San Francisco chronicle potential is if players assume the roles of a *kànbuijàn wu*, either following Westernized versions of the existing Dharmas, heretical Dharmas or a combination of both. A *kànbuijàn* chronicle has several advantages, mainly as characters more familiar with Western culture (and therefore easier for Western players to roleplay) and as potential for a mix of diverse characters. Already outcasts from Kuei-jin society, *kànbuijàn* don't generally care about social distinctions like Dharma, allowing a mix of heresies that the Middle Kingdom courts would never normally permit.

Of course, a *kànbuijàn wu* must deal with a lack of support, the scorn (and perhaps open hostility) of other Kuei-jin and becoming fair targets by opportunistic Kindred. Without teachers and gurus, their Dharma advancement is limited at best, and they can't learn the many Disciplines available to Kuei-jin. On the other hand, they are a unique "wild card" in San Francisco's power structure; nearly every faction will likely court them for their support. It requires a complex juggling act to play their would-be "allies" against each other, and too many refusals may earn the *wu* several powerful enemies.

unfortunate Wan Kuei captured by the Camarilla. They learn much about the Kuei-jin in the process (see "What the Kindred Know") and they hunger for more. The combined goads of curiosity and vengeance may drive the Tremere to initiate their own measures in San Francisco, without Prince Winder's permission or knowledge.

The Western Princes: The princes of Western North America, excluding newly-appointed Sara Anne Winder, are less than pleased with the current situation. They engineered the events leading to the Kuei-jin invasion of San Francisco by sabotaging peace negotiations, thus trying to force the Camarilla into a confrontation. Now they must deal with the aftermath of what they wrought. The confrontation never materialized the way they wanted it, though it may given time.

Meanwhile, the princes take steps to ensure the Camarilla doesn't sue for peace again and leave them at the Cathayans' mercy. Nearly every other Camarilla-controlled city along the Pacific Coast is an armed camp, waiting for the first signs of a Cathayan invasion. Kindred have mistaken more than a few Asian sect members for Kuei-jin and destroyed them, which makes the Camarilla's job of recruiting experienced Asian agents difficult. Everyone is on edge and it wouldn't take much for another prince to slip up, a fact not lost on political rivals looking to scale the Camarilla's hierarchical ladder.

The Sabbat: The Sword of Caine suffered some setbacks recently, but the bishops believe they are nothing insurmountable. In fact, the presence of the Cathayans in California presents the Sabbat with an opportunity. The Camarilla shifted its focus to the New Promise Mandarinate while the Kuei-jin generally lump the Sabbat in with the Camarilla and all the other Western vampires (one barbarian is the same as any other). The Sabbat wants to ensure there is no peace between the Camarilla and the Quincunx. Their agents stir up trouble in Los Angeles and San Francisco, hoping to spark a conflict that finishes off one side and leaves the other crippled and exhausted for Sabbat hunting packs.

Anarchs: The anarchs suffered one terrible blow when Los Angeles fell to the Kuei-jin and another when their last-ditch effort to disrupt the Camarilla-Quincunx peace talks backfired. The local anarch movement is a mere shadow of its former self, with most anarchs in the city on their way somewhere else (when they can arrange to reach elsewhere in reasonable safety). The rest are disillusioned and disheartened, unable to organize an opposition to the New Promise Mandarinate or willingly joining it rather than be left to the Camarilla's or Sabbat's mercy.

Story Ideas

- An anarch who survived the fiasco on Telegraph Hill (described in "Walking After Midnight" in **Nights of Prophecy**) possesses documents proving the Western princes backed the anarchs and devised the plan to disrupt the peace talks. Needless to say, such information is "embarrassing," so the princes arrange to destroy the evidence and the anarch along with it. The hunted vampire might seek out the characters as allies or offer to sell them what he knows in exchange for safety. The characters might also come upon him dying and learn where he's hidden the documents. Whatever faction the characters belong to, the evidence is a useful tool and the other side will surely be interested in it, if they find out. Camarilla characters must also contend with the dilemma: do they risk splitting the Camarilla and pitting the princes against each other at this critical time, or hide what they know and perhaps try blackmailing the princes?

- While Oliver Thrace unraveled the Tremere-placed wards blocking San Francisco's tunnels and bridges, the Cloud Mandarins want the Camarilla believing they haven't solved that problem yet. Jiejie Li charges the characters with obtaining the Tremere ritual that created the ward, using the characters as red herrings. They can try outright thievery, though it'll be difficult reaching the Tremere chantry in Las Vegas, much less penetrating its defenses — both mystical and mundane — and escaping in once piece.

This offers a great opportunity for a "road trip" to Vegas since the Mandarinate wants to avoid antagonizing San Francisco Kindred by attacking their own there. The *wu* might also try luring the Tremere

out, perhaps baiting the trap with valuable Kuei-jin occult lore or even valuable Kuei-jin prisoners. That said, the characters aren't supposed to succeed, at least according to the Mandarinate. If they do, Jiejie Li either forces the characters to return the information before the Tremere notice it is missing or sends assassins after the characters, hoping to fool the Tremere into believing Lupines destroyed the thieves before they shared their stolen knowledge.

HUNTERS VS. VAMPIRES

The sudden increase in San Francisco's bloodsucking population has not gone unnoticed by the city's other denizens. Certainly the demon-hunter Xiu Ping (p. 116) is aware of the situation. Although both sides carefully conceal their activities, some slip-ups are inevitable. Scarlet screens and mortal pawns help cover them up, but a few mortals in the know have picked up on events in the City by the Bay.

The Storyteller can make hunters and *shih* anything from a background element and minor inconvenience to a serious threat that may catch both vampire groups off guard. A hunter offensive might even force a temporary alliance between the Camarilla and Quincunx to deal with the problem.

Story Ideas

- The Mandarinate asks the characters to "dissuade" students from attending Madame Xiu Ping's martial arts school and deny the *shih* any more potential disciples. They're not to act openly against the demon-hunter or her apprentice, however, because Madame Xiu Ping draws the attention and quiet approval of Father Li T'ien. They can do everything else within their power to ruin the school and encourage Madame Xiu to stay out of Kuei-jin affairs. On the other hand, Prince Winder may ask Kindred characters to discretely approach the demon-hunter and offer support against the Kuei-jin in exchange for some concessions (namely leaving the Kindred alone). They're not likely to succeed, but the Camarilla needs allies wherever it can find them.

AKUMA AND THE YAMA KINGS

Although ostensibly the New Promise Mandarinate helps prepare the Middle Kingdom for the Sixth Age, the truth is that neither the Foreigner-Vanquishing Crusaders nor the Harmonious Menders of Broken Fences encounter many *akuma* in the Great Leap Outward, which is just as the servants of the Yama Kings want. Although their brethren fall in large numbers in Shanghai and elsewhere, the North American *akuma* are a different breed who play by different rules. They work subtly behind the scenes, waiting for a ripe moment when they may act.

Chan Te and his Hollow City *wu* (p. 98) are the Yama Kings' (and specifically Yama King Mikaboshi's) primary agents in San Francisco. The Storyteller can introduce others, perhaps even among the ranks of the



CROSSEOVERS

Although it's easy to focus on Kuei-jin and Kindred activities, leaving the rest as rumor and the occasional encounter, San Francisco is also ripe for a chronicle that draws together the World of Darkness' various supernatural elements. Some supporting characters in Chapter Five provide hints about what other supernatural factions think of vampires and recent events in San Francisco.

Previous books for *Mage* and *Changeling* (notably *Loom of Fate* and the *Immortal Eyes* series, respectively) presented San Francisco as a setting for those games. Of course, since then the Traditions have suffered serious setbacks and the Fae are at war. This fits in with the strengthening of San Francisco's Wall, increasingly severing it from the spirit worlds. The city is likely to be bleaker and more isolated than before, and other supernaturals must be careful to avoid becoming embroiled in the conflict between the Kuei-jin and the Kindred.

New Promise Mandarinate. Could one Cloud Mandarin even be a secret disciple of the Yama Kings, waiting to drag the whole Mandarinate down into the mouth of Hell? (Consult *The Thousand Hells* for more on *akuma* and the Yama Kings.)

Story Ideas

- Parts of the Wicked City touch upon the malignant and more twisted portions of San Francisco (like the Tenderloin district or Bayview; see Chapter Three for more information). Characters may hear rumors about vampires discovering strange streets and alleys where none should exist, or they might themselves stumble down an entrance into the Wicked City through the vanishing building. The incursion of Mikaboshi's Hell is proof there are *akuma* in San Francisco, and the knowledge will likely spark an investigation, if not inquisition, among the Kuei-jin. Meanwhile the Kin-jin, especially the Sabbat who deal with Infernalism, become concerned. Is this a new Kuei-jin trick or endemic of a heresy extant among the Wan Kuei? Why are the Cathayans so close-mouthed about it?

PLAYING THE POLITICAL GAME

Groups looking for a chronicle involving elders and more experienced characters can play out the political struggles between San Francisco's New Promise Mandarinate and the Camarilla. The players can assume the roles of prominent supporting characters from this book (like the Cloud Mandarins and Prince Sara Anne Winder) or create their own mandarins, princes and primogen members. For a real challenge, players can take roles on opposite sides of the conflict and play against each other. The caveat with this technique, however, is that it might foster a sense of destructive competitiveness

that could unravel the chronicle and engender animosity within the group. Storytellers should consider this option very carefully.

A political game is far likelier to focus on roleplaying and interaction with the setting's major persona, though there is still room for action given the factions trying to spark the powder keg that is San Francisco. The Storyteller should emphasize the complexity of the local situation for both sides and the difficulties in maintaining peace while arming for war. Characters can meet in negotiations with their opposite numbers, face assassination attempts and rebellion from within their ranks, deal with political pressure coming from their superiors and contend with the nightly demands of maintaining order in a city at siege.

A high-level political game is also ideally suited for Live Action *Mind's Eye Theatre* using the *Laws of the East* supplement for Kuei-jin characters.

SYSTEMS

This section provides systems for specific issues characters may encounter in and around San Francisco. Included here is more information on Kuei-jin who take the Second Breath outside the Middle Kingdom.

CULTIVATING CHI

San Francisco has several districts where there's been mention of inauspicious Chi and its deleterious effects on Kuei-jin and Kin-jin. In game terms, this means the Storyteller has several avenues available to her on how she might represent the effects of bad *feng shui* on vampires of both hemispheres. As a simple rule of thumb, the Tenderloin, Bayview and Financial District (particularly around the Trans-America Building) are the most affected, though the Sunset M-T Sector may follow them soon.

THE KUEI-JIN AND CHI

The Kuei-jin both benefit and suffer for their attunement to Chi. While they possess the Disciplines to purify and balance the Chi within themselves, they are also more susceptible to its negative effects. This is especially true in places like the Trans-America Building or Bayview, where Yin Chi prevails and Demon Chi becomes more prevalent. Mortals carry around this burden in their system as well, becoming more susceptible to illness and depression because of the negative Chi reservoirs in their flesh, blood and breath.

Tenderloin and Bayview possess a higher quantity of Yin Chi and faint traces of Demon Chi (in select locations; Storyteller's prerogative). When a Kuei-jin rolls to obtain Chi through Blood, Breath or Osmosis, each roll of "1" indicates the vampire absorbed an extra Yin Chi point instead of Yang. If the vampire's intent is only to absorb Yin Chi or she botches the roll, the Kuei-jin absorbs a point of Demon Chi and must make a shadow nature roll.

If the Kuei-jin is a flesh eater, the Storyteller should consider all victims “a cold corpse” (see *Kindred of the East*, p.137) regardless how fresh the kill, and only yield 8 Yin and 2 Yang.

For the area surrounding the Financial District's Trans-America Building, all Chi Art or Soul Discipline rolls automatically incur a penalty of one to their difficulty. Within the Trans-America Building, all rolls concerning the above-mentioned Disciplines receive a penalty of two.

THE KIN-JIN AND CHI

Ignorance has its advantages. While *Kindred* and Cainites can do little about the negative Chi around them, if they even believe in it, neither are they as affected by it as the Kuei-jin. The reason is mostly because the physiology of Western vampires isn't attuned to Chi, despite their need for blood. In fact, because they don't ingest breath or Chi, *Kindred* possess spiritual calluses that inure them to its poisonous effects. Still, that doesn't mean they're completely immune either. They still rely on blood to exist, and that means they are sometimes susceptible to their prey's health.

Hunting in Bayview or the Tenderloin carries some disadvantages, primary of which are victims suffused with a surfeit of tainted Chi. Whenever the vampire rolls to feed from a local mortal (using Strength to pin the victim down or a Discipline to cow them, etc.) any “1s” translate as a potential Blood Point lost during the feeding because the victim's vitae somehow tasted old and stale. The vampire must spit it out, disrupting the feeding. If the *Kindred* hunts animals in Bayview or the Tenderloin for blood (like rats and pigeons), however, any rolled “1” means all the creature's blood is tainted and unfit for consumption.

Another effect endemic to the area surrounding the Financial District's Trans-America Building (not to mention some areas in Bayview and the Tenderloin; Storyteller's discretion) is one of “luck.” Frenzy and Röttschreck are both more difficult by a penalty of one towards difficulty, or even two, in these areas because the Yin Chi and Yomi World call out to the Beast in local vampires, stirring and agitating them. Additionally, a cloying malaise affects the mortal population of Bayview and the Tenderloin, meaning that all Social rolls may suffer a penalty of one to their difficulties as well.

RITES AND RITUALS

Rituals are powerful tools for both Kuei-jin Sorcerers and *Kindred* Thaumaturgists. The Tremere used their magic to good effect in penning in the Kuei-jin, but the Cathayans have already developed secret countermeasures. As the stalemate between them stretches on, it's almost certain both sides will develop new mystic weapons for their arsenals that eventually change the way vampires win cities in the future.

WARD VERSUS CATHAYANS (LEVEL THREE RITUAL)

This ritual is similar to Ward Versus Ghouls (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 184), and provides the *Kindred* with some protection against their rivals. Like the ritual upon which it is based, the ward causes great pain and injury to any Kuei-jin who comes into contact with the warded object or area. Since it requires a half-pint of Kuei-jin blood, the ritual is costly and not performed casually. The caster mixes the Cathayan blood with a small measure (one blood point) of his own before pouring it over the object in question or marking the borders of the affected area while reciting the appropriate incantation. The entire ritual takes about 15 minutes (assuming the caster already prepared the blood).

On a final note, the ward and almost all Tremere familiar with it are in the Las Vegas Chantry. Only Luna Demain and her assistant Martin Franckel know the ritual and still dwell in San Francisco. The Tremere try limiting the Cathayans' potential exposure to anyone familiar with the ward.

System: Kuei-jin who pass through or touch upon a warded area suffer three dice of lethal damage every turn. The Kuei-jin must spend a Willpower point to continue touching the object or remain in the area. They must also check for wave soul each turn they continue to do so. If they enter wave soul, they must flee from the warded object or area as quickly as possible.

WRIT OF PROTECTED PASSAGE (LEVEL TWO RITUAL)

Tremere expatriate Wan Zhu (p. 88) developed one countermeasure to the Tremere's ward. This ritual requires a small amount of blood from the subject, which the caster (a Tremere) uses to draw protective sigils and diagrams on a piece of paper, creating a charm that shields the subject from the effects of the Ward Versus Cathayans. The charm's creation requires about 10 minutes, and it works only for the vampire who provides the blood used to make it. A Writ of Protected Passage lasts for 24 hours and instantly loses its effectiveness if exposed to sunlight.

System: A Kuei-jin carrying a Writ of Protected Passage is automatically immune to the effects of a Ward Versus Cathayans ritual so long as she carries the writ. If the carrier loses, destroys or exposes the charm to sunlight, it no longer offers protection. An individual can only carry one writ bearing his blood at a time; others created while the first exists have no power.

OBLITERATE THE BATTLEMENTS (LEVEL FIVE RITUAL)

This ritual is a *deus ex machina*, a Storyteller plot device and bit of magic known only to Oliver Thrace that can disrupt the wards strangling San Francisco's

Cathayans. The spell is deliberately complex thanks to Thrace's understanding of Thaumaturgy and his almost preternatural acumen with languages. Translating it requires a minimum of Linguistics 4 and a Linguistics + Intelligence roll (difficulty 9), if anyone can steal it from him in the first place.

This ritual should only appear as the culmination of a major story arc, and one that alters San Francisco for the foreseeable nights. If the Cathayans bring Thrace to San Francisco to activate the spell, the Kuei-jin are ready to invade another city and the their supply lines to the Middle Kingdom are now secure. Otherwise, it could mean the Camarilla is on the verge of retaking the city, and the Kuei-jin are trying to escape *en masse*. A third option is that the Sabbat discovered both the ritual and Thrace's betrayal in Hong Kong. If that's the case, they send a pack into Hong Kong to "rescue" Thrace and bring him to their side given the disappearance of all the Tremere antitribu (or wait for him to come to San Francisco and kidnap him then).

KÀNBUIJÌÀN

Players in a San Francisco chronicle may want to run *kànbuijìàn* characters, in which case Storytellers can use this information in conjunction with some of the characters described in Chapter Five. *Kànbuijìàn* lack the training given to *hin* and therefore have no place in Kuei-jin society. More importantly, *kànbuijìàn* know nothing of the Dharmas, and therefore must seek enlightenment on their own; it is a difficult and dangerous path.

KÀNBUIJÌÀN (4 PT. FLAW)

You are *kànbuijìàn* — "unable to see" — a Kuei-jin who took the Second Breath outside the Middle Kingdom. You survived your time as a *chih-mei* and overcame the Demon on your own. Other Kuei-jin did not find you and see to your education, either because you were too isolated or because you hid from them too well. Consequently, you know little or nothing about Kuei-jin society, history, philosophy, etc. All that you know about your existence is what you learn from hard experience and instinct.

Your Traits and Abilities are exactly like those of other Kuei-jin, with the following exceptions:

- **Dharma:** You cannot follow an established Dharma (either the five Dharmas from **Kindred of the East** or the heretical Dharmas from **Kindred of the East Companion**). You gain none of the benefits of following a Dharma, except as outlined below (see **Kànbuijìàn Paths** for more details).

- **Abilities:** *Kànbuijìàn* cannot have dots in any Abilities requiring Kuei-jin knowledge or training, such as Portents or Rituals.

- **Backgrounds:** You cannot buy Backgrounds associated with Kuei-jin society or training, including Mentor, Rites and Status. *Kànbuijìàn* also do not possess the Horoscope

Background (since their Second Breath was clearly inauspicious). Backgrounds like Jade Talisman, Magic Artifact and Nushi are exceedingly rare among *kànbuijìàn*.

- **Disciplines:** You cannot have dots in Chi or Soul Disciplines, since they require a deep understanding of Chi (and instruction from a master teacher). *Kànbuijìàn* can learn Shintai Disciplines and Demon Arts on their own.

KÀNBUIJÌÀN PATHS

By definition, *kànbuijìàn* do not follow the Dharmas set forth by Grand Arhat Xue or even the heresies practiced in the Middle Kingdom's far-flung domains, but neither are they as blind as their fellow Kuei-jin believe. Any *kànbuijìàn* who survives past the *chih-mei* stage must wrestle with and conquer the Demon, achieving some small measure of enlightenment. Whether or not the vampire can build upon this small foundation is another matter.

When they wrest control from the claws of the Demon, all Kuei-jin experience a moment of enlightenment. They have an opportunity to choose a path leading them away from the flesh-eating demon and toward a greater understanding of their place in the Great Cycle. For most Kuei-jin, the teachings of the Dharma direct this choice. *Kànbuijìàn* do not have such training, so their choice is instinctual and based entirely on the knowledge and experiences of their mortal lives.

Each *kànbuijìàn* finds and clings to a particular philosophy of existence like a drowning man clutching a floating piece of wood. Unlike the Dharmas, the *kànbuijìàn* paths are diverse and individualistic, though they often stress similar virtues. Holding tightly to their beliefs, the blind ones stumble forward on their path like explorers in a newly discovered land. It may be that the *kànbuijìàn* paths are similar to the Dharmas of uncounted centuries ago, when they came into being in the mind and soul of Xue and the first of the Wan Kuei (although modern Kuei-jin certainly don't care for the comparison).

In game terms, each *kànbuijìàn* chooses a particular Virtue like Hun (for Way of Hun) or P'o (for Way of P'o), or Yin, or Yang or Balance as his or her path focuses. The Kuei-jin accepts and follows tenets supporting that virtue, deepening their understanding of it and eventually leading toward greater enlightenment. Essentially, each *kànbuijìàn* creates his own Dharma through painstaking trial-and-error. Some *kànbuijìàn* become victims of their own blindness. Some find the path too hard and fall to the temptations of the Yama Kings, becoming *akuma*. A few manage to stay on the path and struggle toward understanding and enlightenment.

A *kànbuijìàn* path functions like a Dharma in all respects except the following:

- The *kànbuijìàn* gains no benefits from having a teacher or mentor. The path is extremely personal. Therefore, auspicious occasions when enlightenment might strike are correspondingly rare.



- The codes and tenets of the individual path (as created by the player and approved by the Storyteller) determine acts of blindness. Disillusionment and becoming lost in mortal concerns are common failings among the *kànbujiàn*.

- The Path Level does not grant any sort of Social Bonus. In fact, other Kuei-jin generally react negatively toward known *kànbujiàn*, regardless of their progress along a path. *Kànbujiàn* do gain all the other benefits of a Dharma Level equal to their Path Level (see p. 54 of **Kindred of the East**).

- Paths do not have lucky numbers associated with them, so *kànbujiàn* gain only the lucky numbers associated with their direction. The auspicious omens and symbols affiliated with their path are left up to player and Storyteller collaboration.

- The *kànbujiàn*'s chosen Virtue must remain equal to or greater than the other three Virtues. (If the chosen Virtue is Balance, then all four Virtues must remain within 1 point of each other.) Failure to do this constitutes an act of blindness for the character's path.

CHANGING PATHS

A *kànbujiàn* path is a difficult road to walk, and some souls lose their way. After trying and failing in a particular path, a character may choose to follow another. This works exactly like changing Dharmas (p. 52, **Kindred of the East**): the character drops to Rating 1 in the new path and must start all over again. Moreover, the character is barred from returning to the old path. A *kànbujiàn* who tries and fails at all five Virtues meets Final Death and is torn from the Great Cycle.

Kànbujiàn properly instructed in a Dharma can take up that Dharma if they choose, gaining all its normal benefits. This is the same as changing paths, unless the Dharma has the same central Virtue as the character's path and the Storyteller feels the two's tenets are reasonably compatible. In this case, *kànbujiàn* do not lose all the insight gained from their path. They begin the new Dharma with a Rating one less than their previous Path Rating.