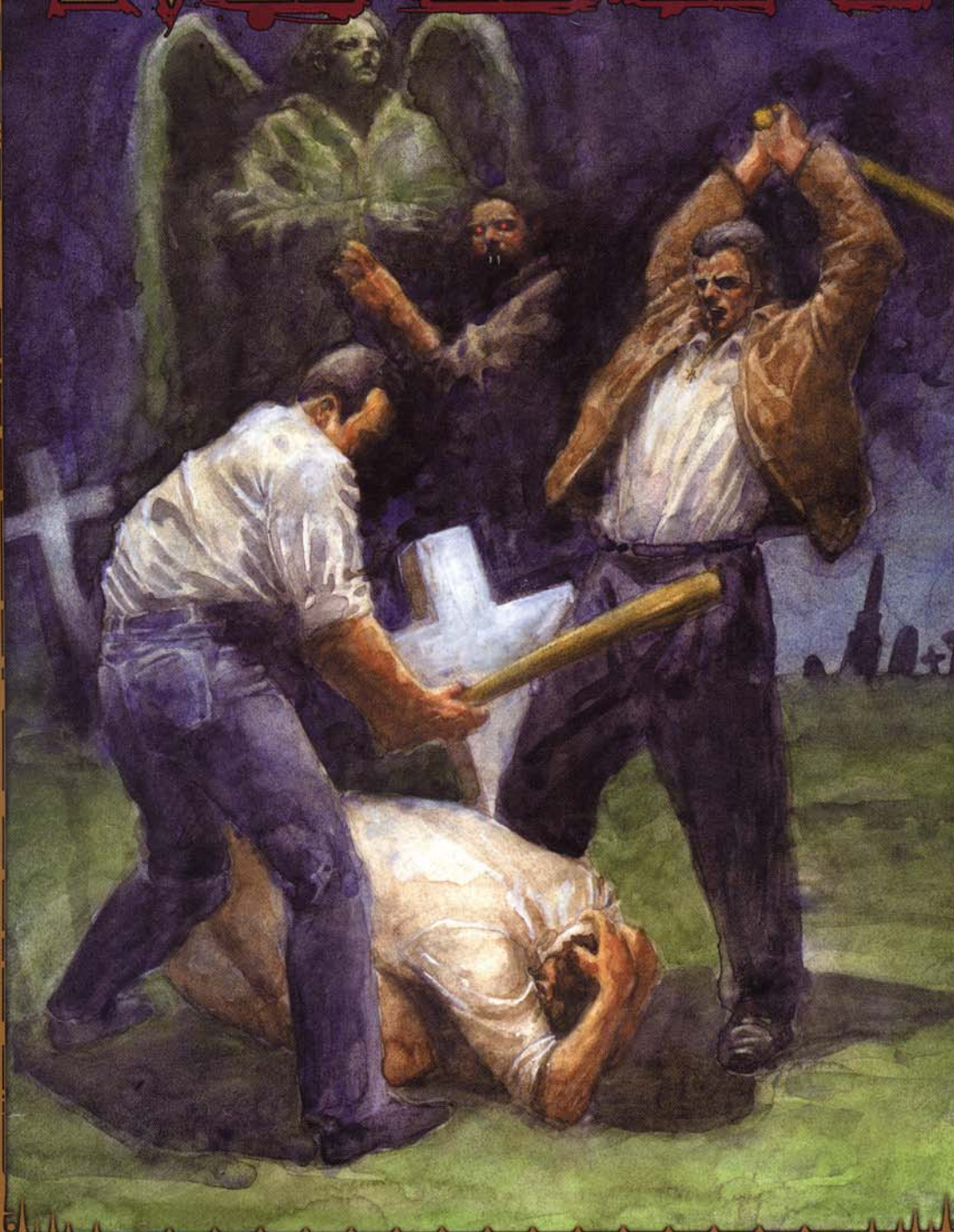


WORLD OF DARKNESS:

# MAFIA



AN ORGANIZED CRIME SOURCEBOOK FOR THE WORLD OF DARKNESS®

WORLD OF DARKNESS:

# MAFIA™

By Ari Marmell, Matthew McFarland  
and C. A. Suleiman



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# Soliloquy

by Ed Hall

*What a world this is. What a cruel, godless garden of miseries it is we live in. Cristina, Cristina, you can't die on me this way. There'd only be one of us left. This is unfair! You were never anything but good, but it's like life was good to you just so you'd know how awful ashes taste.*

*I don't know if you can hear me. The doctors, they told me to talk to you, that a familiar voice might bring you out of this... this sleep that's so close to death. So I'm speaking to you now the way you asked me to the last time we saw each other. I remember the first words you said to me that day, after so many years. As if I could forget them! You said, This is America Emilio. Speak English to me.*

*Then you said, Just don't expect me to say anything back.*

*That was right before you called me a killer. My brother is a killer, a thief and a whoremaster. Those were your exact words. The words that hurt me worse than when I got shot, worse than the times I got stabbed. You cut out my heart that day. You cut it out and never knew! You never understood why I did the things I had to do.*

*I did it all to keep my family alive. And the only thanks you ever gave me was to cut me apart, to tell me that the one brother you had left in the world was dead to you. You made me feel like I had invented cruelty itself, like my soul had withered away.*

*I'll tell you where we all would be if I hadn't led this life of mine. On the ground with Mama and Papa, that's where! You, me, Pietro, all dead, all long dead!*

*Things would have been quicker that way. Maybe they would've been better, too. Is that what you thought? Did you think that if we hadn't lived, all the people who suffered, who died of want, did you think their lives would have been better somehow? Or longer? Life doesn't work that way. Life is struggle, life is hard, no matter what you do. Why couldn't you see that? Why couldn't Papa see that? People who don't fight hard enough in this life become stepping-stones for the ones who do. People who never figure out which are the right friends to have sink out of sight. Papa never learned these lessons. But I knew he wouldn't, and that's why I left when I did. What was hard for me wasn't being away from Mama or Papa. Or Pietro. It was leaving you behind. Leaving you was like leaving me, like my body left home and my soul stayed there.*

*All I knew for sure the night I ran away was if I stayed, the only good that was ahead was us getting to die together.*

*I never told anyone before, but the first decent night's sleep I can remember was that night I ran away. I hated that house. It was always cold, and the spiders! Spiders are the Devil's fingers, I'm certain of it. Most nights in that house I'd wake up two or three times, sure that something had been crawling on me in the dark. Nights I managed to sleep through, I used to dream that a fat spider was dropping down toward my face.*

*That first night I should have been terrified. I slept in a barn I had never seen just because it had a solid roof. Not like the one we had. The war hadn't been over long then, so lots of places*

were deserted. A lot of the farmhouses were just wrecks, though, so I slept in barns like that one while I headed south to find someplace warmer than home.

I wound up in Sicilia because I made a friend in Naples. A good friend he turned out to be, a man named Lucania. And he was the right friend to make. He told me to go to Sicily and mention his name to a man there.

He did the same for the Americans. When the Allies landed there in '43, the English and the Canadians died by the thousands. The Americans took a different route, though, and barely had to fire a shot. Thanks to Lucania, the Sicilians knew they were coming. When people saw that the Americans' tanks had banners with a big "L" in gold, the islanders knew these soldiers were just passing through on their way to hand Mussolini his ass. And that made them very friendly. While the rest of Italy was falling in step with Il Duce, the Sicilians were telling him to go bite his own rump. He didn't like that. He tried to wipe out all those old bandits hiding in the hills there. You know who won that battle. Lucania knew how it would end, too, so he wanted to be a friend of the United States. A patriot. An ally. He understood the importance of friends. By being a good friend, he was able to convince the Americans to let him out of prison after the war and send him home. To Naples, anyway. Close enough to home. And that's where I met him.

How I met Lucania, that was a thing in itself.

Every— is someone there? Nurse?

Everybody was hungry after the war. Even so, a lone child at the door at sunset held the key to most people's hearts back then. This I learned by accident. I traveled by day, asked farmers for water and got food. Late one afternoon it turned cool, so when I saw a farmhouse I walked up and asked if I could warm myself in their barn. The couple who lived there looked at each other, and for a moment I thought I had made them angry. Then the woman put her hands on my face and pulled me to her. I didn't realize she was crying until her tears began to fall on my cheek. At first I thought that their roof must leak the way ours did!

They fed me. They gave me an overcoat that was too big and too warm for the season. I knew I'd need it on the road, though. Even then, I knew I couldn't stay with those people. They reminded me too much of Mama and Papa. Not because they were kind, but because they also seemed beaten. Defeated. Somewhere else, I knew, was a place not made of loss. I just had to find it.

The farmer and his wife offered me a bed to sleep in that night. I accepted because I didn't want to offend them. Before they could enter their own bedroom, though, I was out the window and headed back to the road.

And there, in the farmer's yard, I learned that our father did not hold all the truths in the world. When I would awaken screaming from fear of spiders in the dark but ashamed to admit

it, our father often said to me, What frightens you, boy? Always I would say, A ghost, Papa. And he told me, Do not fear ghosts, child, they mean us no harm. They are merely lost and need to be helped along their way.

I got there, in my path, stood a boy — or the shape of a boy — a little taller than I was. But he wasn't all there. I could see through him to the trees at the roadside. Right before me stood a ghost. I thought of Papa's words, and I tried to step around him but again he blocked my way. I felt a scream inside me, but I didn't want to bring the farmer and his wife running. I decided I had to walk through this phantom, but when I tried I became even more frightened!

The ghost seemed angry then. He opened his hand toward me. My first thought was that I should pay him for what food I'd eaten at the farmhouse — but I couldn't imagine what use a ghost could have for money, which I was without, anyway. I looked down at my empty hands, then at this angry soul between me and the road. And then I knew. I looked down again, not at my hands but at the cuffs of the coat that almost hid them. The coat had been his when he lived, I was sure. I took it off and let it fall behind me. I watched the ghost the whole time. As the coat fell on the ground, the dead boy moved out of my way.

I took a few steps straight ahead, but with each one my fear heated into something else. What did he need a coat for? He couldn't warm him, I figured. I turned and saw he was sitting on the coat. I ran back and snatched it up with one hand, then I turned again and ran for the road. I held the coat up high, like a flag. Behind me, I heard a sound like nothing else ever. I thought the Devil himself was behind me and if I slowed down at all or even turned to look, he would swallow me whole! I don't remember when I stopped running, but once I did I had no wind in me at all. I dropped to my hands and knees in the middle of the road. I could barely see the farmhouse in the distance, and there was no sign of the dead boy at all. I don't know how long I stayed there, but when I thought about sleeping, I knew I wouldn't be doing any that night. So I walked.

I didn't rest until almost daybreak. I remember thinking right before dawn how comfortable the flat rock in front of me looked. Then I was falling asleep on top of it.

It must have been midday when I woke up with an American soldier standing over me. The sun was behind his head, so I couldn't see his face and I was afraid. The man wanted me to come with him. I did because I was sick of walking, and I saw there was another American in a truck. I climbed inside it with them. I fell asleep again. And at nightfall, again the soldier woke me up.

They had brought me to a depot filled with children. It looked like a prison to me, even though some of the boys were playing ball in the yard. I stayed there for exactly three days, three of the worst days of my life. They moved me from place





to place, asked me questions that made no sense, took away my clothes, covered me with white powder, washed me, gave me new clothes, took them back, returned the old clothes.... I hated that place.

And then they asked me where I was trying to go and did I know if my family was alive.

And I knew that this was my ticket. They thought I might be some kind of orphan! They showed me a map. I pointed at a place on the coast, south but not too far south. I remember Mama always saying how Southerners ate with their hands, that they used forks for back-scratchers. That was how I chose Napoli.

Naples was nothing like I imagined it would be. There were Americans all over, including at the camp for "displaced persons" they put me in. They made my picture and posted it near the gates. The idea was that while I waited my turn to be taken in search of my family, maybe they would come there and see my face. I knew I would be as old as Papa before that happened.

My first night there I escaped.

They weren't trying hard to keep the kids inside, after all. With the Americans everywhere, though, the trick was in not getting brought back. I decided I would have to keep moving. I knew it was time to find some money.

The next morning, I looked for someone with more money than he needed. I found him sitting outside at a café. As soon as I saw him, I knew he was what I had been looking for. He sat there in this cream-colored suit like he was king, just watching the world turn. The way he looked at everybody around him said, I could stop the world from turning if I wanted to. I felt bad that I would have to steal from him. But I knew I could do it.

I watched him from an alley across the street. He drank coffee and smoked cigarettes, but he never got up. The sun got higher, and he took off his suit coat. He draped it over the back of another chair. Finally, he stood up and walked inside the café. That was when I crossed the street. I moved between the tables to his and let my hip catch his coat, which the man had left behind. It fell and I grabbed it before it could hit the ground. While I was bent over, my coat hung open and hid my hands. I searched all his pockets fast, but there was no money. I put his coat back as it had been and started to walk away. And out of the corner of my eye, I saw the man watching me from inside the café.

He called out to me. Kid, he said, you looking for this? He held up a bank note that was worth more than all the money I had ever seen pass through Papa's hands. I went to him, and he said, That's what I thought.

He asked me my name. I told him, and he told me to call him Mr. Lucky. He asked me if I wanted a job. I said, Yes. He put the bank note on the bar and wrote something on it. Then he folded it up. He stuck out his hand to the man behind the bar, and the man

handed him another bank note. He held up a note in each hand and said, *The ferry to Sicily leaves in an hour. Be on it. This will pay your way.*

He handed me the unfolded bank note, and then he just sat there. I asked him what he was waiting for and he said, *I was waiting to see if you'd run away with the money. I guess you really do want a job.* Then he said, *When you get to Palermo, ask anybody where to find Don Vizzini.* He held out the folded note and said, *Give him this and tell him Mr. Lucky sent you.*

*And that was how Lucky Luciano answered my prayers.*

Thanks to him, I was able to send money home to keep you and Mama and Papa and Pietro fed. Alive. I bet you never wondered how Papa kept turning a profit on sugar beets while the price fell through the floor. By the time I was eighteen, they were growing beets on the moon! You couldn't give them away! Papa didn't tell you, though. Papa didn't tell anybody, except Pietro. He told Pietro everything, and still our brother turned out to be a fool.

Pietro came to Sicily once, and do you know why? To preach communism! What was he thinking? This was early in the Fifties, and the Sicilians had been killing Communists for years by then! I heard from another of the don's lieutenants that some Northerner was asking about me at the docks. I took some men with me to see what was going on, and I found our brother talking Marxist trash to stevedores. I had the men with me go smack him in the mouth and bring him to me. Pietro hit his head on the ground and was out cold when they carried him in. When he woke up, I said, *Hello big brother. You looking for me?* He started to cry, so I had to slap him. He said he was glad to see me alive. I said, *You better be, because the only reason you're alive now is because I am. Because I'm a devoted family man,* I said. I asked him if he knew what happened to Communists in Sicily and he said, *No, what are you talking about?*

So I showed him. That night, I took him to the house of a man named Aldo Giardini. Giardini had deserted from the Ethiopian war in '41 and brought back a little half-breed baby with him. Once he stopped being a Fascist, he started getting cozy with Karl Marx, but he kept it to himself. For a while. Then he actually made some friends. I figured they didn't know Aldo's son was a tar baby. To tell the truth, Ennio looked like half the people in Sicily to me, so I didn't blame them for that. Marxism, though.... Anyway, after Aldo's friends arrived, we kicked down the door. We beat them bloody, all of them. Pietro begged us to stop, so I looked around for something to use on Aldo besides my fists. On the table was a bar of wrought iron filigree, like for fancy stair railings. I said to Pietro, *You asked me to stop, so, okay, I won't hit him with my hands anymore.* Then I snatched up this piece of iron and beat Aldo with it till it broke. Your brother screamed and blubbered like a woman.

Ennio wasn't home, but I figured somebody needed to be in one piece to bandage up the reds. I bet they were never redder. We dragged them outside and set fire to the house. The important thing, after all, was to make Pietro understand how badly he could get burned. And that I couldn't protect him anymore. It wasn't worth killing them for that.

Don't think there weren't people in Sicily who needed killing, though. Like the Spinettis. Mama must have had the Spinettis in mind whenever she talked about how awful Southerners were. Don Vizzini sent me off to Giorgio Spinetti to learn the business. And Giorgio put me to work helping his idiot sons harvest bird traps. You never saw anything like this, Cristina! They used to mix up quicklime and smear it on tree limbs up in the hills. Later, they'd come back and dozens of birds would be stuck to the limb. Some would be hanging like fruit, exhausted or dead from trying to escape. And they did this day after day. I remember noticing one day that there had been fewer birds in the traps. I asked Giancarlo, Giorgio's oldest boy, what they would do when Sicily ran out of birds. And he laughed at me. He said the sky was full of birds, that you could never catch them all.

Even though I was still young, I knew I was talking to a fool. The only thing this world has in endless supply, I know now, is fools and weak people. You told me the last time we spoke that I poison children with drugs. Children are accountable for their actions, too, you know. Better to lose the truly foolish ones before they can become foolish adults and drive cars. Or own guns. And you couldn't make money off drugs if not for weak people who can't stand being trampled by people of strength.

After Giancarlo laughed at me, I never spoke about birds again. But he remembered what I said, and when things got really bad, he blamed me! They all did. Giorgio beat them regularly, but he never beat me. I think he was afraid of what might happen if Don Vizzini found out. Giancarlo and his brothers, though, they'd pass it along, you see. They only knew enough to fear their father. All of them should have been afraid of me.

On the hills not far from the Spinettis' home was a cave where Giancarlo liked to meet the neighbor's daughter for recreation on Sundays. I knew this because I followed him there more than once. I always wondered how anyone could be so stupid as to go someplace that was sure to be full of snakes and worse. Plus, there were rockslides there all the time. One Sunday, I intercepted the neighbor girl and told her Giancarlo wanted to meet her in town instead, to buy her a cola. And off she went. Simple. Then I headed up into the hills and got above the mouth of Giancarlo's cave. Along he came, and he disappeared inside. I pushed a rock down the slope and it picked up some friends on the way. All of sudden, it was an avalanche. I had to move fast, or I would have been part of the rock pile that buried Giancarlo.



The neighbor girl never said a word, as far as I know, because she didn't want her father to know what she had been doing. Giorgio made a half-hearted effort to track down his missing son, but he seemed to me more inconvenienced by the loss of a pair of hands than anything else.

Since I was the oldest after Giancarlo, things changed a little once he was gone. Pino and Cesare tried to double-team me, but without Giancarlo they weren't up to the job. I knew they would be soon, though, so I began planning for that day.

If I had known then what I learned later, that Don Vizzini wanted Old Man Spinetti and his little toadstools out of the way, I—

Is someone there?

It's getting dark, Cristina, and my eyes are not so good now. I've seen all kinds of shapes in the shadows lately.

The city's lighting up down there. I wish you could see it with me.

Everything was a test with men like Vizzini, you have to understand. He wanted to see how much of the Spinettis I could stomach and what I would do about them. I didn't know that at the time, of course. By the time I learned the truth, I had been the don's most trusted lieutenant on the island for a long time. By then, though, everything about Sicily made me sad. Especially the lack of birdsong. Naturally, it went away with the birds. And the Spinettis, or so I thought at the time. Plus, there were junkies everywhere. But the heroin users turned out to be my key to getting away. It was around 1960, I think, and the big bosses smelled opportunity. They wanted to make Palermo the conduit for their drug traffic, and they needed trusted friends to oversee distribution outside Sicily.

That's how I got sent to Boston. I wasn't a boss, but I didn't have one in town, either. I shared mutual respect with the movers and shakers here. Ray Patriarca was one, and so was Andreas Giovanni. Andreas looks like Mephisto himself. And with good reason, too. When those two went after each other's family, I made it very clear that I was not allowed to pick sides. And everybody was fine with that — especially me — until Cesare Spinetti showed up.

I never did get to ask Cesare how he got out of the house the night I set it on fire. I had locked him and his brother in their bedroom, and old Giorgio was passed out drunk in his own bed. He had been smoking, so it wasn't hard to make him look like the source of the fire. The hardest part was setting myself on fire to throw off suspicion. My back still has the scars from that night. Lucky me, I never have to look at them.

Anyway, Cesare arrived in Boston as imported muscle for the Patriarcas. The moment I saw him, he saw me, and nothing needed to be said. His scars were on his face, and I watched them turn purple while he stared at me. Hard. I knew I would have

to kill him before he killed me. And I knew I had to have clean hands when it was done, because Cesare, by then, was a made man, just as I was.

So I went to Andreas. And I made a deal. And he fulfilled his end. And I sealed my own fate.

The funny thing was that all Andreas wanted in return was talk. At first, anyway. He insisted, though, that I never lie to him, and he swore he would know if I ever did. I believed him, too. He asked me about the first person I ever killed, and I told him. He asked me about the first woman I was ever with, and I told him that, also. One time, he asked me whether I had ever seen a ghost, and I told him the same story I just told you. He asked me for proof, so I brought him the coat. He seemed satisfied by that and asked if he could keep it. Who knows why? Like I said, he's the Devil himself. I know that now.

The night Andreas made good on his end of our bargain I'll never forget.

The restaurant where I used to meet Andreas had fish tanks inside it. Biggest ones in town outside the Boston Aquarium. One Monday, Andreas said meet him there alone. I knew the restaurant would be closed, so I figured either Cesare's number was up or it was a double-cross. I made arrangements in case and headed out. Andreas himself answered the door, and it was just him and me there. Then I saw one of the aquariums had a black curtain in front of it. Andreas started asking me about South America, had I ever been there, what did I know about rain forests and the animals that live in them. I was nervous, so nothing he was saying made sense. What's going on, I said. And he said, Cesare is getting acquainted with my new pets. He yanked away the curtain, and there was Cesare inside this aquarium. No water inside it, just some gravel, and Cesare and. And.

Spiders.

Cristina, you never saw such spiders.

Several of them. Like tarantulas. But big. Bigger than my hand. Andreas was quiet for a minute, then he stared at those things and said, Watch, their poison only paralyzes him for a little while. When he starts flailing around, they'll bite him again. Soon, he'll have lost enough blood that he won't move anymore. Then he turned around and said, Where do you think you're going?

I hadn't even realized that I had been backing toward the door. I wanted to look away from these... monsters, but I was afraid to turn my back to them. Then one of them moved, fast. One moment it was in a corner at the back of the aquarium, and then it was on Cesare's leg. He was laying flat against the glass and looking right at me. And I couldn't speak. I wanted to scream, but nothing came out. Next thing I knew, Andreas had me by the back of the neck, with my face pressed to glass. I was looking right at Cesare, watching him die. Andreas said, This is



what you wanted, right? All I could think was that there was nothing but a piece of glass between me and my worst nightmare. Worse than my worst nightmare.

Andreas told me that our deal was changing, that I would have to perform certain services from time to time. And that if I didn't like the new deal, I could join Cesare in the tank.

And that was how I finally got a boss in the states. Nobody knew, because if they did me and Andreas would be dead already. Of he can die, I mean.

For years, all he ever asked me to do was get rid of a few inconvenient people. Nobody I knew. Hell, I don't think Andreas knew half of them, either. They were favors for outsiders or for members of Andreas' family. I car-bombed some arms dealer named Carcassione because Andreas said his cousin didn't like the guy's cologne. More of what I always did, in other words. So I didn't have a real problem with this deal. Until two nights ago, when Andreas asked me to kill your son, Salvatore.

I told him he had made a mistake, that Salvatore had died in the Po River floods. Andreas said the mistake was mine, and he handed me a photograph. The young man in the picture resembled the boy I remembered from photos around your apart-

ment. I asked him, Why me, can't you get somebody else for this? No, he said, I can't. And I want you to do it to see if you're still up to the job. That's what he said.

So I showed him that I was. I stabbed Andreas through the heart with a switchblade.

And he just looked at the knife. Not like he was surprised, or even like he was hurt. Like he was sad. Then he said, I liked this shirt. Please leave now. Just like that.

And I ran. And I would have kept running if I hadn't found out you were here at the hospital. So here I am. Waiting for—

Who's there? I can see you. Come out!

Jesu! De's you! You can't still want the coat after all these years, can you? I don't have it. Andreas—

Andreas sent you here, didn't he? Well, I hope you can fly, because that's the only way you'll catch me you little bastardo.

Cris—





# Introduction: This Thing of Ours

*As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster.*  
— Henry Hill, *Goodfellas*

It's a modern romantic notion, the popular consideration of the Mafia gangster, especially in the idiom of the Hollywood heyday. Clad in a tailored black suit, hand in his pocket clutching a hidden pistol, sharing dinner with senators in spite of his Brooklyn accent and checkered past — it's an icon that lives in our cultural memory. From the dapper Don Corleone of *The Godfather* to Edward G. Robinson's pinch-faced Joe Kozac, pop culture has given us indelible images of organized crime.

The truth of the matter, however, is that our popular image isn't very close to the real world's truth. Little of the glamour we ascribe to gangsters has much validity in the modern Cosa Nostra. In the real world, the Mafia has crumbled over time, desiccated from the inside out and refusing to age gracefully.

In the World of Darkness, however, the Mafia never really outgrew its heyday. Sure, it's suffered internal problems, but those are the conflicts great stories are

built from. Crime and **Vampire** have always gone hand in hand, mostly because they're both shadow societies that exist just below the surface of the mortal world. In a setting-specific context, vampires are also inherently criminals, as sooner or later, they're going to have to take blood without asking. Leaving aside the question of whether this is theft, rape or some other crime, the fact is that it's a crime, effectively lumping the Kindred in with other sundry scumbags. It's the same shadow-world in which mages exist, only the *mafioso's* way is different from the willworker's. That's just in the implementation, however, as the practice is largely the same. After all, both the gangster and the mage want to effect their wills on the world — whether by magic or brute force is a question best left for the moment. Other supernatural elements, too, overlap with the secrecy of the Mob, from wiseguy Glass Walker werewolves to the ghosts of hit victims and even rarer things.



Organized crime, it must be noted, rises to the top of the criminal hierarchy. These aren't petty stick-up men, deranged murderers or common street pushers. Even when they are such base creeps, their connection to the greater network gives them a greater value to a story. Mafia culture as a good mirror for supernatural culture: It's made up of individuals, but those individuals contribute something to a greater ideal. Whether they're refined dons adored by the public (John Gotti was beloved by his neighborhood, and he threw vast block parties) or murderous fiends in the organization's employ (did even Albert Anastasia's own mother love him?), they're almost part of a pantheon, players in a secret drama that plays out nightly. Just like the more-than-mortal denizens of the World of Darkness.

Again, **World of Darkness: Mafia** presents a very romanticized version of the Mafia, and it does so with abandon. In the real world, the Mafia's all but in the shitter. The families have fractured and decayed, and the *omerta* code of honor it once held hasn't changed with the times. The Sicilian Mob is no longer as relevant as the triads and tongs, and the Russian Mob is more brutal tonight. But we don't care about that and won't mention it much — we're going to assume that the Mafia heyday that ended around 1971 never really drew to a close. We play more to the icon and the myth in this book than to facts, and so should you in your stories. In doing research, this book's writers have come up with some pretty sad details. You'll see Vincent the Chin staggering around the neighborhood in his bathrobe, pretending to be insane. You'll see nepotism at its worst, with John Gotti, Jr. being handed the reins of the most visible crime family in the world. To hell with all this. This book accepts them as fact but also sweeps their gravity under the rug. For the sake of the story, they still happened, but they're footnotes in the continuing legacy of Carlo Gambino, Joe Masseria, Bugsy Siegel, Lucky Luciano, Sam Giancana and all the rest. It's still an era of Frank Sinatra songs, Marlon Brando imagery, Mario Puzo bombast and governors shaking hands with dons. *Omerta* still exists; it's not a bunch of cowboys ripping each other off, stupid and criminal only because they don't know anything else.

Yes, it's unrealistic, but it's an icon. Although it may be fun to storytell an on-the-ropes Mafia chronicle, it's not so fun to doom the effort with the fact that the organization is no longer relevant. Play to the archetypes; play to the myth.

Note the title of the book, as well. Our focus here is unrepentantly on the Mafia. You'll find mentioned other avenues of organized crime, sure, but only in the

context of the Sicilian Mob. We don't minimize the effect of those other cultures' criminal contributions, but we admittedly focus (and, where necessary embellish) upon the Italian incarnation.

## Theme and Mood

As part of our **Year of the Damned**, this book's focus is on compromise. When you join the Mob, you make yourself and your family comfortable, but it's at the expense of breaking the rules. You take what you want, but in doing so, you've placed yourself outside the system. It's the Devil's deal in a different context — whereas a witch might make a pact with the Devil for power, the mobster makes a deal with the criminal/mortal underworld for his. Look at Tony Soprano from *The Sopranos* or Henry Hill from *Goodfellas*. These are guys who put their family first and that's what got them involved in the Mob in the first place. It's also their undoing — their damnation — because the Mob demands more of them than they're able to provide safely and still look out for what put them there initially. Consider the morality of it all: How far is too far? At what price do success, power, wealth and comfort come to a gangster? Obviously, this will vary by the character in question, but, hey, that's why Humanity and Paths of Enlightenment are scales of 10 and not binary conditions. Morality is forever gray in the World of Darkness.

For mood, keep the players on their toes, but it should be more suspenseful than horrific. As always, in the World of Darkness, we shouldn't trust anyone, but this time, it's not because they want to drink our blood (necessarily, though the Kindred are present...). It's because we stand in the path to their success. Many of the story elements will remain the same, but it's the type of story we're telling that's different. It's all tied to the World of Darkness, but it's important to know that we can use the horror setting to focus on other genres.

## How to Use This Book

As a reference volume for both players and Storytellers, **World of Darkness: Mafia** works as an idea crucible, both for characters as well as plots. We've gone out of our way not to include any earth-quaking superplots in the interests of leaving the introduction of organized crime to the Storyteller. That is to say, we haven't installed our own crime bosses in certain cities as we would a sept of Garou or chantry of mages. We've done our real-world fact-checking and used those names where appropriate, but that's just one more step you don't have to do in the name of historical accuracy. Who loves ya, baby?

**Chapter One** is a concise look at the history of “this thing of ours,” from its suspected Old World origins to the modern nights. It’s an account largely free from supernatural influence, but as always in the World of Darkness, whether that’s accurate or simply the hallmark of supernatural forces very skilled at hiding themselves is a question for your troupe to explore.

The modus operandi of the Mafia is the subject of **Chapter Two**, explaining not only the mundane operations of La Cosa Nostra but also the unique nature of its relationship with the supernatural.

Character creation and Trait considerations constitute **Chapter Three**. This section includes an abbreviated guideline for creating mortal characters as

well as suggestions for using existing Traits outside the context of vampires, werewolves and the sundry other night-fiends of the world.

**Chapter Four** examines the presence of the Mafia on a geographical basis, with emphasis on North America. The organization’s hold is not as global as one might think, and with particular attention to the World of Darkness, the Mob is most active in specific places.

Storytelling advice rounds out the book in **Chapter Five**, with special focus on adapting the Mafia genre to the horror setting (as discussed above). Broadly useful, this chapter should give direction to any Storyteller, whether she’s building an organized crime chronicle from the ground up or introducing the Mob as an ally or rival into an existing chronicle.







# Chapter One: A Distinguished History

*There would be no way, Michael, no way you could ever forgive me. Not with this Sicilian thing that's been going on for two thousand years!*

— Kay Corleone, *The Godfather: Part II*

Anyway, continuing from my last letter, I'm still looking into it. Call it what you want — La Cosa Nostra, the Mafia, the Mob, the Syndicate — it's diverse and it goes back a long time, probably centuries. Since the noble, decent lawmen of America insisted that it didn't exist for quite a long time, and since I'm not exactly a historian, it's difficult to do anything but offer conjecture on the origins of the Mafia. But conjecture I will.

Incidentally, I received your last letter, and I'm choosing to ignore your request. I know that he's nearby, and I don't disagree that he might well deserve the Good Death. That's not the issue. It's your responsibility, and I'm not a damned hitman. OK? Now, with that unpleasantness out of the way, let's talk Sicily.

## Our Thing

The term "Mafia" didn't come to refer to organized crime until the 20th century. As to its origins, I've heard a few explanations. One is that the word dates from a French invasion of Italy in 1282. Supposedly, "Mafia" is an acronym for "*morte alla Francia Italia anela*" — "death to the French is Italy's cry." Another, also referring to that invasion, is a bit more romantic. It holds that a French soldier raped a Palermo girl on her wedding day, and that the citizens rose up and murdered a French troop. The fever spread, with the revolt's battle cry stemming from the poor girl's mother running through streets shouting "*ma fia*" or "my daughter." I'm not sure I buy that one, but mobster Joe Bonanno espouses it in his autobiography.



An explanation that makes a bit more sense is that "Mafia" comes from an Arabic word meaning "refuge." Centuries ago, Sicilian peasants, under oppressive occupation by Arabs, took refuge in the hills and with each other. They came to realize that reporting difficulties between them to the authorities was a bad idea. Disputes between Sicilians should remain between Sicilians, and a kind of "underground justice" emerged. This was the beginning of *omerta*, the vow of silence on pain of death that members of the Mafia would swear (and break) in later years. In a way, you could see it as an attempt at a self-ruling body; the Sicilian people governed themselves without involving the actual government. A kind of un-civil disobedience, right?

But Sicily was a prime target for invaders. Normans, Arabs, Spanish, Germans, Greeks — for whatever reasons, all of them visited the island. And each time, the need for unification emerged. Eventually, that need crystallized in the form of a secret society, organized much like a family, with a "don" in charge of the society in each village, and the "don of all dons," or what later generations would call *capo di tutti capi* or "boss of all bosses," in Palermo.

The problem, of course, with making any kind of speculation about a secret society is that, if said society is at all successful, you run into secrets. It's therefore difficult to trace the Mafia from its beginnings as a kind of anti-establishment force to the wealthy and shadowy organization it became. However, a few key points in its development are common knowledge.

In the 1700s, "Black Hand notes" appeared. Most of us are familiar with the notion of protection, though I personally despise the euphemism. Some representative of the Mob handed a wealthy citizen a note with a polite request for a sum of money, lest the citizen find himself the victim of beatings, robbery, bombings, etc. A mugging with formal dressing — and that kind of farce, thugs under a mask of respectability, continued on even into modern times.

But I digress. When the Mob was still handing out Black Hand notes, at least they were being surreptitious. In 1876, centuries after Sicilian peasants had need of the organization for refuge, Don Raffaele Palizzolo maneuvered his way into political office by literally forcing voters — at gunpoint — to vote for him. Once in office, he

arranged for his associate and partner in crime, so to speak, Don Crispi, to be elected Prime Minister. Sicily, partially under control by organized crime for years, was now officially in the Mob's pocket.

I've looked into that election fairly thoroughly, or at least as thoroughly as the scant official records of it will allow. I've seen no evidence of supernatural activity, though I grant that both our forebears and Guild (now ironically titled the Syndicate) could have taken a hand in ways that would never be detected. However, as you know, I've held up the Mafia as an example of the skill and organization that even Sleepers (to use your rather condescending term) are capable of for some time now. I believe that, if anything, vampires might have been attaching themselves like ticks to the new establishment, but evidence suggests that the undead are present in that role no matter what mortal government does. The Mafia is and always has been run by mortal human beings. I believe this is because its beginnings were too rural to be of interest to most of the forces that would later take an interest, and by the time it grew rich and powerful enough to attract our attention or that of the vampires or the Order of Reason, it was too diverse to suborn completely.

Of course, I could be wrong. Perhaps even now the heads of the Five Families take their orders from some obscene undead horror. But I rather doubt it. Read on — and do try not to see supernatural machinations at every turn, okay?

## The Mafia in the New World

As a lifelong American, I can only imagine the novelty and promise that the USA must have offered to a poor Italian or Irish immigrant in the late 1800s and early part of the 20th century. Religious freedom, a voice in the government, and the chance to make some money and have some comfort — the same chance as anyone else to do so, in fact — was a beautiful notion to the poor of Europe and other locales.

But we all know that wasn't (and isn't) the case. The system was human, run by people, and therefore suffered all too human biases. Those who were comfortable and in power had no real desire to let anyone else in — after all, if everyone is equally rich, everyone is equally poor! So the throngs of people who came to America, who believed the "Give me



your tired, your poor..." routine were commonly greeted only with more poverty and the prospect of living in ghettos.

The old despaired but the young adapted. They saw how the country was really run — by those with the strength and the will to bargain for or just take what they wanted. And they emulated the powerful, in a way. Gangs appeared in every major city in America. These gangs were more akin to the urban "gangstaz" of today than to the Mafia; they would attack and beat people on the street, rob them, and generally vent their aggression however they chose. And, like the aforementioned modern hoods, they did it largely out of a desire to belong. Their parents were immigrants, out of touch with the country they lived in. But the young toughs knew how things were, and if they couldn't get a real glimpse of the American Dream, well, damn it, they'd raise Hell.

An important point here, by the way: These gangs were restricted. Irish joined Irish gangs, Jews joined Jewish gangs. Not for several decades would organized crime stop arranging itself strictly along these lines.

As more immigrants from Italy and especially Sicily arrived, it was only natural that members of the Mafia would as well, perhaps on the run, or perhaps, like their more respectable countrymen, they were looking for new opportunities. They found them. Black Hand notes circulated in any predominantly Italian neighborhood, and most large cities had one. The victims assumed (possibly correctly) that the police either would not or could not protect them, just like in Sicily, so they paid. It wasn't only poor shopkeepers, either — the famous tenor Enrico Caruso paid the Mafia for "protection" as well. Both the Mafia and its victims viewed this extortion as a Sicilian affair, which meant that they were usually too frightened or stubborn to talk to the police even when reputable people around them were murdered for delinquent protection payments.

Black Hand extortion wasn't really all that profitable, though, and the first and principle sin of the Mafia has always been greed. Therefore, while such figures as Ignazio Saitta ("Lupo the Wolf" to his friends and intimates) were passing out



threatening notes, the real movers and shakers were taking over legitimate Italian businesses — olives, wine grapes, and so forth — as well as running illegal lotteries and prostitution. Men like Joe Masseria and Salvatore Maranzano would be important *mafiosi* for decades. They lent money to the poor, but stacked the interest and payments so that the borrower was forever in the Mafia's debt. They would arrange for a supplicant's family to have passage to America (legally or otherwise), but then someone, be it the newly arrived relative or whoever asked for the favor, would owe the Mafia his life. However, the Mob stayed in the Italian community for the most part, which meant that only Italians were commonly victimized. That changed notably in 1890 in New Orleans with the murder of police chief David Hennessy.

### **The Mafia Surfaces... Briefly**

Hennessy discovered that the Mississippi River docks were caught in a sort of turf war between two opposing families, the Matranga and the Provenzanos. As the bodies mounted, Hennessy pushed his force to get some leads on this "Mafia," but they seemed unable. The Mafia, for its part, attempted bribery and then threats to convince Hennessy to back off. When that didn't work, they killed him. Public response to the murder was quick, and a grand jury concluded that the Mafia did indeed exist. Several *mafiosi* went on trial — and were promptly acquitted, thanks to judicious bribery of the jury. The citizenry was outraged, and they bashed in the doors to the jail, dragged the defendants (awaiting release) out into the streets, and hanged them from lampposts. Justice is served?

A note here, just to keep you interested (since I know you'd think of this anyway): Who killed Hennessy? No one is really sure. No one was ever arrested for his murder specifically, and neither the Matranga family nor the Provenzano family claimed credit for the hit, not that it would have been smart to do so. So the question must be raised: When something is happening that you don't understand, who benefits? Who had money to lose when the Mob was skimming cargo off of ships? Who had the most to gain by seeing the war end with neither side victorious? Who would be callous enough to arrange a hit of a dutiful, driven police chief, knowing the public outcry would result in the two families being scattered? And finally, who knew the city well

enough to know how to arrange it? My guess would be someone who'd been in New Orleans for many years before the Matranga-Provenzano war, and remains there to this day.

At any rate, the Mafia in New Orleans went underground (even more than usual) for years until the lynch-mob fever subsided. It took some time, but it happened.

### **The Evolution of the New York Mobster**

One of New York's largest gangs was the Eastmans, led by one Monk Eastman, a hulking brute of a man in the employ of the city's political machine. He and his thugs were very much for hire, and would beat, maim or kill any target their employers named. His primary job was making sure that elections went the way they were supposed to. That is, his employers were elected and re-elected. In return, in addition to money, Eastman received immunity. Although arrested too many times to recount, he always walked — his friends in Tammany Hall saw to that.

Eventually, Eastman's turf bumped up against that of Paul Kelly (born Paolo Vaccarella). Kelly, though assuredly a gangster, was a different kind of man than Eastman — well-educated, soft-spoken, and smart. Eastman and Kelly's gangs went to war, culminating in the so-called Battle of Rivington Street. More than 100 gangsters spent the night shooting at each other. Policemen who tried to intervene found themselves shot at by both sides. The morning saw at least three men dead and several more badly injured.

This all would have been bad enough, but Tammany Hall had been denying the existence of organized crime (meanwhile, using it for their own ends — or was it using them?). The bigwigs sued for peace between the mobsters, which lasted a while, only to erupt again. They tried settling it in typical schoolyard fashion — Eastman and Kelly, *mano a mano*, in the ring. I'm not joking, either. What's really amusing is that the fight was inconclusive. They pounded on each other for a while, and then both collapsed. No clear winner, so the war continued, at least for while. Then Eastman managed to get himself arrested again and the leaders of Tammany Hall, no fools, let him take his medicine. He eventually got out, but by that time he was powerless. Poor guy died in a gutter the day after Christmas, 1920. Shot to death, as it happened.

The point of all this was that the leaders of the city — the official ones, not the crime bosses — had recognized that a thug beating up people on the streets wasn't the way to go. They threw in with Kelly and mobsters of his ilk: smart, willing to compromise, and subtle (more so than Eastman, anyway). Above all, the new breed of mobster had to be willing and able to work within the law as well as outside of it. Recall, by the way, that the Sicilian Mob had been doing just that for years.

### **The Windy City**

New York may have been corrupt, but Chicago was downright rotten. Before Al Capone came Johnny Torrio. Torrio was from New York, but he moved out west to Chicago at the request of a cousin to help take pressure off of her husband. Her husband, Big Jim Colosimo, ran whorehouses all over the city (Torrio's cousin was the madam) and the pressure was coming in the form of Black Hand notes. Torrio arrived in Chicago in 1909, found out who was troubling his family and killed them.

Torrio received control of a minor whorehouse for his trouble, but ever the businessman, he gussied it up into a major attraction. Within a few years, he was running most of Colosimo's businesses. White slavery was in its prime. Young girls would be lured out from their homes on farms and promised the chance to make some money, and then forced to turn tricks. The sheer amount of money that prostitution pulled in during this time was frankly staggering, especially when compared with the amounts the girls were actually charging versus how many women were "working." To give some point of reference, estimates place the annual take at around \$30 million, whereas the number of tricks turned is guessed at something like 27 million. That means just over a dollar per trick. Pretty sad. Even sadder when you realize how much of that dollar the whores were actually getting — less than half.

An interesting side note for you: Torrio evidently did a brisk business in "keepers." Supposedly, these were hookers that Torrio never expected to see again. He'd tell the girls they were to make a special house call, that they'd get paid top dollar for it, but that they were to keep their mouths shut about it because the client was "an important fellow." And by dawn, Torrio would be as much as a thousand dollars richer and no one would ever see the hapless prostitute again.

So who bought these "keepers?" Anyone's guess, really. Leeches needing blood, possibly, or even Nephandi needing sacrificial victims are both possibilities. I'm fairly sure that Torrio never really knew (or thought about) where the "keepers" went. He was a monster, but a human one, and most of us humans don't want to know about things like that. How do you think they continue?

### **Prohibition**

Prostitution was and remained a good money maker, but new laws in 1910 made it tougher on the white slavers. While Torrio never abandoned the business, there was a better one on the way: selling booze. Various anti-alcohol groups in the country had been attacking the evils of strong drink, blaming booze for all the country's woes — typical, isn't it? We have to have a scapegoat. Anyway, the Volstead Act went into effect at midnight, January 16, 1920. The law had actually been passed the year before, so everyone knew that America was going dry on that date, including the Mafia. They also knew that between medicinal and religious alcohol, easily smuggled Canadian booze, and the homemade stuff that citizens had been making for years, there was enough drink to go around. All the Mob had to do was sell and distribute it.

### **Chicago's New King**

Torrio had Big Jim Colosimo murdered in May of 1920. About a year earlier, he'd agreed to give sanctuary to a young killer on the lam named Alphonse Capone, with whom he had mutual acquaintances in New York (one of the men who asked Torrio to help Capone was Frankie Yale, the man who killed Colosimo for Torrio). Capone started out as a bouncer but was capable and ambitious and quickly rose to prominence in Torrio's gang.

Capone was Torrio's opposite in many ways. Torrio, ahead of his time, forged a peace between the warring gangs of Chicago (including the O'Donnell gang, the O'Banion gang, and the Terrible Gennas), convincing them that violent crime was not nearly as profitable as bootlegging and gambling. He despised unnecessary violence and preferred to use bribes and subtle tricks to get his way. When Chicago elected a reformer mayor in 1923 and suddenly the police began raiding Torrio's interests, he moved operations to the smaller city of Cicero. The local police resisted, but the citizens of



Cicero enjoyed slot machines, so rather than fight the police, Torrio called in favors from the county sheriff and had all of the slots impounded. When the Cicero officials agreed to let him set up shop in their town, he returned them.

Torrio, secure in his power, left for Italy (he would make this trip several more times in his life) and Al Capone took charge. The streets of Chicago, never truly safe even with the peace that Torrio arranged, became deadly once again.

Torrio may have disapproved of violence, but Capone was a different story. "Moderation" was not really in his vocabulary; he believed in using as much brutality as necessary to achieve his ends. Torrio recognized this; back from Italy in 1924, he asked Capone to "fix" the mayoral election in Cicero so that the cooperative party would stay in power. Capone did — his methods involved assaulting and intimidating voters, opening the ballot boxes to dispose of votes for the opposition, and making examples of people who wouldn't cooperate. The evening of election day turned into a series of shootouts between the police and Capone's gang, which left his brother Frank among the slain. The bullets certainly didn't stop flying there; the peace that Torrio had masterminded unraveled as each of Chicago's gangs started eyeing the others' enterprises.

On May 19th, 1924, Torrio, Dion O'Banion and Hymie Weiss (one of O'Banion's men) met to make a shipment from one of Torrio's breweries. O'Banion had decided that he was leaving the city — the war was just getting too dangerous. As it happened, he'd tipped off the police to the shipment, which meant that all three of them were arrested, but that O'Banion (a first-time offender of the Prohibition laws) would receive only a fine, not jail time. Torrio, however, would not get off so easily — but as it happened, neither did O'Banion. Torrio arranged for his punishment: He was gunned down in the flower shop he ran.

Torrio was sentenced to nine months, but nearly served the same sentence as O'Banion. Before his term began, members of the O'Banion Mob ambushed and shot him. Torrio survived, and once his hospital term ended his prison term began. When *that* term ended, he officially gave control of Chicago's interests to Capone and left, once again, for Sicily.

Capone immediately went to war with Chicago's other gangs. Much of the work had already been done for him, as Weiss, now controlling the O'Banion gang, had virtually wiped out the Gennas. Capone offered a truce; Weiss demanded that Capone turn over the men who had killed O'Banion. Capone, naturally, refused, and the battles continued for a time. Weiss survived several attempts on his life, but fate caught up with him, and he, too, was slain, not far from the flower shop where his friend Dion O'Banion died.

The wars continued, but Capone was invariably the winner. There really wasn't any serious threat to his rule over Chicago — with William Thompson as mayor (whose position on Prohibition was that he wished to reopen the old saloons "and open 10,000 more") as his pawn and ally, Scarface Al wallowed in luxury and publicity. Everywhere he went, he was treated as a celebrity, and he loved talking to the press (this is one of the very few things that the 1987 film *The Untouchables* bothered to show correctly). He owned scores of businesses, legitimate and otherwise, and money flowed in from all angles. Not officially, of course, but he controlled them by dominating the unions. Almost any business would fold under a prolonged strike, and Al could signal one in any of a hundred unions simply by making a call. The money that Capone was making off of these rackets was staggering — and of course, the companies raised their costs to compensate. Estimates indicate that by 1930, mob influence cost every person in Chicago \$45 annually.

Amazing as it might seem, Capone's organization wasn't making the money it could. George "Bugs" Moran, one of O'Banion's lieutenants and leader of the gang after Hymie Weiss' death, seemed determined to muscle in on Capone's rackets. He hijacked trucks, burned down one of Capone's dog-racing tracks (such racing, at the time, was illegal) and assassinated Capone's men (but never got to Capone himself, obviously). Capone responded by leaving the state. He was in Florida on Valentine's Day, 1929, when six of Moran's men and one innocent victim (just a groupie who liked to hang out with gangsters) were lined up against a wall and slaughtered. Moran, had he been on time that morning, would have been with them — but he arrived a few minutes late, saw what he thought was a police car, and left. (Seven years later, on the anniversary of the Saint Valentine's Day Massacre,

one of the probable gunmen was himself slain in a bowling alley. Everything comes back around, and in the Mafia, it often happens with a kind of grim poetic justice.)

### **Meanwhile, in Old New York...**

New York never had a Capone. While as much if not more illegal booze flowed through the streets during the 1920s, an arch-criminal was never behind it all. At least, not a visible one.

Arnold Rothstein, gambler, loan shark, and underworld mastermind since the early years of the 20th century started out as an importer of English and Scotch booze. He stuck with it for some years, but discovered that importing was a risk — if the authorities seized a ship and impounded the cargo, there was often no way to retrieve the product and any money spent on the shipment was lost for good. By the latter half of the 20s, he was out of the importing business (though by no means out of the underworld scene; he would remain a habitual gambler and retained controlling interests in various speakeasies until his murder in 1928). One of the people who took over his imports was Irving Wexler, more often known as Waxey Gordon. He would later become infamous as a rat (and there are other suspicions about him, too — such as his nickname coming from his pale, yellowed skin — that never made it to the papers), but during Prohibition, he was becoming rich by importing, cutting and selling liquor.

Rothstein's greatest contribution to the Mafia was probably acting as mentor to four very special thugs: Salvatore Lucania (Charlie "Lucky" Luciano), Francesco Castiglia (Frank Costello), Maier Suchowljansky (Meyer Lansky — you can see why he changed it) and Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel. These kids started out as minor-level hoodlums but were exceptional in at least one respect: They weren't bigots. The Jewish and Sicilian gangs, remember, had barely tolerated one another, but these four toughs recognized the opportunities that the others presented and agreed to look past nationality and religion. The four of them sat at Rothstein's feet, so to speak, and listened to his views on running the business. In some ways, Rothstein's ideas paralleled Johnny Torrio's. He believed in minimal violence and stressed diplomacy — it was simply a better way to go, as it fostered fewer grudge matches, which, in turn, made for a better long-term

situation for all involved. And indeed, while the Prohibition years in New York had their share of murder and gang warfare, it didn't take place in the public eye nearly as much. Gangsters killed each other, but not in broad daylight and not in front of witnesses.

Another important development of the time, whether it came from Rothstein or not, was cooperating with other bosses in other cities. Luciano and company needed to get the booze before they could sell it, after all, and they made deals with bosses in Atlantic City and here in Boston (both cities' ports became hubs for illegal booze). Expanding further, they contacted Moe Dalitz of Cleveland to tap into the vast quantities of whiskey he was smuggling from Canada — Lansky, a superb diplomat, traveled all over the country to make deals.

What eventually evolved was the Seven Group: Luciano and Costello (Manhattan); Enoch "Nucky" Johnson (Atlantic City); Waxey Gordon (Philadelphia); Joseph "Joe Adonis" Doto (Brooklyn); Longy Zwillman (Long Island and New Jersey); Lansky and Siegel (acting as enforcers, protecting shipments from hijackers and hijacking competitors); and Torrio (a kind of overseer for the whole arrangement). Those seven powers formed the core, and made alliances with gangs from New England to the Gulf of Mexico (with Chicago notably missing).

This organization curbed the violence that was cutting into profits on all sides. More importantly, it set the stage for the national alliance of mobsters that was to happen in May of 1929. Prohibition, after all, wasn't long for the world.

## **The End of the Dry Spell**

Prohibition officially ended on December 5, 1933, but that didn't catch anybody by surprise, especially not the Mafia. In 1928, both Torrio and Rothstein (before being shot that November) predicted that Prohibition wasn't going to last much longer. The country was headed for a downturn, and when the bottom fell out, people were going to demand their right to drink.

Never let it be said that the Mob doesn't think ahead. In 1929, Atlantic City hosted the first meeting of gang leaders from all across the country. I could list who was present, but really, I think you'll find the absentees more interesting.





Of course Luciano and his crew were present; he'd organized the whole thing. But Luciano had recently thrown in with Joe "The Boss" Masseria, one of the Mafia dons from the old days. Masseria himself was not present, and neither was Salvatore Maranzano, Masseria's archrival. Andreas Giovanni, vying for primacy over Boston's interests with Charles "King" Solomon, also didn't attend (though Solomon did). In fact, none of the old school *mafiosi* (nicknamed "Mustache Petes" by the younger crew) were present. Chalk that up to racism; with Irishmen and Jews part of the discussion, the older guard probably felt insulted. As it happened, they weren't invited anyway.

The bosses met and discussed working together, not competing, and making sure everybody had a share of the profits. They planned for the end of Prohibition, and did the smartest thing they possibly could: They decided to use the know-how of shipping and distributing liquor to continue doing it — legally — once Prohibition died. But they by no means intended to go straight. Prostitution and gambling in all forms were big sources of funds for

the Mafia (King Solomon, at this meeting, was heard to grouse about how the Giovanni Mob had tricked him out of controlling interest in an underground boxing ring in Boston. That ring, by the way, still operates, and is one of the few Mob-related venues that the Giovanni still maintain an interest in).

Another important discussion was about violence and the danger it caused to the Mafia. Chicago, in particular, was becoming a problem — Capone's penchant for gunning down the competition was making operations hard on the Mob all over. Capone, who was indeed present for the Atlantic City meeting, agreed that as the most visible gangster in America, he should take a fall to appease the citizenry. After the meeting, he was picked up in Pennsylvania for carrying a concealed weapon, sentenced to a year in prison (of which he served ten months) and emerged in 1930 to find his empire in trouble. The Depression had hit — the stock market crashed in October of 1929 (as I'm sure you know), and newspaper stories about Capone's lavish lifestyle only angered the poor

citizens who could barely afford rent. Capone's organization fell under tough scrutiny, and while they never pinned any kind of violent crime on him, he was indicted in 1931 for income tax evasion. He served 10 years, some of that at Alcatraz, and when he was finally released in 1939, syphilis had reduced him to a gibbering idiot.

So who put the pressure on the Chicago authorities to "get Capone"? President Herbert Hoover? Possibly; after all, his election in 1928 was followed so quickly by the stock market crash that he must have been desperate for a way to regain public favor. Mayor William Thompson? Maybe so; he had his eyes on the White House for a while, and putting Capone away would have been a good way to dispel the (quite true) stories of him being in the Mob's pocket. The public? Certainly the general populace had been enamored of Capone once, but after so many of them lost their livelihoods in the crash (and after many had lost friends and family in the crossfire of the Chicago gang wars), they'd had as much as they could stomach.

But I heard a story once, and while I don't really buy it, it involves your *paisan* Dominic Cardona, Jr. Turns out he was in prison at the same time as Capone, before he was shipped to Alcatraz (yes, we've established that Dominic's been around since at least the 30s, but I'm still not going to kill him for you). Anyway, he later told an acquaintance that he actually had the cell next to Scarface Al, and that every night he heard the mighty Capone whimpering and someone whispering — someone with an accent that was decidedly Sicilian.

So was it syphilis that drove Al Capone insane? Was it really public outcry that brought him to the courthouse? Probably it was. Like I said, I don't believe the story.

All right, so we've come up to the end of Prohibition. And I've run across exactly one confirmed report of Dominic Cardona, Jr. during that time (I know he told the story about Capone, I just don't believe it). Next letter continues this history.

— Jerry

## Wars, Bloody and Otherwise

I received your letter. I don't know how many times I have to go through this with you, Mark. I see your point. I agree with you. The man needs to die, sooner rather than later. I just don't see why

you can't get on a plane and come out here and do it yourself. Dominic Cardona, Jr., to the best of my knowledge, has been around since at least 1925 — as an adult. He's gone by different names, but he's been a gangster all his life, and has therefore never had much of an "official" existence; it would surprise me greatly if he ever had a real birth certificate. I've been watching him off and on for a couple of weeks now; he seems to stick around the waterfront, for the most part, but I see him as often during the day as at night, so I don't think he's a vampire (assuming that particular bit of lore is true). Anyway — your letter indicated you wanted to know more about the Mafia, so I dug some more info up for you.

## The Death of Mustache Pete

The Atlantic City Conference in 1929 was supposed to end the feuds between gangs, but of course that didn't happen. The older *mafiosi* — notably Joe Masseria and Salvatore Maranzano — had been gunning for each other for several years. Both of them dated back to the early days of the American Mob, and both felt they had a right to call the shots for the current Mafia. As I mentioned, Lucky Luciano thought otherwise, but figured that he wasn't quite ready to strike out on his own. So, prior to the meeting in Atlantic City, he hooked up with Masseria's crew.

### Masseria...

The plan was never to ride Masseria's coattails, however. Luciano wanted him and Maranzano dead. The body count between them was mounting quickly — the gangsters referred to this period, roughly 1929 to 1931, as the Castellammarese War, because Maranzano's people were largely from the Sicilian city of Castellammare del Golfo — and the public was starting to demand protection. Throwing in with Masseria was a dangerous game; Luciano became his right-hand man, but that simply made Charlie Lucky a target. In fact, in October of 1929 (before the stock market crash), Luciano was taken for a one-way ride, and he became the only known gangster to return from one. He suffered a severe beating in the process but never said who was behind it. The obvious answer would be Maranzano's people, but frankly, if that were the case, why didn't they just kill him? Rumors abound — he got a girl



pregnant and her father was behind it, he bargained with his assailants and paid them off, and so forth. Some cynics (like me) have even suggested he arranged it himself to bolster his reputation, which it certainly did.

Luciano himself arranged Masseria's death: He treated Joe the Boss to a lot of food and booze (not a difficult task; Masseria was a much a glutton as Capone) and then went to the men's room while his friends Vito Genovese, Joe Adonis, Albert Anastasia and Bugsy Siegel walked into the near-empty restaurant, shot Masseria several times, and then left. Luciano washed his hands, and then stepped out and called the police.

### Maranzano...

With Masseria dead, Maranzano declared himself *capo di tutti capi* — and informed the rest of the Mafia that his word was law, he expected a cut of *everything*, and that he would be handing down new orders and laws to the other gangsters, which would be followed on pain of death. He also pioneered the Five Families of New York, and held a lavish ceremony much like a coronation. Luciano and company were unimpressed, and started sending messages to their allies from the Atlantic City conference, to the tune of, "This guy has got to go." The rest of the underworld was in agreement. Meyer Lansky imported four Jewish gunmen, trained them to act like federal agents, and had them burst in to Maranzano's offices and demand to speak with him alone. Maranzano had no reason to suspect they were anything but what they said (and like Masseria, Maranzano typically forgot that the underworld wasn't exclusively Sicilian). They took him into his office and killed him, but not neatly — six stab wounds, four gunshot wounds, and a slit throat. Another Rasputin, no?

### And All the Rest

The night after Maranzano died became known as the Night of Sicilian Vespers in gangster lore. Supposedly, Luciano's associates across the nation sought out supporters of the old-school Mob and slaughtered them. Reports put the death toll anywhere from 20 to 100.

This is all bunk, of course. I have yet to see a list of victims or any other verifiable evidence that anything like the Night of Vespers ever occurred. No gangster I've spoken with or book I've read gives me any reason to believe it.

And yet, there must be some truth to it, because upon reading my own words, I don't get that bitter "untruth" taste in my mouth. Well, if there is anything behind it, I have no idea what that something would be.

### Cooperation?

And then it was time for another conference, in Chicago this time (this was shortly before Capone was sent up the river; he still had the money left to entertain everyone well). Luciano was offered the title of *capo di tutti capi* but declined it — he wanted the governing body to be a council, wherein every representative had an equal vote. He himself was voted unanimously to the position of chairman, of course. At the time, only Italians could vote, though important non-Italian gangsters like Lansky and Moe Dalitz could sit in on the meetings. The Five Families of New York — headed by Luciano, Joe Bonanno (a.k.a. Joe Bananas), Joseph Profaci, Tom Gagliano, and Vincent Mangano had territories of their own, but Luciano made it clear that warfare wasn't the way to defend these territories. Just like in Atlantic City, Charlie Lucky preached the importance of working together without competing.

How long did that last?

### A Different Sort of War

"War on crime," is new neither as a concept or phrase. In his years as governor of New York, Franklin Roosevelt led his own war on crime, appointing a special commission headed by Judge Samuel Seabury to expose the corruption of Tammany Hall and its link with organized crime. It worked — Seabury's inquiries brought to light undeniable links between the Mafia and the city's leaders. But Roosevelt had a problem — he needed Tammany's support in his bid for the presidency over Al Smith (here's a funny note: there was a third contender, a man called John Nance Garner, but no one in the cities really considered his campaign serious. Why? Because he was from Texas, that far-off, crazy land — not really felt to be part of the US in most large cities. Maybe they know something we don't...). Anyhow, Roosevelt looked over the commission's findings, decided that there wasn't enough to go on, and didn't pursue the matter (at the time). The underworld decided that Roosevelt would do after all and Tammany Hall threw their support behind him.

As soon as his party's presidential nomination was official, however, Roosevelt began his anti-corruption campaign again. Seabury's commission started asking difficult questions, and some folks — James Walker, the mayor of New York, among them — didn't have answers. Walker resigned and fled to Europe, but Roosevelt continued on.

### **The Underworld Fights Back?**

Possibly. Do you know about the attempt on Roosevelt's life? On February 15, 1933 — not long after Roosevelt won the presidential election — he was traveling through Florida and stopped in Miami to give an open-air address. Standing next to him was the recently elected mayor of Chicago, Anton Cermak. During Roosevelt's speech, a shot rang out (prompting a nearby reporter to joke to Cermak, "Just like Chicago, huh?"). Cermak was hit in the lung, fatally, as it turned out. The shooter, an Italian marksman named Joseph Zangara, was tried, convicted, and executed within a month.

Of course, rumors abound as to what really happened. One story is that Zangara fired but a nearby woman grabbed his arm and pulled, throwing his aim off. Another is that he wasn't aiming for Roosevelt, as was generally assumed, but Cermak (the mayor had recently sent police officers to murder Frank Nitti, one of Capone's chief operatives. Nitti survived the shooting, but killed himself some time later — he wasn't thrown off a building by Elliot Ness, as a certain film depicted). There's no way to verify his motives or his employers; he's dead, after all. But here's the truth of why he missed, as told to me by a member of our Tradition who was actually there: Zangara, while he was a crack shot, was also very short. He stood on a chair and aimed for the President-elect, but his chair wobbled slightly, and he missed. Now, what are the odds that the chair would shift at that precise moment?

What indeed?

### **The Mob Prospers...**

Really, even with Roosevelt putting pressure on the Mafia, it was doing all right. As I mentioned, when Prohibition died, the Mob turned to manufacturing liquor legally and made a killing. During the Depression, mobsters were some of the few citizens with any cash — after all, they had never played the stock markets or put money in banks, so the Mafia had enough cash to get through.

(Interesting note: Somebody came up with the idea of imposing high taxes on the now-legal liquor. Result? People kept buying illegal, untaxed booze.) Gambling, in the form of slot machines and "policy" (a bettor would place money on a number from 1 to 999, with a 600 to 1 payoff if his number came up. The number was derived from the results of a given horse racing track, or sometimes the last digits of the stock market's closing number, and therefore unfixable. We know, however, that *nothing* is unfixable) provided even more cash.

Loan-sharking changed a bit during this time. Many of the folks who needed money weren't street scum but otherwise respectable folks who had lost everything in the stock market. So, instead of beating a delinquent debtor bloody, the Mob would just become his partner, and then edge him out. By the mid 1930s, the Mafia controlled an astonishing diversity of businesses: hotels, car sales, imports, drugstores, newspapers (!), food packaging and service. The list is really endless. Of course, they were still infecting unions, as well, driving dues up and skimming off the top, threatening strikes if the business owners didn't pay.

The diversity of the Mafia is staggering, no? The reason for that is that they were (and are) opportunists at heart. They'd jump in on any business they could, take enough control to make money but leave enough space for the business to continue running, and rake in the cash. Makes you wonder who they learned from, back in the rural villages of Sicily.

### **And Gets Organized**

Seems like the Mafia did a lot of "getting organized," doesn't it? Don't forget that all of this was taking place in a fairly short amount of time; over a period of years, something called the Combination (or Syndicate) was forming. Longy Zwillman stressed the need for gangsters to present a good front. The crazy antics of John Dillinger and the warfare between Dutch Schultz and Vincent "Mad Dog" Coll were bad for business. Zwillman himself actually offered a sizeable reward for the capture of the kidnappers of Charles Lindbergh's son (for all the good it did).

The Mafia nailed down its policies more clearly during this time. Louis Lepke offered to take over enforcement of those policies, with a group of dedicated killers (including Albert Anastasia) — this enforcement wing of the Mob became known



as Murder, Inc. The Mob wisely decided that reporters and politicians would be off limits, as killing either of them tended to incite reprisals and get spotlights aimed at the underworld, and that always spelled disaster. Cops weren't exactly off limits, as killing a cop was seen to be an occasional necessary evil, but police were by and large excluded from assassination.

The country was headed out of the Depression and smack into a World War, and the Mafia would meet that turn of events better organized than it had been. Just like Prohibition, they'd find ways to make money off the war. But before that happened, Abe "Kid" Reles would spill his guts, break the vow of silence in the Mafia, and introduce Murder, Inc. to the world.

## Rats

Supposedly, a rat will do anything to survive, which is why the term is applied to criminals who betray their accomplices to win freedom. The policy of granting immunity to gangsters who "ratted out" their fellows is probably what enticed Kid Reles to sing — that, and he was afraid that if he didn't talk, someone else might, and then he'd be on trial.

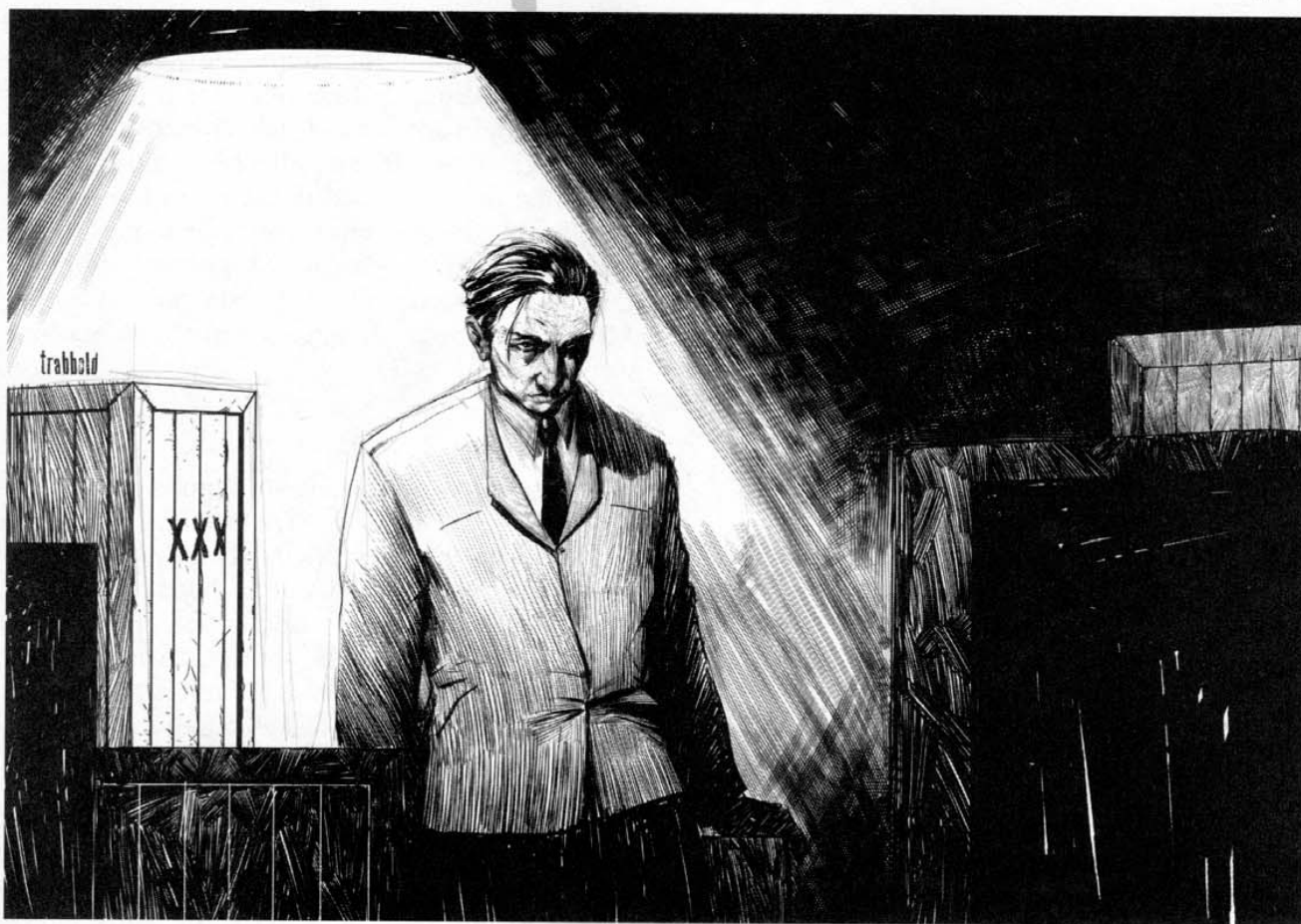
Whatever his motives, Reles was exactly what William O'Dwyer, the chief prosecutor of New York in 1940, needed. Reles wasn't a don, of course, nor was he a low-level solidier. He was a middleman, a wiseguy, and he had a photographic memory. He gave details on the lives and minds of Louis Lepke, Luciano, Siegel, and so on — and never messed up once. No one has a memory that good, right? So who fed him the information? I know a dozen different ways that one of us could have done so, and the bloodsuckers have also proven themselves to be accomplished at brainwashing (or, of course, the government or some other more mundane group could easily have penned his confession. Jesus, I was starting to sound like you for a minute). But even if confessing wasn't Reles' idea (or if someone was feeding him information once he started to sing), whoever was actually behind it must have had real inside data. Reles crowed about Murder, Inc.'s ability to perform killings, robberies, hijackings, and so forth to a customer's specifications, and that the "customers" in question were members of the Syndicate all over the U.S. He led them to bodies in mob graveyards (including one outside of town here in

Boston; oddly enough, forensic evidence showed that some of those bodies had been dug up and then reburied or replaced). With his testimony, O'Dwyer whipped through New York and arrested nearly everybody Reles implicated. Some of those folks, like Allie Tannenbaum, joined the chorus, so to speak, and gave testimony in exchange for immunity and freedom. Others received prison time or the electric chair. One of the folks who died there was Louis Lepke.

Lepke was never a bootlegger, he was a sadistic racketeer. Versatile, too — he'd use acid, knives, guns, ice picks, or whatever else was handy to kill or intimidate someone. With Luciano in prison (for masterminding a prostitution ring, which he vociferously denied) and Dutch Schultz dead, Lepke was public enemy number one. He had been in hiding for two years by that time, but the New York authorities were turning up the heat on every criminal they could find that was even loosely connected to the Mob — which included the bookies running numbers games. This heat was bad for business, and Luciano (still in prison), Lansky, and the others on the council decided that Lepke either needed to turn himself in or die (he did both, as it happened). Lepke walked right into a trap — the Mob told Lepke that he'd be tried only on federal charges and not turned over to the New York authorities (who could book him for murder). Lepke, agreed, and in August of 1939, got into a car with J. Edgar Hoover, to surrender. Lepke was raked over the coals in federal court, and then handed over to O'Dwyer for prosecution. Tannenbaum testified against Lepke in court (Reles did not... but we'll get to that) and Lepke was executed in March of 1944 (only four years after his conviction. Times have changed...).

Reles didn't testify against Lepke, though, because the Kid was dead. He fell out of a fifth-floor window along with some knotted bed sheets. Not hard to surmise what happened; someone made a few calls and the cops assigned to guard him looked the other way just long enough for Murder, Inc. to pay a call.

Reles' death spared Albert Anastasia and Bugsy Siegel (for the moment) — he was the key witness in the cases against both men. But the underworld was about to undergo one of its strangest twists, all on account of the nationalistic paranoia that World War II brought.



### Dead Mobsters

Thought I'd mention this because it's up your alley. *Mafiosi* are pretty superstitious most of the time, and a lot of them believe in ghosts. Sometimes they'll make little concessions to their dead buddies, and who knows if it helps or not? What I do know is that Louis Lepke paid some old friends a visit after he rode the lightning.

The story goes that for about eleven months after Lepke died, a mobster who was about to get caught by the cops (or whacked, the stories vary) would see him in a dream, in the electric chair, being electrocuted. The dreams apparently varied on other points. Sometimes Lepke would talk, sometimes he'd just point at the dreamer and grin, whatever. But he was almost always right. A wiseguy who had a "Lepke dream" was invariably dead or in police custody within a week (though some *mafiosi* report having close calls with death or the cops).

I don't know whether Lepke's ghost returned or why he would take such an interest in stalking mobsters after death, but I haven't heard any stories of "Lepke dreams" after 1945. Not sure why that is.

### Operation: Underworld

Never let it be said that mobsters aren't patriotic Americans. Their methods would never fly in most countries, and wouldn't be nearly as profitable. But the American Way had made a lot of gangsters very rich, and they didn't see any reason why World War II shouldn't be the same way. During wars, as I'm sure you know, things like gasoline and tires are rationed. During the Second World War, fabric, meat and many other commodities were also rationed, all in the name of the war effort. Citizens received special stamps with which to buy rationed goods. And during Prohibition, liquor kept for medicinal purposes was only released to people bearing special certificates. The Mob hadn't forgotten any of its old tricks. Gangsters counterfeited and stole the stamps, hijacked shipments of rationed goods, and sold them off to anyone willing to pay. Always a way to make a profit, it seems.

But Charlie Luciano was still behind bars, and as the "Chairman of the Board," as far as the underworld went, that wasn't an ideal situation. In



February of 1942, however, the catalyst that would free Charlie Lucky exploded in the Hudson River. A luxury liner, the *S. S. Normandie*, which had been converted to carry Allied troops burst into flames and left many patriotic Americans worried that the docks were crawling with saboteurs.

This was ridiculous; the docks were crawling with mobsters and folks influenced by mobsters. If the navy had looked at the facts — nothing got in or out of New York's harbors without the Organization taking a piece of the action — they wouldn't have worried. After all, if the Axis took over the U.S., would the Mob enjoy the same freedom? Probably not. But the navy fretted, and Charlie Lucky, working through channels, sent word that maybe the Mafia could help the navy.

It took some time, but eventually someone suggested that the navy go speak to Charlie Lucky (who had taken great pains to make sure that the idea didn't seem to come from him). He said he'd love to help — if he were moved from the dank cell at Dannemora to Great Meadow Prison (more a country club than a holding facility, really), he could probably do something.

He wasn't just moved there — he was given an office, a phone, and visiting privileges. Among his visitors: Meyer Lansky, Frank Costello, Joe Adonis and Albert Anastasia (by this time, Reles was dead and there was no real case against Anastasia anymore). He purported to be talking about national security, but more likely, he and his friends were milking the rationed-goods angle for all it was worth. But he talked a good game, even providing postcards picturing the Sicilian coast so that the Allies could plan their landing. Let's be honest, here — Luciano left Sicily as a young child and hadn't been back. But the military bought it, and at war's end, Luciano was freed and deported back to Italy.

So who burned the *Normandie*? It's not so much a question anymore. Albert Anastasia and his brother, "Tough Tony" did the deed personally. Their objective was to get their boss out of prison — and the plan went off without a hitch. Operation: Underworld had achieved its objective in fine style.

## Another Conference

The Sicilian Mafia didn't have much of an interest in narcotics before the late 1940s. Oh, there was the occasional pusher in their ranks —

Luciano did some dealing when he was young, in fact — but for the most part, the Mob didn't sully its hands with drugs. Before you start thinking this stemmed from any kind of righteousness, I suggest you forget it — it was all about money. The Organization recognized that the risks associated with selling drugs weren't worth the money they'd make, not when they had so many other enterprises that were bringing in cash hand over fist. So the Mob stayed mostly drug free until Vito Genovese came along.

## Drugs

Genovese was actually an important figure in the Mafia — he was one of the men who murdered Joe Masseria, in fact. He fled to Italy in 1937 when facing a murder charge, counting on his friends in Mussolini's government to harbor and protect him. It worked for a while, but then the war ended, Italy lost, and many of Il Duce's cohorts wound up hanging. Genovese, no fool, secured a position at an army base as a translator, but began selling off American goods from the supply depots. Eventually, someone caught on and contacted the FBI to see if Genovese was wanted. He was, as it happened — for murder — and so was shipped to New York. However, before his ship docked, the witness against him was poisoned and Genovese walked. More specifically, he walked straight into territory controlled by the Mangano and Bonanno and started his own operations.

This was the sort of behavior that might have led to another way, but Lansky and Luciano stepped in and had one of their famous meetings, this time in Havana, Cuba. Shortly before Christmas, 1946, Genovese, Anastasia, Bonanno and company flocked to a hotel in sunny Cuba to attend (supposedly) a party for Frank Sinatra. Sinatra himself arrived at that party with two of Al Capone's cousins, so it's not difficult to guess how he felt about the Mob.

Be that as it may, the assemblage discussed important matters, one of which was narcotics. Luciano, having done time on drug charges, advised against the Mafia getting involved, but his view was hardly universal. At the end, that discussion was tabled and each individual boss was told to go his own way on the subject.

## Viva Las Vegas

Las Vegas was the other topic of the day. Seems that Bugsy Siegel had a grandiose vision of Vegas as a gambling Mecca. Up to that time, Reno was the big attraction for gamblers, while Las Vegas was pretty much a one-horse town. Siegel had borrowed money from his friends in the Mob and in Hollywood (he was the West Coast's boss, remember) to build a magnificent hotel called the Flamingo. He finally did get it built and opened, but not without some sweating; one of the things that came out at the meeting in Cuba was that Siegel was siphoning money off the building funds and socking it away in a Swiss bank.

The Mob let him live about another year. The Flamingo opened just after Christmas in 1947. It didn't do so well initially, but by spring, the place was turning a profit. Siegel should have left the country, as indeed he may have been planning, but fate caught up with him. He was shot to death in June, and Lansky's men took over the Flamingo. Over the next few years, hotels started to spring up in Vegas, created what is now called the Strip, and nearly all of those hotels were owned in part or in full by the Mafia.

Howard Hughes managed to screw himself nicely by buying up most of Nevada and making a fortune for the Mob from the casinos. His big mistake: He didn't hire new staff when he bought the casinos, which meant that *mafiosi* were handling (and therefore redirecting) most of the money. An interesting attitude at the time, by the way, was that only criminals could run casinos successfully (having been to Vegas, I'll state that it's less criminals and more chumps that make the casinos rich — don't people even *consider* the odds of winning?) and that criminals would run them honestly. Ha. Getting ahead of myself a bit, Meyer Lansky was indicted in 1969 for skimming \$36 million off the Flamingo *alone*, and God only knows how much money actually found its way into Swiss banks during the 50s and 60s.

Anyway, with Hughes making profits (though those profits didn't reflect what the casinos were taking in even remotely), the state officials figured they should get in on the act, and Mob share in Vegas gambling faltered. Today, while the Rothsteins keep a hand in, most of the gambling in Vegas is legit.

## Things Are Tough All Over

In 1947, Luciano was expelled from Cuba and shipped back to Italy at the insistence of Harry Anslinger, director of the Bureau of Narcotics. Anslinger was convinced (ironically) that Luciano was a drug lord, staying in Cuba to oversee shipments of narcotics into the States. That might have been true, but Luciano denied it. It didn't matter; the U. S. threatened to withhold medicine and supplies from Cuba if they didn't deport him to Italy. They did, and there he remained.

## The Kefauver Commission

But Luciano might have counted himself fortunate — he never had to appear on television and deny his links to organized crime. Beginning in May of 1950, a special committee pioneered by Tennessee's Senator Estes Kefauver toured the country, putting organized crime's figures on the witness stand and grilling them unmercifully. Most of them pled the Fifth Amendment, of course, but that wasn't the point. The committee wasn't formed to gain a lot of convictions, it was formed because Kefauver wanted to know the extent and scope of organized crime in America — and he felt the people should know, too.

And the people found out. If Kefauver had simply published his findings, even in the daily news, it probably wouldn't have had as much of an impact. But the committee hearings were televised, and Americans sat glued to the sets, watching the Mafia shift uncomfortably as Kefauver and his committee rattled off charges of racketeering, extortion, and murder and then, almost as an afterthought, asked for confirmation. The gangsters either denied it or refused to answer, but that didn't matter. Albert Anastasia and Joe Adonis, as well as scores of lower-level hoods, had their faces broadcast all across the country. Frank Costello, who had tried so desperately to become a respectable businessman, refused to let the cameras show his face. Instead, they captured his hands, nervously drumming his fingers or fiddling with his cigarettes, and his shaky voice, and that was probably worse for him. It didn't help that he changed stories often, left the room when he became agitated, and refused to produce documents that the committee requested.



## Aftermath

Costello didn't serve substantial jail time as a direct result of the hearings, but he did lose his leadership role in the Syndicate. He wasn't the only one. Joe Adonis was indicted on gambling charges, and a host of other indictments followed. He fled the country and returned to Italy. Willie Moretti, another leader and a partner of Longy Zwillman, didn't have the chance to go to prison. He was murdered instead (though, since his mind was starting to go due to advanced paresis, the same disease that supposedly killed Capone, this was more a mercy killing than an assassination).

Vito Genovese, however, was doing fine. He'd been all but ignored during the Kefauver commission's circus. Yes, he'd been subpoenaed but had left the country during that time, and since he was regarded as a second-tier hood, the commission didn't go looking for him. After the hoopla from the commission died down, he assumed control of the Luciano family. He was already second only to Costello in that role, and since Costello had decided to retire from the Syndicate altogether, Genovese could have had the family to himself.

But the principle sin and guiding philosophy of the Mafia is and always has been greed. Genovese didn't want to be "just" the head of the Luciano family, he wanted to be the new *capo di tutti capi*. Apparently, what had happened to Masseria and Maranzano escaped his attention. At any rate, he disobeyed a direct order from the ruling council (including votes from Luciano and Adonis in Italy) and sent a hit man after Costello.

The assassin, Vicente "The Chin" Gigante, screwed up. He grazed Costello's head but did no real damage. He was eventually tried for the attempted murder, but Costello, in Mafia tradition, wouldn't identify him, so he walked.

Costello, for his part, had no desire to dodge bullets for the rest of his life (he was having enough trouble dodging jail time), so he offered Genovese a deal. If Genovese would stop trying to have him shot, Costello wouldn't bring up the matter to the council (which basically meant that Genovese wouldn't be shot in retaliation). They agreed, Costello went back to playing shuffleboard, and Genovese went back to New York to direct his "family" with an iron fist.

Neither of the men meant to keep his word, of course. Genovese still wanted control, and was afraid that Costello might try to stop him by proxy. Costello didn't want to see the Syndicate in the hands of a petty drug dealer like Genovese. Genovese figured that if Costello was going to act against him, it would be through Albert Anastasia. Anastasia's underboss was a *mafioso* named Carlo Gambino, and he wanted control of the Anastasia family. So Gambino threw in with Genovese, and contracted Anastasia's murder out to the Gallo brothers. On October 25, 1957, Albert Anastasia sat down in a barber's chair. "Crazy Joe" Gallo and another man, likely one of this brothers, walked into the shop and shot the feared Lord High Executioner of Murder Inc. to death. Gambino took control of Anastasia's interests. Genovese set a date for a meeting of all of the underworld's bosses. Rather than have the meeting in a major city, however, he decided on a small town in upstate New York called Apalachin.

## The Apalachin Debacle

Someone wasn't thinking ahead. It might have been Genovese, for holding the meeting in the tiny town in the first place. It might have been Joseph Barbara, who owned the country estate where the meeting was taking place. Either way, the sudden reservation of dozens of hotel rooms and purchase of meat and other supplies in great quantity didn't escape the notice of the New York State Police. As limousines from all over the country arrived and all headed for the same place, the cops decided that something interesting was going on and put roadblocks around the house. A minor thug — likely out for a smoke or just standing guard — noticed the roadblocks, and rushed inside to sound the alarm.

No one did jail time as a direct result of Apalachin, because having a meeting isn't a crime. "But it was funny as hell," one of the officers was later quoted as saying. "All these middle-aged mobster guys jumping out of windows, running through the woods. Even if we couldn't book them, it was still fun rounding them up." And what a catch, indeed. Genovese, Joe Profaci, Joe Bonanno, and nearly 60 other *mafiosi* were captured (and later released). But there were nearly 100 on the guest list. Some of them escaped into the woods, and I'll touch on that in a sec. A few

actually managed to escape by hiding out in the cellar until the police left. Among them: Dominic Cardona, Jr. And the mobsters in charge of Chicago and New Orleans never showed at all, claiming delays en route, but since both of those cities were still loyal to Luciano and Costello, it makes you wonder how accidental the Apalachin incident really was.

Genovese's hopes for control of the Mob went up in smoke. No one was going to swear loyalty to him now. But a power vacuum had appeared in the underworld. Many of the major players were in prison (Genovese was indicted on drug charges in 1959 and given 15 years), out of the business (Costello), too new to the organization (Gambino) or too busy with their own troubles to lead (Profaci).

An afterthought for Apalachin: I mentioned that some of the gangsters who fled ran into the woods. A few of those, including an up-and-comer in the Profaci family, were never seen again. I've visited Apalachin and I wandered close to those woods, and focused a bit on the forests around the town. What I felt was an air of chaos and sheer rage like I've never encountered. Mafia lore has it that the few gangsters who vanished after Apalachin left the country or were shot by rivals in the confusion. I think they met a much worse fate.

### The Gallo-Profaci War

Profaci's troubles had much to do with the Gallo brothers. "Crazy Joe" Gallo had a reputation of being somewhat difficult to work with, but he was, in some ways, a visionary. Many of the Italian and Jewish mobsters shunned blacks, but Gallo figured that much of inner-city crime was going to be black-controlled in years to come, just in terms of sheer numbers. He also realized that no matter what kind of rules or honor codes the Mafia set for itself, they would *always* be broken — change and eventual breakdown is inevitable in any system, as we well know. Frankly, that kind of entropy started showing up long before this war. Hell, Luciano contributed to it by wiping out the Mustache Petes. The established order gets a little too established, stifles change and growth, and then everything falls apart, leading to change again. The slide from Dynamism to Stasis to Entropy repeats itself.

Sorry about that little diatribe. In any event, the Gallo brothers worked with Joe Profaci for a time, but then started demanding bigger pieces of

the profits. Profaci, not a particularly generous fellow, turned down their requests. Crazy Joe responded by kidnapping Profaci's brother, brother-in-law, and two bodyguards and held them for ransom. That was probably the true beginning of the Gallo-Profaci War, such as it was.

The war didn't start off with much in the way of fireworks. Gallo's victims were released unharmed when Profaci promised payment. He didn't follow through, of course. Instead, he ordered a Gallo enforcer murdered. Then, Larry Gallo (Crazy Joe's brother) received an invitation to meet and receive the first payment. What he got instead was a noose around the neck. Luck was with Gallo, however; a passing cop asked what was going on and Profaci's soldiers shot at the cop, giving Gallo time to get free.

The Gallo-Profaci War wasn't as exciting as, say, the Castellammarese War. The highlight was when the Gallo brothers, holed up in their President Street bunker, saved a family from a nearby building that burst in flames one night. Joe Gallo and Joe Profaci both left the war for reasons entirely unconnected with it. Gallo wound up in prison on an extortion charge, and Profaci died of cancer in June of 1962. Both sides claimed victory in war. It's always hard to admit that nobody won.

### The Banana War

With Profaci dead and the Gallos crippled, control of the Profaci family passed to Joe Maggliocco, Profaci's aforementioned brother-in-law. He wasn't exactly a terrifying figure; he was weak and sick much of the time. Meanwhile, Tommy Lucchese's family was still going strong, and Carlo Gambino was gaining power as well. It wasn't either of these figures, however, who would make the next move.

Joseph "Joe Bananas" Bonanno was the don of the smallest family in New York, but he had fingers in every pie from Brooklyn to the Caribbean. He, like Genovese before him, set his sights on ultimate rule over the Mob (don't these people ever learn?) and set out to kill Lucchese, Gambino, Buffalo boss Steve Magaddino, and the Los Angeles boss, Frank DeSimone (that DeSimone was even added to the list was something he might have found flattering, were he not so terrified. After Bugsy Siegel was killed and his bodyguard Mickey Cohen took over most of his rackets, though DeSimone was nominally



in charge, Cohen didn't even pay him tribute much of the time. Indeed, the West Coast Mob is often called the "Mickey Mouse Mafia"). Bonanno needed help for such an ambitious undertaking — the phrase "biting off more than you can chew" leaps readily to mind — and went to Magliocco. The new Profaci family boss, in turn, gave the contract to a rising star in the family, Joe Colombo.

Colombo was a survivor, and he reckoned his odds of survival were much better if he betrayed Bonanno and Magliocco to their intended victims. The council summoned both of them: Magliocco showed up and begged for his life. The council figured (correctly) that he was too cowardly to conceive the plot and let him live. He died of a heart attack a few months later. In reward for his honesty, Colombo was granted leadership of the Profaci family, making him the youngest American *mafioso* to gain such a distinguished position.

Bonanno, on the other hand, didn't appear before the council. It didn't help for long, as he was abducted off the street at gunpoint in October of 1964 and kept prisoner by Magaddino for nearly two years (at the time, of course, he was presumed dead). In the meantime, his family split down the middle. The council put a loyal mobster named Gaspar DiGregorio at the head of the Bonanno family, while many of Bonanno's men put their loyalty in Bill Bonanno, Joe Bonanno's son. The two sides went to war, racking up a decent body count but with neither side really winning much in the way of decisive victories. When Joe finally reappeared, he jumped into the war, guns blazing (breaking a promise to the council that he'd accept the council's choice, which had changed from DiGregorio to Paul Sciacca, and go retire in Arizona).

Bonanno probably could have won the war. He was shrewd and effective, as were his soldiers, and the bodies on the Sciacca side mounted more quickly than on Bonanno's side. In 1968, however, fate intervened — Bonanno suffered a heart attack and dropped out of the war, retiring to Arizona and retaining only his western interests. Sciacca took control of his holdings in New York, for a time (Sciacca was demoted in 1970).

And of course things continue on like this, but there's a notable exception here, right? Where's Dominic Cardona, Jr., anyway? I've seen

him pop up twice, once when he told his story about Capone, and once in the basement of Joseph Barbara's house in Apalachin. Of course, I know your beef with him, but as that happened in 1980, I'll assume that this history's enough. He's not an important figure, Mark. He wronged you, and as you had the opportunity to finish him and didn't, I think it's up to you to come out here and do it. I'll act as backup for you, if you'd like. I've seen Cardona around the wharves just lately, as I said earlier. He seems to frequent the same places I do (of course, I've been hanging around some Mafia-esque places of late, looking for info that I can't find in books).

Anyway, let me know if you still need more info. Or, just fly out here and we'll talk face to face.

— Jerry

## The Next Generation

I received your letter yesterday. All right, Mark, you asked for it. Here's the rest of the Mob's history, from the early 60s to modern days, but I'll warn you about something. As the FBI and other enforcement agencies get smarter (and better equipped) with respect to catching criminals (witness the Donnie Brasco affair, which I'll discuss) the Mafia responds by lying its collective ass off. There's a lot of misinformation floating around out there, much of it in the hands of the low-level *soldati*, so don't be too surprised if something that you read here today gets contradicted in the news tomorrow. Now, admittedly, my home recipe for truth — a rote I call "Truth in Advertising" — does allow me to sift through the press-induced crap, but using it on newspapers leaves a bitter taste in my mouth (literally, since part of the ritual requires me to sip a drink flavored with ink). So, perhaps what's here is a bit more true than what you might read elsewhere.

## Another Canary

In 1962, a low-level punk named Joseph Valachi, who had worked under Maranzano's organization, and then Luciano's and finally Genovese's, found himself doing 15 to 20 for drug trafficking. Worse, there were rumors circulating that he was an informer, and his cellmate happened to be Vito Genovese himself. Genovese marked



trabhold

Valachi for death. After surviving three attempts on his life, Valachi mistook a prisoner for an assassin sent to kill him and beat the poor guy to death with a pipe.

Now facing a murder rap and a life sentence, Valachi sang for his life. The FBI surrounded him with guards and he gave testimony. But unlike Kid Reles, who gave testimony in minute and correct detail, Valachi told stories that often contradicted each other. Plus, he wasn't very bright — he refused to believe that non-Italians held any real power in the Mafia, even after Meyer Lansky had been a Mob leader for decades. He referred to Genovese as the "boss of bosses," but I've already discussed how that bid for power turned out.

Valachi's testimony might have made for good television and press, but it wasn't very accurate. It did, however, give the Mafia one of its most commonly used monikers: *La Cosa Nostra*, or "our thing." *Mafiosi* occasionally used the phrase in casual conversation, and it was never really used to denote the organization as a whole. Valachi, however, did use it that way. This, in turn, gave J.

Edgar Hoover, the head of the FBI (who for 30 years had insisted that there was no Mafia), a chance to redeem himself. There was no Mafia, he said, because it was called *La Cosa Nostra* and the FBI had been investigating and infiltrating them for a number of years now. Sure, Edgar. Nice dress. Infiltration of the Mob was, in fact, only a few years away, but we'll get there.

The FBI started going after the Mafia, but not with any real energy. The only reasons Hoover made an attempt at all were because he'd been embarrassed by the whole debacle — the old G Man hated bad press — and because Attorney General Robert Kennedy kept hounding him to do it. Hoover based many of his initiatives on Valachi's testimony, however, which meant the Lansky and his ilk were safe (for the time being). However, Kennedy wasn't quite so shortsighted, and came up with some interesting tactics. One was a statute stating that if a defendant testified to gain immunity, he couldn't cite the Fifth Amendment to avoid self-incrimination (which only makes sense).



Whatever the veracity of Valachi's testimony, it helped the law. By 1966, more of New York's mobsters had been jailed than in the previous 30 years.

## Strange Days

Blame it on the Red Scare, the rapid advance of technology, or just the heat, but some odd things have happened in recent decades. Some of those have involved organized crime.

## Kennedys

The Kennedy family has had problems with the Mafia for decades, right back to Boston, when the Giovanni family backed Francis Milliner against Timothy Kennedy (reportedly, the Milliners continue this vendetta to this day, to the point that they bought the Kennedy mansion out from under them and then leased the damned thing back to them). Probably the one that gave them the most trouble was Bobby Kennedy, though.

Robert Kennedy, as I mentioned, was U.S. Attorney General from 1961 to 1967, but had been after the Mob for longer than that. Throughout the Teamsters Union issues, when Jimmy Hoffa was hiring Mafia thugs right and left, Kennedy was there trying to get it sorted out. When he became attorney general, he took a cattle prod to Hoover to get him moving (not that it helped much). Past officials liked to make a show of going after the Mob but were often bought or gave up on the fight when the public's interest shifted. Robert Kennedy didn't, and in 1968 (after he'd resigned as attorney general) he got shot for it in the kitchen of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles.

Supposedly, a Palestinian named Sirhan Sirhan shot Kennedy, but I don't buy it. You know I'm not a conspiracy theorist, but there's a lot of evidence suggesting that Sirhan could not possibly have inflicted the wounds on Kennedy that he did, giving the way they were facing and so forth. Also, there's the "Polka Dot Dress" theory: Reportedly, a woman outside the hotel was exclaiming, "We shot him!" after the assassination.

I really have no information on the truth of his assassination, but I do know that Sirhan, as of 1997, was professing innocence (at first he said he did it, then he didn't remember). He was sentenced to die, but he, like Charles Manson, was saved by the

decision that the death penalty was unconstitutional (thank God they came to their senses on that one). So, why has his story changed? Lies from the beginning, or subtle mind control that's now wearing off? Who knows?

The other Kennedy, JFK, had his own Mafia issues, but the Mob actually supported his presidency. Seems strange at first, but the story goes that Joe Kennedy (John's father) had Mob ties himself, and asked for Sam Giancana's help in getting JFK elected. Why Giancana agreed, if indeed he did, is a mystery, but most likely, he thought John would owe him favors and therefore get Bobby to back the hell off the Mafia once John was in office. As we know, it didn't work out that way.

But either way, JFK beat Nixon by a ridiculously slim margin in the 1961 election. Reports have Giancana's boys stuffing ballot boxes and campaign funds from LCN channeled to Kennedy through (who else?) Frank Sinatra. Another interesting little twist concerns a woman named Judith Exner, a sometime "companion" of both Sinatra and Giancana. She acted as a courier of messages between Sam and John, and made phone calls to the president, completely unaware that she was being followed by the authorities (for her association with Giancana, as it turned out).

So why didn't any of this come to light at the time? Simple. The President was having an affair with a woman who had Mafia ties. The attorney general was the only one pushing for the FBI to crack down on the Mafia. The attorney general was... the president's brother.

Thicker than water, indeed.

## Operation: Mongoose

Every time the federal government gets cozy with the Mafia it ends up getting burned. But it still happens sometimes; the government assumes that because *mafiosi* tend to be patriotic Americans, their motives for that patriotism are purely nationalistic. That's not true; most Mafia motives are selfish. The plots to assassinate Fidel Castro during the 1960s were no exception.

Castro had driven Meyer Lansky out of Cuba, which meant that a large chunk of gambling dollars was no longer his. Lansky was also anti-Communist; criminals are, of necessity, capitalists, and usually conservative. The more free stuff, be it medical

supplies, food, or whatever liberals want to give away, the less money ultimately ends up changing hands, and that's bad for business. Organized crime is very dog-eat-dog capitalist, to the point that in Italy, the crime families will support fascist governments over communist (you can make friends with fascists and help them with their takeovers, but real communists just want to give everything away). Anyway, when talk of taking Castro down began to circulate, he offered support. Howard Hughes, another paranoid anti-Communist, put out a search for Mafia soldiers willing to help kill Castro. His people came up with Sam Giancana, the Chicago boss, and Johnny Roselli, one of his soldiers. Somewhere along the way, Florida boss Santo Trafficante, Jr. signed on as well.

The Mafia actually scammed the CIA for years on this matter. The Agency suggested machine-gunning Castro. Roselli pointed out that while that would be fine in Chicago, the getaway car might have trouble getting off the island. The CIA came up with poisons, explosives, bugs, and even a virus that would cause Castro's beard to fall off (thus destroying his image). None of these methods was ever even attempted. Trafficante and company just ignored them, fed the CIA stories about their friends in "rebel forces" in Cuba, and squeezed the Agency for funds.

Giancana took it beyond money and asked the CIA to do him a favor. That "favor" turned out to be bugging a hotel room so that Giancana could ascertain whether or not Phyllis McGuire was having an affair with comedian Dan Rowan (Giancana considered McGuire his property). Unfortunately, Las Vegas deputies arrested the men doing the bugging (thinking they were burglars) and the whole incident had to be covered up.

Giancana died in 1975, shot from behind by an unknown assailant while cooking sausages in his home. Underworld lore holds that the CIA killed him and made it look like a mob hit to keep him from talking — that indeed, many assumed Mafia hits over the next two decades were actually government-initiated. Of course, more forces than the government have interests in keeping the Mob down. After Giancana was shot, the police found his dog curled up under a table, shaking like a leaf. It didn't growl or even react to anyone around it, and died later that day, apparently of shock. Makes you wonder who had it in for Giancana, doesn't it?

## The Italian-American Image Problem

Between Kefauver's commission and Mario Puzo's book *The Godfather* (and the films based on it), the Italian-American community wasn't looking too respectable. Often, folks assumed that any Italian businessman had to be associated with the Mob (or La Cosa Nostra, pardon me). Not surprisingly, the Italian-American community was annoyed by these assumptions and, like many ethnic groups of the time, spoke out against persecution and discrimination. What's funny is that it was the mobsters who organized much of the demonstrations. Joe Colombo was the most outspoken.

He chose an interesting target for his vitriol: the FBI. Since the LCN revelation, the Feds had been dispersing a great deal of gangster-related information, which wasn't doing the Italian-American people any good. So Colombo formed the Italian-American Civil Rights League. His people and area Italian merchants (sometimes under pressure from Colombo — ironic, no?) picketed FBI offices with signs and chants. He also insisted that everyone working for him hold down a real job. In a society that holds contempt for the average 9-to-5 working man, you can imagine how well that went over.

Colombo was calling too much attention to himself and to the Mafia, if indirectly. Things came to a head when he held a massive rally in New York's Columbus Circle with 50,000 in attendance. Colombo emerged a hero, for the moment. His movement had the effect he wanted: The FBI, the television networks, even Hollywood stopped equating "Italian-American" with "Mafia." (I'm reminded of the classic defense against libel: If one's statements are true, it's not really libel. It's the same here, really — folks accusing Colombo's organization of being Mafia-backed were absolutely right, but that didn't seem to matter.)

The League intended to have another rally in June of 1971, but the underworld was hardly supportive. Joe Gallo, recently out of prison, was threatening shopkeepers to stay open during the rally, sometimes during the same day that Colombo's men threatened them to close. Carlo Gambino, too, withdrew his men from the League. Colombo didn't seem to notice the problems, and showed up at the rally, just as he had the year before, smiling at the crowd. He was still smiling when Jerome Johnson,



wearing reporter credentials, stepped up to him and shot him in the head three times. Colombo's bodyguards immediately shot the young man.

Colombo wasn't killed outright, but lingered in a coma for seven years before finally dying. But the question remained: Why had Johnson, a black man, shot a Mafia boss? The stories vary, but one makes sense. Joe Gallo, you'll remember, had connections in the black crime community and could easily have called in the hit. Gallo, at the time, was demanding recriminations from back during the Profaci-Gallo War, and so had the motive. He also would have known that while none of his Italian men could get close to Colombo, a black reporter certainly could.

There's another story in circulation that may or may not be true, but it's interesting. The tale goes that Gambino went to Colombo and ordered him to stop fooling around, that he was generating too much heat by antagonizing the FBI. Colombo responded by spitting in Gambino's face.

So, did Gallo whack Colombo of his own accord, or did Gambino take out the contract? No way to know. The authorities, while not at all sorry to see Colombo go, had trouble determining who was head of the family. In fact, the Colombo family leadership would remain in nearly constant flux from the 70s on.

## RICO

1970 saw the passage of the RICO Act — the Racketeer-Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act. It allowed courts to sentence bosses to long prison stretches if they could prove a pattern of incriminating activity throughout a business or string of businesses.

You can probably see the problems already; RICO was vague, slightly unconstitutional (as it legalized guilt by association in some ways) and in the 70s, juries weren't convicting people with it. About the most success it had was in 1972 Boston, when several members of the Giovanni organization (who are still around, they're just better at hiding than any of the major families) went up on RICO charges. I don't have the results handy, but I do remember reading that none of those tried did any time. I don't recall if that was because they weren't convicted or if their boss rubbed them out after the trial.

But apart from that trial, RICO didn't get much use until the 1980s, when it would be used to prosecute not only mobsters, but striking workers and picketers. Obviously, the law still needs further definition.

## Donnie Brasco

His real name was Joe Pistone, and he was an FBI agent with a unique assignment. He was sent undercover in the Mafia, and remained so from 1976 until 1982. His cover wasn't really blown, either: He was given a contract on a man's life, and the Fibbies decided it wasn't in the spirit of upholding the law to let an agent commit premeditated murder. So, they withdrew him from duty and he spent the next five years acting as a witness in trials, putting nearly 100 mobsters away.

Of course, there's a contract out on the man's life. Open-ended, \$500,000 and climbing yearly. It's never been fulfilled — no one's ever gotten close. Why not? Well, for a number of reasons. For one thing, the man's not stupid and takes precautions to keep himself safe. For another, he has friends he doesn't even know about. And those friends make sure that, one way or another, Pistone is one lucky guy.

## Changing Times

Everything moves in cycles, right? As the old *mafiosi* died or were imprisoned, others stepped up to take their places. As older rackets fell to the wayside, the Mob found new ones.

## New Business

"Sex sells," goes the adage, and the Mafia knows it. Pornography became a best friend to the mob, as easily reproduced movies, photos and books began appearing with greater frequency. For a long time, it was a niche market; everybody drank, but very few folks were interested in porno (or, at least, would spend money on it).

And then the 1960s rolled around and the Supreme Court made some rulings that left law enforcement confused as to what pornography really was. It was illegal, theoretically, but hard to prosecute successfully (and cops had better things to do, anyway). The Mob recognized a gold mine, and sleazy bookstores and porn

theaters began popping up. The other advantage to this was that since much of the business was cash-based and therefore anonymous, the Mob could report inflated numbers of books and movies sold and thereby launder money from other operations.

Every now and then, someone tries to stamp out pornography. Giuliani tried it recently in New York. You know what? It never works. People have been interested in watching, reading about, and seeing pictures of sex for centuries if not longer, and it really doesn't hurt anyone (until you start getting into rape and snuff flicks and kiddie porn, of course). Whenever the heat turns up, the sex industry goes further underground for a while, and then just edges its way into public view, a foot at a time, until they're doing business on every street corner as usual. The Mob knows the score, the pornographers know the score, everybody seems to know the score except the repressed individuals who want to wipe out the "smut."

Another profitable venture cropped up in 1964 and continues to this day, and once again, the Mob has the federal government to thank. When the shocking revelation that cigarettes are *bad* for you came to light, the Feds thought it would be a good idea to tax them, since maybe then people would decide it was too expensive and quit (apparently, they hadn't spend any significant time around a smoker, or they'd know better). Just as with alcohol, the Mob realized that they could get cigarettes cheap in one place (North Carolina, as it happened) and sell them off in New York. Bootleg cigarettes aren't as profitable as, say, bootleg liquor was way back when, but it's certainly a good side business.

And then there's the narcotics business. Underworld mythology has it that the bosses had a code against narcotics. What that evolved into was a kind of "don't ask, don't tell" thing. Don't tell the boss where the money is coming from, and he won't ask. And even that isn't true, because all of the major families have their fingers in the drug trade somewhere along the line. They just won't admit it.

### The Old Guard

The 70s and 80s saw the deaths of many of the familiar faces on the Mob scene. Here's a short list, just so you know where they went:

- Luciano died of a heart attack in 1962. He was allowed to come "home" for burial, and was interred in New York City.

- Frank Costello died in 1973. His wife refused to allow *mafiosi* at the funeral.

- Meyer Lansky finally ran afoul of the law in 1970 and tried to flee to Israel under the Law of Return (anyone with a Jewish mother could claim citizenship). It didn't work; the Israeli government rejected him and he was tried for income tax evasion in 1974. Unlike Capone, he fought it and won, and the law gave up on him. He died of natural causes in 1983.

- "Crazy Joe" Gallo was gunned down in 1972 while dining with his family and friends. His sister vowed over his coffin that the streets would "run red," and they did for several weeks thereafter.

- Joe Adonis died of natural causes in Italy in 1972. He and Luciano didn't remain close during their time in exile, though Adonis did attend Luciano's requiem mass in Naples.

### The New Mafia

Luciano and crew took over the Mafia by being young and spry. The newest crop would do the same. A 60-year-old man facing a 30-year prison sentence is likely to turn, because if he doesn't, he'll spend the rest of his life in prison. But a younger man can do that time easily, and probably only serve a few years and get out early for good behavior.

Thus, as the old guard died away, there were newer men ready to take the reins of power, usually in the time-honored way of killing one's boss. This was how John Gotti, the "Teflon Don" or "Dapper Don," took power in the Gambino family.

Carlo Gambino himself died in 1976 of a heart attack, but before death, he named Paul Castellano as his successor. By rights, the better choice would have been Aniello Dellacroce, his underboss, but Castellano was Gambino's brother-in-law, and family won out over competence (Don't laugh, it happens all the time. Even in the presidency.). At any rate, Dellacroce took control of many of the family's operations in Manhattan, which kept things cool for a while.



Dellacroce also kept the Young Turks in line. John Gotti, one of these Turks, was a tough and ruthless man who patterned himself after Albert Anastasia, and might have moved to take over the family sooner if it hadn't been for Dellacroce. Meanwhile, Castellano was grooming a man named Thomas Bilotti to take over for him. He even promoted Bilotti to the rank of *capo*, making him Gotti's equal. Gotti knew that when Dellacroce died, he was not long for the world unless he acted.

Aniello "Mr. Neil" Dellacroce died of cancer in early December of 1985. Exactly two weeks later, as Bilotti and Castellano stepped from a limo to enter a steak house, they were shot to death. John Gotti was later heard to wonder in FBI-bugged buildings who had killed them. Who, indeed?

At any rate, Gotti made the Gambino family more powerful than ever, beating several raps in the 80s for racketeering and other charges. And then, in 1992, his underboss, Sammy "The Bull" Gravano sang. Gotti was convicted on RICO charges and sentenced to life without parole. Gotti's son, John Gotti, Jr., took over the family for his father, but lacked the senior Gotti's savvy and general intelligence (another example of family ties mucking up a perfectly good operation).

Meanwhile, the Genovese family had some interesting turns, too. Vito Genovese himself died in prison in 1969, and leadership of the family was uncertain for a time. Finally, Carlo Gambino installed Frank "Funzi" Tieri as head of Genovese operations, and he did quite well, bringing back Genovese power and continuing to support Carlo Gambino. Indeed, when Gambino died in 1976, Tieri was probably the most powerful don in the country. Indeed, if John Gotti was Albert Anastasia incarnate, some felt Frank Tieri to be Lucky Luciano reborn. Ruthless when he had to be, Tieri was a moneymaker, and would advocate easy payment schedules for debtors who could pay back some, if not all, of their owed monies.

Tieri died of natural causes in 1981, having beaten nine arrests in previous years. The last one, which resulted in a 10-year sentence, was handed down two months before his death. The score, as the underworld likes to say, was 10-zip, Funzi.

For the next six years, the leadership of the family remained in uncertain hands. In 1987, however, Vicente "The Chin" Gigante, whom you'll remember as the guy who failed to kill Frank Costello some years before, assumed control of the Genovese family.

Gigante may have acted dumb, but he was a shrewd leader. Under his command, the Genovese family eclipsed even the Gambinos under John Gotti. Gigante took what he thought were precautions to avoid prosecutions, mostly stumbling around his neighborhood in a bathrobe muttering to himself, figuring he couldn't be prosecuted if found incompetent. He was right; had he been found incompetent, he would not have been prosecuted. His ploy didn't work, however, and in 1997, at the age of 71, he was sentenced to 12 years in prison. Dominick "Quiet Dom" Cirillo took control of the Genovese family.

## Crime Marches On

Just lately, the ploy has been to claim that the Mafia is dead. It isn't. A lot of powerful people pull strings in LCN. Wars break out, police and politicians are bought — it all just isn't as obvious as it was 30 years ago. Anyway, you'll notice I skipped Cardona's unfortunate involvement with you and that botched Good Death in 1980, but I figure you know all about that.

Look, you've convinced me. The guy is dangerous, probably taking orders from someone even more dangerous, he's got to go. It won't be hard. Consider it done.

— Jerry

## Treachery

Got your last letter. It's done; Cardona Jr. sleeps with the fishes, if you'll pardon my melodrama. Wasn't real enthused with your questions; the Mafia's supernatural connections aren't really my strong point. The Mafia also has friends in weird places — I've mentioned vampires occasionally, and even we take a hand, but I'm not going to tell you about that.

Why? Because you're a fraud. You're not Mark. Remember that "Truth in Advertising" thing I mentioned? It works on letters, too. Now, I don't know what you've done with my friend, but I do know that you manipulated me into killing someone.

That he needed to die anyway is not the point. I am going to come and find you, and it will take some time, but believe me when I tell you it all comes back around.

Sleep well.

— Jerry Giamatta







# Chapter Two: Made Men in a World of Darkness

*Luca Brasi held a gun to his head, and my father assured him that either his brains — or his signature — would be on the contract. That's a true story. That's my family, Kay.*

— Michael Corleone, *The Godfather*

The following is a transcript of a recorded conversation between Don Antonio Cardona of Malta and his childe, Nicholas Romero. For reasons undetermined, only the voice of Romero appears on the tape; operators deny any mechanical failure and are at a loss to explain the discrepancy.

*Felice notte*, Don Cardona. May I say again how delighted we are that you are back with us after your long sleep? Your presence makes the night brighter for all of us.

Did you enjoy your reception? The effort involved in assembling the Orders of St. John after so many years was prodigious, but I felt that you would—

My apologies, Don Cardona. You're absolutely right. The point, of course. Forgive me for wasting your time.

As per your standing orders, my sire, we have been keeping a very close watch over your mortal family, giving them a bit of a boost here or a leg up there.

You'll be delighted to know that they have, during your absence, obtained a position of great significance as the core of the Maltese Family of...

*Merda*. You do not know what has become of the Mafia during your time away, do you? It is—somewhat difficult to explain, Don Cardona, and may take much time. Still, if you wish it...

You do? All right, then. Here where we stand with this thing of ours.

## The Families of La Cosa Nostra

would, I think, be the place to begin. It's not an easy system to describe concisely. The Maltese, for example, are but one of many great Families in a society that stands away from the light. It is not, if you'll pardon my descent into metaphor, entirely unlike the Kindred themselves.



Consisting, as it does, of multiple Families, the Mafia is not a specific unit, and never acts as a unified body. Instead, each Family is essentially an independent entity in a larger society — again, somewhat like our own clans among the Camarilla.

Connections exist, levels of authority if you will. Smaller Families answer to larger ones. The Gambino Family, for instance, holds a vast territory, but that is not to say that other Families do not operate within. Rather, they receive permission from the Gambino to set up shop in exchange for a percentage of their profits.

Sometimes, of course, Families do not ask permission. Sometimes they poach on the territory of another Family, and then, if negotiations break down, we have war. More on that in a moment, Don Cardona, if you'll indulge me.

Even the largest Families are not completely autonomous. In America, La Cosa Nostra has a governing council, less a royal court than a board of directors. It has many names, but the Commission is the most popular and will do as well as any. The Commission consists of the dons of the major Families. The Maltese, you will be pleased to note, are indeed

powerful enough to have our own seat on the Commission, though we cannot truly be said to be among the greatest of the Families. Not yet, anyway.

In Sicily? No, Don Cardona, nothing quite like the Commission exists in the Old Country. Even there, though, the heads of the Families usually try to work things out at the table before taking to the streets. But the truth is, much as I may hate to admit it, the current power is with the American Mafia. Oh, the Sicilian Mafia is still larger — proportionally, not numerically — and even more vicious. But Sicily is simply — and I pray you forgive me for saying so — less important in the global arena.

But where was I? Ah, yes. The power of the Commission is limited by its ability to reach a consensus. Only when a majority of the Families agree can the Commission move forward; it has precious little power if it cannot achieve some sort of majority decision. In the past, the American Mafia had its own enforcers, soldiers who did not answer to any specific Family. You may hear the name Murder, Incorporated, from time to time. Still, the vast majority of the firepower resides with Family soldiers.

### Rank and Title

are very much as they were before your long sleep. Not everything has changed in the past seven decades! Still, there has been enough shifting of emphasis that I would suggest you allow me to recap. If I may?

First off, simply so you will be familiar with the term should you come across it — popular culture often refers to *mafiosi* as wiseguys. Undignified, perhaps, but there it is.

But as to specifics. The honorific “don,” is applied to the head of the Family, of course. The don of a family is sometimes called “boss,” but since a *capo* can also be called “boss,” don is usually more precise.

It has been quite some time since anyone could accurately claim the title of *capo di tutti capi*. It is difficult, in these nights of the Commission, for any one man to become the “boss of bosses.” Certainly some men have tried. The title is sometimes used to honor the most powerful standing member of the Commission, and others use it to refer to themselves when they hold power over all the Families in a specific territory. But in its most literal, traditional meaning, I doubt we'll ever see a true *capo di tutti capi* again.

The *capo bastone* is a don's second, of course, and a *caporegime* is a lieutenant who is normally in command of a single group of soldiers or a “crew.” Incidentally, another less frequently used title for the *caporegime* is *capodecima*. I understand that this is the preferred term among the Giovanni; for some reason, they seem to find it amusing. Personally, I don't get the joke. *Caporegime* is often shorted simply to *capo*, or boss.

A *sgarrista* is one of our soldiers; but more than that, he's part of the Family... a made man. A *piciotto* is a lower-ranking soldier, also called a “button man” or an associate. They are not truly part of the Family.

Finally, we have the *consigliere*, who is an advisor to a don; the *contabile*, a financial advisor or bookkeeper; and the *giovane d'honore*, who is a non-Italian servant or soldier of the Family.

What all this boils down to, Don Cardona, is that the Families are limited by the dictates of the Commission only so far as they allow themselves to be. The Commission may mandate peace, for instance, but it takes only one dissatisfied don to shatter that peace.

So we have these Families, which are entities unto themselves, and the dons, who are the heads of those Families and somewhat analogous to the Sicilian barons and landowners you may remember. But there's a lot more you must know about the Mafia's family structure.

For a number of reasons — not the least of which is your own particular familial feeding requirement — it is important that you understand the use of the term "Family." The core of any Mafia Family is indeed a network of blood relations. But this is only at the heart, Don Cardona. Not every member of the Genovese Family, for instance, bears the last name Genovese, or even one traceable blood link to them. Admittance into a Mafia Family can be earned, and requires no family ties at all in the traditional sense. Those who have been officially adopted into the Family in such a manner are called

## Made Men

Becoming a made man is the aspiration of many young servants and soldiers of the Families. It requires many years of loyal service, the ability to keep one's mouth shut and put the needs of the Family first, and, in most cases, pure Italian ancestry. Most of our operatives never reach this esteemed level of acceptance; for those who do, it is the highest honor they might have hoped for.

La Cosa Nostra has a long-standing cultural tradition behind it, of course. Not everyone, even an individual willing to operate above the law, has the proper mindset to become one of us. Most don't even know how to try. A sense of persecution exists in many of Italian blood, I think, Don Cardona. It stems from the lack of any just or effective government in Italy for so many years. Although some of the younger generation wish to join us just for the power, most of us still have a sense of belonging to a true society, not just a profitable organization. It is a commitment to a way of life, not just a job. We take care of our own, as we always have, and that is the best reason for becoming part of the Family.

Guys who are about to be made must undergo a very specific

## Initiation

We have, of course, a ceremony for this. It would be nice if these could be affairs of great pomp and circumstance, but I'm sure you see why we must keep them secret. These ceremonies are normally held in a side room or the basement of another Family member. In attendance are many of the *capos bastone* and *caporegimes* of the Family, and often the don himself. The ceremony involves oaths of loyalty to the Family, including willingness to turn against even one's own blood at the order of the don and for the good of the Family itself. You enter on your feet, the aspirant is told, and you leave only in a coffin. The blood of the aspirant is taken from his trigger finger, and spread upon the picture of a saint, which is then burned — as will the aspirant's soul, he is told, should he ever betray the Family to which he is now pledged.

It is all very ritualistic, of course, Don Cardona, but surely we of the Kindred know better than anyone how powerful ritual can be.

## Race and Sex?

An intriguing question, Don Cardona. Yes, I did mention that made men are almost always Italian. Were you to ask a random *mafioso*, you would no doubt be told that *all* made men are Italian. The real world, of course, is not so cut-and-dried.

The Mafia, as a whole, is a racist organization — except when it isn't. Many years back, our primary competitors were the Irish, not to mention the excess of Irish cops. The average *sgarrista* would hardly give a mick the time of day, except, of course, when they proved useful. The Irish gangs were fairly powerful in many neighborhoods, and some Families found it easier to work with them than war with them.

Jews were the same: hated, except when they were necessary. Many of them were more highly educated in the old days than we were, and we took advantage of that, even if it meant working with them. Some of them — Meyer Lansky and Bugsy Siegel, for instance — became enormous figures in our ranks. Surely no one could say they were not made in all ways that matter.

It's the same tonight. Most made men would prefer that the slants, kikes, niggers and spics just keep to their place as errand boys and expendable soldiers. Sure, now and again one of them might prove himself, might drag himself up by his bootstraps, but it doesn't happen often.



Something you might find interesting, Don Cardona, is that other Kindred among the Families seem to be of two minds on the subject. Does it matter if a man was Italian before the Embrace? He's dead now, and may even prefer to identify by clan rather than by nationality. Personally, I could hardly care less, but I've known Kindred — that Sewer Rat Sannini in Jersey comes to mind — who'd rather shove a stake up their own ass and twirl in the sunrise than admit a foreigner, living or undead, into the Family. *Bastardo!*

Women have it... well, you could say better or worse, depending on how you look at it. You're never going to find a woman who officially holds a position of authority in a Family. Women are either wives or girlfriends of good Family men. The Families even have a tradition that Saturday nights are for the wives and Fridays for the mistresses, so there can be no chance of them running into each other. It's not that they don't know about each other, but appearances must be maintained. Daughters and nieces are often married off to bring Families together, or to bring a useful young man into the Family. They are, in essence, trophies, tools and bargaining chips — not unlike in your own day, my sire.

Many *mafiosi* keep their wives and girlfriends ignorant of their activities, and these are relatively harmless. But some of these women, those who know what happens behind closed doors... *porcoddio!* I tell you, Don Cardona, I'd rather face a raging Lupine than the wife or the mother of a *sgarrista* who isn't getting what she feels is her due! Such a woman often speaks with her husband's voice, and no one wants to show disrespect to the wife of his *caporegime*. So they can get things done, even going so far as to put out contracts, with no official backing at all. And if things go wrong, well, their husband's — or son's, or father's — reputation is often enough to protect them from the repercussions.

Not always, of course, but often....

## Proper Behavior

is a very big deal to good Family men. The Mafia has developed an intricate code of conduct, as, I think, would any organization this violent. Some of the young Turks — that is, the younger generation — are less likely to follow the old ways. If anything finally brings down the Mafia, sire, it will be these punks, and no outside enemy. Mark my words.

But forgive me. Back to the subject at hand.

For all that they're supposed to be equal, made men still don't have it quite as good as actual blood relations of the don. Children, grandchildren, nephews, cousins — they'll get the best assignments, the greatest praise, the most authority. Most sensible wiseguys accept that as the way it is when they're inducted into the Family proper. Those who are less intelligent protest, or try to remove the competition, and end up at the bottom of a slow-moving river in very small chunks. The point, though, is that they are expected to abide by the codes of behavior as strictly as actual blood relations, if not more so, even if they feel they receive less return for doing so.

Family men are to be treated with respect. Whether blood relation or made man, it doesn't matter, and never more so than if they outrank you. Men have been killed for lesser offenses than failing to show their *capo* the proper deference.

Respect doesn't stop there, either. Disrespecting a man's wife, or his children, or God forbid his mother, are just as serious offenses.

It's even expected — though it doesn't always happen — that a good Family man will show his rivals proper respect. When meeting with the representatives of another Family, or even with someone from another organization, it shows good breeding to stay polite. That doesn't mean you can't cave in their skull with a bat when they turn around, but there's no reason to be rude about it.

It's usually wise to be polite to the cops as well, but that happens about as often as I go sunbathing.

Made men and Family are untouchable. It doesn't matter who you are. You could be a cop, some slob defending his daughter's honor, or even a loyal and favored *giovane d'honore*. Doesn't matter; you do *not* kill a Family man. I've ordered wives, even children slain in retaliation for such things. It won't do to set precedent.

The flip side of this is that a made man is under no such restrictions. He can beat, steal, rape, kill, whatever he wants, and the Family will still come down hard on anyone who tries to come after him.

Of course, if he gets too far out of hand, the Family may [clears throat] remove him themselves. Nobody in our position likes unnecessary attention, after all.

Procedures for dealing with other Family men do exist, should the need arise. By the strict rules of the Commission, you cannot whack — you are familiar with the euphemism “whack,” Don Cardona? Good. Well, you cannot whack a made man without first discussing the situation with the



bosses of the Families involved — including the target's don! This is meant to ensure that only the most serious offenses, those that even the man's own don cannot excuse, are punished.

This particular custom is honored as much in the breach as anything else. During war particularly, Family men, and indeed women and children, are slaughtered on a regular basis. Nor is it uncommon for made men to simply resolve their grievances with a slashed throat and a dumped body. This is dangerous, since the Family will hold a grudge, and may take revenge decades later should the perpetrator of such a deed be revealed. But in a life like this one, many wiseguys feel that one more risk is of no consequence.

Above and beyond even these, however, is one immutable law of Family life. It is the code of

### *Omerta*

You're almost certainly familiar with the term, Don Cardona. Literally translated, of course, it simply means manhood. Tonight, it refers to so much more.

*Omerta* is about a man solving his own problems. It means you do not go to the police, but rather obtain justice with your own hands — or, at most, with the help of the Family. It is where our love/hate relationship with vendetta comes from.

But above all, *omerta* is about keeping one's mouth well and firmly shut. It is the code of silence followed by all the Families, everywhere. Whatever else the dons may disagree on, whatever conflicts may arise, it is the one immutable law of our way of life or unlife.

Not unlike the Masquerade, is it?

No crime is greater than breaking *omerta*. It is treason, a betrayal of Family, of blood, and even of God and Christ. On the street, they say that someone betraying us like this is flipping. The United States government has an entire branch of law enforcement, the Witness Protection Program, designed to prevent informants and traitors from receiving their just punishments. Sometimes it even works, but short of a lifetime of hiding, no way exists for such a *figlio di puttana* to escape the consequences of his actions. No don will protect such a traitor, even if it's his own grandson.



## Vendetta

is almost as important to us as *omerta* itself. As often as monetary matters or territorial disputes, it is vendetta that drags Families into war after war, spilling gallons of precious blood into the gutters.

I am sure that you, sire, know vendetta all too well from your own breathing days. It is the same tonight. Blood must be avenged, justice must be served. An eye for an eye, as it were. I know of entire villages in Sicily that have been stripped of every male inhabitant between the ages of 12 and 60 by vendettas that ran unchecked. These days, the Commission usually steps in should a vendetta-born war drag on for too long, and the Commission usually has enough of the local Families behind them to force a settlement.

Still, wounds fester, and many new wars are the result of old vendettas that resurface after years or even decades of dormancy. Justice must often wait — this is why vendetta took the place of duels in our culture — but it must never be denied. It's practically a religion to us.

## Speaking of Religion...

It's kind of a funny thing, really, but the vast majority of the Mafia is still devoutly Catholic, even after —

I — no, Don Cardona, I meant no offense! I know that you're Catholic! P-perhaps I misspoke! Yes, Don Cardona. You're absolutely right; I should think about how I say things before I say them. M-my humblest apologies.

What I meant to say, of course, is that the prevalence of Catholicism might seem strange to an outsider who does not understand our ways. Religion is not as great a part of daily life for most of the kine now as it was in your time, but a preponderance of Family men still take Communion and confession. I know this is something you will be pleased to hear.

Faith, however, is not always easy to reconcile with our less socially acceptable enterprises. I know that many *mafiosi* feel that they are committing no sin, that everything they do is done in defense of the Family; surely God will not punish them for defending their own blood! Others, less convinced of God's understanding of their let us say, unique world view, simply take the precaution of confessing on a very frequent basis. That Nosferatu I mentioned earlier, Sannini? I understand that he takes confession no fewer than three times a night. Must have some truly weighty matters on his soul, no?

I am also quite certain, Don Cardona, that many of the "faithful" among our ranks are simply maintaining appearances, and care nothing for the teachings of God and Christ, but the Lord will judge them in his own ways, will he not?

All of this — the Families, our codes of behavior, all of it — brings me, finally, to

## War

The purpose of the Mafia, the cause behind everything we do, is the advancement of the welfare of the Family. Yes we commit crimes, yes we get rich, yes we kill, but it's all for the comfort and the safety of our own blood.

Unfortunately, what is good for one Family is not necessarily good for another, and then we have

## Bloodshed in the Mafia

American movies, set in the years of Prohibition, have us waging open warfare on the streets, Tommy guns blasting away at each other, careless of who might get caught in the crossfire. It was not then, and it is not now, a wholly accurate image, but it's pretty close, nonetheless.

You did not see the worst of it, even before your sleep, Don Cardona. You saw the feuds here, on Malta and in Sicily, but you never saw the bloodshed in the New World. Tonight, the Tommy guns have been replaced with Mac-10s and AK-47s, but the wars are the same.

It is an unfortunate thing when war comes. The Families can accomplish so much when we work together. In times of peace, a member of any Family is almost as close to a wiseguy — in theory — as to his own Family. They're to be treated with respect, we help each other out in a jam. It's almost like the Mafia, at those times, really is one big Family.

It never lasts, though. For some reason, despite the expense, despite the wasted lives, war seems to be easier for us than peace. It's our own fault, in a way. We've built a society within a society predicated on the notion that we take what we want, when we want it, so that our families may thrive. Is it any wonder that we prove unable to rein in those impulses even when our brothers and sisters hold the thing — property, money, whatever — we desire?

We do fight on the streets at times, slaughtering entire crowds with drive-by shootings or cheap explosives. This draws attention, though, and

attention is never good. It makes the other Families look our way. It makes the police and the government look our way. It's bad for business. By the time a war reaches this level of uncontrolled violence, it's only a matter of time until the Commission, the other local Families, or the Feds put a stop to it. With prejudice.

So how do we war against our enemies, when prolonged conflict is bad for everyone? Primarily, we have to be very precise in our

## Choice of Targets

A bit of artfully applied violence is, obviously, far more effective than trading barrages on the freeway, and it draws less notice. We've found over the years that two specific sorts of hits, when done properly, effectively cripple our enemy's ability to operate. We'll hit other targets as well, of course, but these are the most effective.

### Assassination

of high-ranking members of the rival Family is far more efficient than blasting away at their button men. Of course, hitting the don, or even many of his immediate family or his *capos bastone*, is never easy. Such men are well protected at all times. Furthermore, it is this tactic more than any other that invariably leads to vendetta, and further ill will—if not bloodshed—down the road.

Still, if we can remove those who are most skilled from our rivals' top echelons, we can destroy their ability to counterattack. Your best bet is probably the second tier, so to speak. Advisors, lieutenants, assistants. I heard about a war back in Sicily in which one of the Families managed to take out damn near every advisor the don had. They never touched him or his immediate family, but the guy didn't have any idea where to go from there. Turned out that it was his *giovane d'honore* who had all the tactical know-how.

Fail in an attempt like this, though, and we've turned what was simply business into a personal affair, and those are inevitably far more bloody.

Something that is often easier to accomplish than assaulting the opposing Don and his immediate underlings is

### Destruction of the Enemy's Businesses

War is bad for business even under the best circumstances. With the outpouring of capital required to hire muscle and purchase additional armaments and ammunition, it's an expensive prospect. Now imagine trying to do that, Don Cardona, without money flowing in, to match that flowing out.

The Mafia has an enormous number of profitable activities, but the vast majority of them are unfortunately static. That is, they require fixed locations in which to operate, and it isn't too difficult for a rival Family to learn which are ours and vice versa. Much of the "random violence" that occurs in a Mafia war isn't random at all. Every business we cripple deprives our rival Family of income, and reduces its ability to battle. Many such wars are won in exactly that fashion. One of the Families simply couldn't afford to keep fighting any more.

Of course, the other Families are trying to do this same thing to us while we're trying to do it to them. Sometimes, the best way to win is not even selecting our targets, but in

## Getting Someone Else to Fight for Us

It doesn't matter how big the Family, none of the bosses wants to waste manpower, or to lose their soldiers and their own relatives. Fortunately, the Mafia has other resources at its disposal, servants and catspaws who can take the risks for us.

### Freelancers

can be quite useful, in the right situations. If we need to hit someone, but we absolutely cannot afford to have it traced back to the Family, outside talent is the way to go.

Of course, hiring a murderer comes with its own risks. We have to be certain that this is someone professional enough both to get the job done and to keep his lip buttoned if he gets pinched. That's actually the single biggest reason the dons don't use freelancers often. They're not as reliable as Family. Some wiseguys have the habit of whacking their hired guns after a freelance job, just to make sure they don't talk, but if word of that kind of thing gets around, nobody else is going to work for you.

You also have to be sure that this guy hasn't already been paid off by the other side as a means of getting close to you. While it's not too common, I've known of a few Family men who went to a meeting with a freelance hitman to negotiate a contract only to find out too late that they were the contract.

Finally, there's the money. Hitmen don't come cheap—or, more accurately, those who come cheap aren't reliable. And if you're going to be spreading the money around anyway, there's no point in hiring a hitman when you can just bribe the



### Police and Government Officials

Some cops are dirty enough that we can actually pay *them* to carry out hits. Believe me, there's nothing better than getting a pig to whack someone for you. Odds are the guy you're hitting is a hoodlum himself, so it won't be too hard to make it look like a righteous shooting. Cops can get close to people your normal muscle couldn't get near, too. Hell, they can pull the mark over for speeding, if nothing else.

But even when we can't find a cop willing to go quite that far, there are all kinds of ways we can use them — and the city — to handle our business.

As I said, we usually know where a rival's establishments are. Maybe we know that he stores some of his hot merchandise in the back of that clothing shop downtown, or maybe we've learned that the dealers working out of the crack-house on 43rd are on his payroll. A police raid can bust up that sort of operation just as well as any hit, and there's a lot less risk to us. All it takes is an anonymous tip and maybe a healthy bribe or two to make sure it's taken care of properly.

This is a very fine line to walk, though, Don Cardona. You know how the Families feel about being ratted out to the cops, and siccing the pigs on an enemy's business comes damn close to violating the code of *omerta*. It's an acceptable tactic if you've got a pretty good handle on the cops involved, and if it can be done without anyone talking.

But who needs the cops? Your rival runs a restaurant in Little Italy? Bribe the health inspector to shut it down. Have your people in city services arrange blackouts and telephone disconnects that impact your enemy's operations. You can even have building and construction permits revoked, if you know the right ears to whisper in.

That's something a lot of dead wiseguys failed to consider: Sometimes a telephone and the voice of authority is far more dangerous than a badge and a gun. It's what I've been saying about respectability; the Families have to at least keep up the appearance of it or else we can't operate. There was, just for example, one particularly irritating wiseguy a few years back — I don't even remember his name now — who was trying to muscle in on Cardona territory in upstate New York. We had other issues pressing at the time, and couldn't really afford the manpower to go to war with his crew. The cops couldn't get him, because they didn't have enough evidence for a warrant.

The thing is, Don Cardona, state and county judges need extra cash, same as everyone else. If you've got a judge on your payroll, you don't need evidence. You get him to issue the warrant, the cops are more than happy to handle the rest. The guy who was challenging us could tell you personally how effective a tactic it can be, except that he was sadly knifed to death in his cell about a year after his arrest. A shame, really.

Finally, if you get really desperate for an expendable pawn, you can always use one of the

### Empty Suits

An empty suit, Don Cardona, is a gangster-wannabe. These are the jackasses who think that they can hang with the wiseguys because they happen to know some of our slang, or because their neighbor's cousin has a roommate who once blew a made guy for a 10-spot. Normally they just hang around our street-level operators, so as long as they don't actually endanger a business or get too damn annoying, we just ignore them. Every now and again, one of them learns a little too much, draws too much attention or just annoys a *sgarrista* on a bad day and winds up in a shallow hole.

But once in a while, if you approach them with an opportunity to "prove themselves," you can get them to do some of your shit work. Maybe they can watch your rival's business for a while, or carry in a package that contains an unhealthy amount of high explosive. It doesn't even have to be something illegal. I actually had one guy washing my car and mowing my lawn for almost a year, just because I — or rather my ghouls — kept promising that he had bigger stuff coming if he proved he could follow orders.

You've got to work through channels with these guys, since you can't count on them to keep quiet if, or more likely when, they're caught by either the cops or another Family. But hey, the job's done, so who cares what happens to these *busones* afterwards?

### The End of the War

usually comes under one of three circumstances: One of the Families has drained its resources dry and just can't fight anymore, or enough of the people at the top of one of the Families have been whacked that the survivors need to get out while they still can, or else the Commission or the other local Families decide they've had enough and put their foot down.

Sometimes entire Families are destroyed by these wars, but once they're over, things usually get back to normal, even if it takes a while. Things aren't quite so easy when we're battling

## Other Criminal Organizations

The unfortunate truth, Don Cardona, is that the Mafia is not the only organization of its sort in the world tonight. While we have been able to reach some accommodation with several of them, there can be no truce with others. Our influence doesn't overlap much, but where it does, I foresee only war until one side or the other concedes defeat.

Neither side has conceded as of yet, sire.

The worst are the damn slants. The Chinese Triads and the Japanese Yakuza have thrived in the United States recently. So long as they stayed in the Orient, we had no beef with them, but now they're messing with our operations all up and down the West Coast and in Europe. They brought some of those damn Cathayans with them, too, which makes things even harder for Family Kindred, but that's not the point.

The point is that these guys are ruthless. Yes, *we're* ruthless — we'll kill you, your family, your friends and your dog if you mess with us. But the Triads'll blow away everyone walking down your street just to get to you, and they'll do it because you looked at them wrong. If we kill a clean cop or some poor bystander who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, it's because we didn't have a choice; again, it draws too much attention. Slants don't care, though. They got their people more intimidated than we ever did, and they don't give a damn who knows what they're doing because nobody's going to talk.

So the problem with warring with these guys is that we've got to be just as stupid as they are. We've got to hit them as hard, and as frequently, as they hit us — and that draws the heat. Between the Yaks and the Triads on the one side, and the cops and the Feds we attract by fighting them on the other, the entire war is kind of a no-win situation, but there's no way we're backing down from these clowns. No; fuck 'em all in the ear.

The slants don't even respect their own neighborhoods, Don Cardona. They fuck their own people worse than anybody. They're heavy into people-smuggling. They'll bring their own over here then force them into slavery. *Bastardos*. Beyond that, they're mostly wrapped up in extortion and smuggling

narcotics, electronics and counterfeit merchandise, so even when we come out second-best in a war, we can usually keep our other operations in the area — gambling and whatnot — running smoothly. Still, one of us is going to have to go eventually.

Once you're fully up and around, sire, you also may want to consider investigating the Cathayan connection. They started showing up in numbers along the American East Coast not long back. Anybody who tries to tell you that they aren't as heavily involved in the Triads and the Yak as we are in the Mafia is a damn liar. We actually had one captured for a while, but — well, let's just say he escaped before we could make him talk. I can give you the full details later if you want, but it's not pretty.

Anyway...

The South American cartels are almost as bad. Things were fine when all they were trying to do was smuggle drugs into the U.S. and make some green off it. Hell, we were one of their main distributors for a while. Then they got greedy, decided they had to do everything themselves, acquire their own territories, and it all hit the fan.

The cartels are kind of like us in that they're a bunch of independent groups, not one organization. We can still work with some of them, mostly the smaller ones who know they can't make it on their own. They provide the product, we sell it. Simple, convenient; everyone's happy.

But the big boys don't play nice. The Medellin and Cali cartels used to be some of the biggest. They've got other up-and-comers taking their place now. They want their own territories in the U.S. — and Europe too, though you don't hear about that as often — and they don't care who was there first.

They're like the Triads when it comes to war, too. You remember me telling you that the young Turks in our own ranks don't respect the old ways? The cartels, the Triads, most of these newer organizations, really; they're *all* Turks, even the old ones. It's ugly, Don Cardona, very ugly.

We don't have so much of a problem with the others. The Irish still have some gangs in the States and in Europe, but they're not what they were. Hardly even competition anymore, really. We don't tangle much with the Jamaican drug posses, and we've come to some interesting arrangements with the Eastern European factions.

## What Sort of Arrangements?

Well, I wasn't going to get into that yet, Don Cardona, but if you really want to know...



## Violence and the Mafia

go hand-in-hand in the minds of most outsiders. You know as well as I that violence has to be a last resort. We don't hesitate when it's necessary, of course, but needless violence attracts the police — and more than that, it is bad for business in ways that we're only now discovering.

People don't cooperate with us the way they used to, sire. Time was when I could walk into any place of business in my old neighborhood, and not only would I be treated with respect, I would actually be welcomed. They knew that I was generous with my money, that I appreciated cooperation and good service. And they knew that I meant business, and that if they didn't cooperate, not only would the money dry up, but they might find themselves lying perforated on the sidewalk, or else the proud owner of a firebombed wreck that used to be a store.

People are still scared of us, and some still treat us as they used to, but others prefer to take the risk of running to the police. And the reason people don't cooperate like in the old days is not that they're no longer scared of us, but that they're *too* scared. It's the fault of these other damn crime groups, and the younger generations in our own. I've said before that they're too quick to use violent means when they aren't necessary. So while people are scared, Don Cardona, it's not exactly the same fear anymore.

You once taught me, when it comes to blackmail, that you should never push the victim too far, that he'll cooperate only as long as what you're asking is less than what he has to lose by exposure. The same holds true here. If people feel you're eventually going to shoot them even if they do cooperate, what motivation have they for cooperating?

Our reputation for violence may be earned, but it's expanded well beyond reality, and it's still growing. If we cannot do something, about the other organizations and the new attitude among our children both, the Mafia as we know it must eventually cease to exist.

The other trick these young punks don't realize is that random violence is counterproductive. It scares people in exactly the wrong way, like I was just saying. When we hit someone, it's for a very specific reason. Since we're usually making a point, we prefer to make those hits in public. Yeah, it's dangerous, but nothing makes our feelings on the matter more clear than that, right?

Some Families make it a common practice to whack the target's immediate family along with the guy himself. Sometimes it's just convenience, because it's hard to miss the wife in the passenger seat with a car bomb or a hail of machine gun fire, right? But it's also because we've got enough vendettas going on already, and the last thing we need is some punk college student coming back with a .38. No, he won't get very far, but people pay attention when upright college kids disappear. Worse, we've had problems with wives and children going to the Feds to get back at us for whacking their husband or father, even when the guy clearly had it coming. Better to take out the whole family and make it a clean break.

Incidentally, our desire to avoid attention — unless we're making a statement — is why you won't find many *mafiosi* taking on murder-for-hire jobs. Oh, it happens occasionally, either for money, or as a favor to a friend, or whatever. But most wiseguys kill for the Family or for their own personal reasons only. Anything else is just asking for trouble, especially if you can't be sure they guy who hired you is going to keep quiet.

All right. We're smart enough to know that, in this day and age, there's no way to eliminate all competition, everywhere. There's just too much of it. So maybe, we figure, we can find a way to turn our competitors to our advantage.

Now, the Yaks, the Triads and the cartels are too big, too well established. But some of these others, they're pretty new at this. There's been a growth of

organized crime in Poland, there's the Russian Mafia — yeah, I know, can you believe it? Russian Mafia! Who names these guys?!

Thing is, they're new to the game, but they're talented, and they know how to change with the times, something some of our own Families haven't managed yet.

So we're advising them, Don Cardona. They pay us, big time, in exchange for advice on how to organize and operate their organizations. If you like, I can introduce you to Premislaus Razbivoi when we meet with him next month. You've no idea how happy he is to be learning our wisdom. He's a big, surly Russian with all the eagerness of a schoolboy getting his first lay. It's funny, really.

As long as their interests don't clash with ours, I imagine this'll go on for a while. And if they do start stepping over the line, well, we've got a pretty good idea of how they're operating, don't we? So it shouldn't be too hard to throw a wrench into their machine.

So after all that, Don Cardona, it probably seems like war is all we do anymore. I'll admit it feels that way sometimes, but it's not so. Let me tell you a little about

## What the Mafia Does Today

As I said earlier, when you boil it down, the Mafia is about the welfare of the Family above everything else. That means protecting the Family from outside threats — be it a rival Family or the government — but it also means providing for the Family's needs.

Which, of course, means money. And we'll make it however we can, regardless of what the government wants us to do.

Not everything the Families are involved in is illegal, of course, but it's not easy to break our interests down into lawful and unlawful because the two often overlap. I'll start with the basics, which would be

## Extortion and Protection

Extortion is a crude business, I admit, but in many ways it's the basis of everything else we do. Combined with bribery, the threat of violence is often necessary to inspire the cooperation we require to run our other operations. In fact, the price of our protection is often aid and information, rather than or in addition to money.

The thing is, Don Cardona, we cannot just walk into a random business in one of our neighborhoods and demand a monthly percentage. Once, we could, and often did, do just that. But today, more people run to the police, and we can't whack them all. Partially it's because the old ways are fading. We still follow the code of *omerta*, but most people no longer feel ashamed





if they can't handle a problem themselves. They don't even feel shame for running to outsiders. And then, of course, there's that violence issue I was talking about.

The best targets for our protection, then, are businesses that already have something to hide. If a shop is already moving stolen goods through the storeroom, or a mechanic is already selling hot cars, they aren't going to risk attracting the police. You can even take it a step further than that, Don Cardona. We've recently started offering protection to independent drug dealers, pimps, even one murder-for-hire operation on the West Coast. And get this. We even provide "security" for a U.S. congressman who wants to make sure his son's cocaine-and-hooker parties aren't disrupted by violent criminals. Nobody said the business we're protecting has to be a real business at all, right? So long as our cut isn't too greedy, some of them are even happy to cooperate, since our presence protects them from other Families or organizations that might not be as reasonable when it comes to percentages.

That's something many people don't realize about us. Protection may be a euphemism for extortion, but we take the responsibility seriously. If someone does pay up, not only will we not harm him or his place, we take it poorly if anyone else does. Like I said before, people won't pay out of fear alone — at least not forever. There must be a carrot *and* a stick.

That's long term, of course. If all you want is what's in the register now — or better yet, the manifest and route of a shipment of computers — threatening to beat the guy to a pulp is acceptable. On the other hand, I still prefer

## Bribery and Graft

Yeah, it may cost you more in the short run to pay the guy for the info, instead of just threatening him with a tire iron, but he's less likely to run to the cops afterward. More important, he's going to be a lot more willing to help you take the *next* shipment. And once someone in a high office has taken one bribe to help you out, he's going to keep on helping you, since he's not going to want you to expose the fact that he's taken bribes.

Even though it's in all the movies, people don't realize just how far bribery can get us. Cops, lawyers, judges, politicians, restaurant owners, delivery men.... One can do anything in this day and age with a few G's greasing the right palm.

Remember what I said earlier about getting the health inspector or the cops to take down a rival? They're not going to do it out of the goodness of their heart, and you probably won't be able to just walk up to one on the street and pay him to do a job. You've got to cultivate these things, and you're probably going to pay more than one bribe before you get even a single favor in return. It's worth it, though, if it means you own the judge who's supposed to be arraigning your best soldier. If you own the right kinds of businesses, like construction companies, a few greased palms will get you some nice city contracts, too.

You want to know what kind of things we can do with graft that nobody thinks about? Urban development. It's all the rage these days, sire. Take a few city engineers out to some high-class dinners, give them a few distinctive dinner companions, slip a few Benjamins into their hands — and then make a few casual suggestions. Given the sorts of places we operate best, it doesn't do us any good to have a playground in the middle of downtown, or for the city to construct a new high-rise office. Another block of crowded shops, on the other hand, or low-rent apartments in a depressed part of town, the kind of place where people are going to be looking for some chemically induced happiness... well, you see where I'm going with this.

How about the phone company? No, you can't pay off Ma Bell entirely. But I remember one hit, about 12 years ago, where a phone line was "accidentally" cut by a clumsy repairman, just about the time the target was trying to trigger his alarm and call 911. Convenient, no?

Hell, get enough congressmen and senators under our thumb, we might even change the laws themselves. No, we're not going to get drugs made legal — and hell, why would we want to? — but it'd be nice if we could get the damn RICO laws modified, if nothing else.

There's actually two different terms for this. Clean graft is what we do most of the time: payoffs to cops, politicians, and whatnot that allow us to go on with business. Bribing the gaming commissioner in Vegas or a cop to look the other way when we're acquiring a prostitute for a senator is clean. Dirty graft is what we pay to cover up the nasty stuff — murder, drug smuggling, that sort of thing. You can usually count on most officials to take clean bribes. With dirty ones, it's hit or miss. Not everyone's willing to close their eyes when blood's involved.

## Blackmail

goes along with bribery and graft, in a way, so I'll cover that next. It's just another way of getting the politicians and the officials — or damn near anyone else, for that matter — to do what we want. We don't often blackmail for money. Most people who can afford to pay enough to make it worthwhile are in a position to do us other favors as well, favors that are worth a lot more than the cash we might get from them. If I've got photos of a city councilman with his dick in some 16-year-old ass, I'd rather use them to influence the next zoning referendum than to take him for an extra 50 grand.

The really nifty thing about blackmail material is that, considering the other services we provide for the city's rich and famous, it's not that hard to get. Who do you think provided the councilman with that 16-year-old?

Actually,

## Prostitution and Pornography

make the best blackmail material anyway, more even than drug use. If nothing else, they photograph better.

We're in this particular field only at the very top end, though. You won't find any pimps in the Family, and God help any of our own daughters or sisters who disgrace the Family that way. No, we provide the pimps a place to operate — a storefront, a hotel, a street corner — and we make sure they don't get hassled too much. In exchange, they provide us with girls when we want them, and with part of the cut.

Same with pornography. We don't let our daughters shame themselves like that, and we don't take the pictures. But nobody sells or distributes the stuff in our cities without us giving us a cut, and some things we just don't want in our territories. Just a few weeks ago, there was this guy trying to sell Polaroids of — well, you don't want the details. Let's just say it involved animals, and I made it very clear to the guy that I didn't want that shit in my neighborhoods. He might even have stopped bleeding by now.

Sometimes it's good business to provide prostitutes as perks. It's just one of the many vices that goes right along with

## Gambling

If there's a single business we're associated with in the minds of the public, now that Prohibition is almost 70 years dead, it's gambling. People see the big lights of the Las Vegas — or, to a lesser extent, Atlantic City — casinos, and they can't help thinking of us. Actually, they think of Robert DeNiro and Joe Pesci, but they *think* they're thinking of us.

The funny thing about gambling, Don Cardona, is that it's one of those gray areas I was talking about. It's all legal and legit, except where it isn't.

## Casinos

are the big money. Flashing lights, tons of food, musical numbers, high-class prostitutes — it's all there. Any given casino can bring in hundreds of millions of dollars per year. Is it any wonder we wanted a hand in it?

The thing is, though, most of the casinos we "own" aren't ours on paper. Yeah, some are run directly by Family men, but that's too easy to trace. We don't want names written down. Casinos are mostly legit, but only mostly. When people try to cheat us, we still take them out back and break limbs. Someone disrupts business too much, they end up buried in the deserts of Nevada. Politicians and other bigwigs are wine and dined and bribed until their pockets bulge in the hotel rooms and the restaurants. If a casino has known Mafia ties, the Feds start examining it, and we don't want that.

So, since we don't legally own the joints, we sort of have to steal from our own casinos.

We'll set up some goombahs on the board of directors, people who don't know and don't want to know what goes on in the counting rooms and behind the curtains. The guards, the people in charge, the guys who count the money, they're all well paid to look the other way when, every few weeks, one of our guys walks in with an empty suitcase. When he leaves, the counting room is a lot lighter, but since none of it's been counted yet, that money never comes up on the books as missing. We don't pay taxes on it, and there's nothing to link the Family to the casino at all.

If the Mafia pulled out of every one of our concerns except for casinos, we'd still be raking it in hand over fist. It wouldn't be enough, of course, because there's no such thing, but it's a lot.

But casinos aren't the only kind of gambling we deal with. We've also got



## Bookies and Numbers

These are about as far from the casinos as you can get. I'm talking about dice games on the streets and people betting on ball games, horse races and anything else with the slightest element of chance. Hell, I once knew a bookie who had a pool going on when he'd next get raided by the cops.

Unlike the casinos, which are usually legit businesses — though we've got a few underground places, like in Cuba — these are completely illegal. They're usually little hole-in-the-wall storefronts or bars, places where you expect to see a lot of down-and-out people looking desperate. If you're a regular, you don't even have to show. Just call in your bet or tell one of the local runners.

It's small potatoes compared to the casinos, but it makes a pretty good chunk of change for a neighborhood business. People don't welsh on their bets, either, since that usually gets their legs broken.

It's also not uncommon for the guys who run these places to also do a brisk business in

us back? Okay, we give him a little longer to pay — but he either owes us even more, or he's got to do us a favor in the meantime. Patience is a virtue.

Of course, if they take too long, or try to jerk us around, we'll fold them in half.

They're also responsible for the vig, no matter what. Oh. My apologies again, Don Cardona. The vig is an interest payment they're expected to make on a regular basis, even if they can't afford to pay any on the loan itself. Sometimes, we set the vig high enough that they'll never finish paying us back. It's a tidy little source of permanent income.

Not all our lenders are street-level operators, either. We've fronted money for people to start businesses, build casinos, send kids to college, even run for office. Yeah, it's a lot of green, but that kind of loan comes with a heavy interest in cash and favors, so it's definitely worth the investment.

Speaking of investments,

## Money Laundering

is vital to our survival. Without going into the details of the process, Don Cardona, it involves taking monies from illegal operations and feeding them, through various channels, through legal businesses and investments so they can't be traced. The Families own a significant number of legitimate businesses for just that purpose. Of course, we also own many just because they make money or provide us a nice place to hang out, but that's not the point.

That's why it's so hard to separate our legal and illegal enterprises. Each one invariably funds the other. We keep bankers on the payroll of the Families just to handle the books.

As far as legal enterprises go, there's nothing we've acquired that's proven more useful than the

### Acquiring a Legitimate Business

isn't something that has to be done through legitimate methods, of course. Who needs to buy stock when we can loan the owner of a failing business some money in exchange for a small percentage of the establishment? The percentage gets larger as time goes on — we loan him money for this, do him a favor for that — and before long, the business is ours.

Or, if he won't accept favors after we've muscled our way in, we can always whack the guy. We've got the majority share, and we can always buy up the rest before anyone else knows he's gone.

## Money-lending and Loansharking

This hasn't changed much since the old days, Don Cardona. You called it usury. We loan people money, we charge them several points of interest above the legal max, and we hurt them if they don't pay us back.

Well, actually, it's not quite that simple. Breaking a guy's arm means it'll be that much longer before he can get the money, and if we kill him, we won't see a dime. Most of us are smarter than that. A guy can't pay

## Labor Unions

Everybody and their uncle knows that we're in tight with the unions, but I bet most of them don't have the first clue why. It's true that the unions don't have the power they used to. Time was, a labor union could make or break a presidential candidate. But they've still got a million and one uses.

The simplest is cover. Seems some days like every wiseguy in the world has a job with the union. We've got to have some way of explaining where our

money comes from, what we do with our time, and who all our friends are. Some of us actually do work cushy union jobs. Others don't do a damn thing except use the title.

Teamsters make pretty good cheap muscle, too. No, we can't have them beat some guy to a pulp; they're not all bruisers. But most aren't going to turn down some extra pay for unloading a ship or packing up a truck, and if you're paying enough, they're not going to ask questions.

But the best use of the unions is information and leverage. Maybe we want to know the schedule and routes for that shipment of computers I mentioned. Who's going to know better than the guys making the schedule — or even better still, the guy driving the truck? Or maybe we're not looking to hijack. Instead, we want to slip a little few kilos of the white lady into a truck that's crossing state lines, to get it to a dealer in Jersey. Again, the guys loading and driving are your best friends. Yeah, they'll expect a kickback from the take, but so what? It's worth it to keep that kind of information and opportunity open.

So let's take it a step further. Let's say one of our boys is caught breaking into the payroll safe at the factory, or the company's had more than its fair share of hijackings and they're about to bring in the cops, big time. How do we convince them not to press charges or to squeal to the pigs?

Threatened labor strike. They're going to lose a lot more through prolonged strikes and negotiation with the union than they will from our fingers in the till. We can't do this too much — if the union strikes too often, the government starts looking up their ass with a fucking microscope — but we can do it when we have to.

The union brings in a pretty good chunk of change, too, what with dues and pensions and all, and it's a great place to launder money from outside.

And since I just mentioned them, I'll move on to

## Theft and Hijacking

I don't just mean grabbing random trucks off the streets or breaking into any house that has a nice entertainment center visible through the window. Yeah, some wiseguys do that, and sometimes they even get some good stuff. But most of the time the profits just aren't worth the risk in that kind of blind operation. As far as Family-backed enterprises, we prefer to know what we're doing.

That's why we try to get inside info, like I was saying a minute ago. This is a dangerous game, here. People get killed over shit like this. We want to make damn sure that we're not going to wind up with a truckload of, I don't know, bananas or something.

The stuff we take? Sell it, of course. A lot of people would drop a load at the thought of getting a \$2,000 stereo system for about five hundred, or an ermine coat for just a couple of bills, or even a cheap carton of Marlboros. They don't ask questions, and we turn a tidy profit, all in cash.

We've also got a huge racket going in hot cars. It's damn near an industry unto itself. The trick to not getting pinched here is we don't sell the parts locally. Hell, often as not, we don't even strip the damn things within miles of where we stole them. Unless you're some *budiùlo* carjacker, you're probably smart enough to swipe the car at a time where it's not going to be noticed immediately. By the time somebody calls the cops, you can have that car in the next city, where the shop's already taking it apart. From there, if you're really smart, you'll ship the parts to another city before you sell them. It's not really that hard, since we've already got channels set up for

## Smuggling

These days, with alcohol legally available, most people think of narcotics when they think of smuggling. And the Families certainly do smuggle drugs. We've got an enormous heroin interest. But narcotics actually make up only a portion of our smuggling operations.

We reap an enormous profit running guns. Not just the illegal kinds, like the full-autos, but handguns and rifles too. You can get a few hundred on the streets, easy, even for a .38 or a beat-up old Colt .45. All because there's no paper trail, and the sorts of people who buy guns from us like it when there's no paper trail. We also keep a lot of the firepower for ourselves. If you've got to shoot it out with someone, it's always better if you've got the Uzis and the AKs and leave them stuck with the pistols.

In fact, handguns aren't the only legal goods we smuggle. Cigarettes, electronics, and computers and yeah, even booze. These are all either expensive items or goods with a pretty hefty sin tax attached to them. From a street corner or the back of a pool hall, we can sell crates of cigarettes or bottles of scotch for a lot less than people are going to pay down at the corner store, and we don't make them show us an ID, either. Hell, run up a bar restock on the tab of restaurant you're in





### There's More, But...

Forgive me, Don Cardona, but I don't think you've been sufficiently educated on the current state of the world to know what I'm talking about. You know what computers are, but has the Internet been explained to you?

Right. So let me just say that some of the forward-looking Families are branching into new arenas. It's possible, via computers and the Internet to steal secure information, transfer huge sums of money, run all sorts of cons. The details would be largely meaningless to you until you've had more time to adapt. But you should at least know that it's yet another business that we have under way, and we'll leave it there for now.

good for. Sell a \$60 bottle of liquor for \$30 out the back door — it's not like you're ever going to actually pay for that bar order in the first place. Far as the computers and electronics, well, we can't let these go for quite as cheap as the ones we hijacked, since we had to put some money into getting them across the border, but they're still cheaper than anything you'll find at Radio Shack.

What else? Knockoffs. Counterfeit brand-name goods. Fads have gotten downright stupid while you've been away, sire. People pay twice for one pair of jeans what they'd pay for another, because there's a different label plastered across the ass. Maybe they want a copy of J-Lo's new album — fuck me if I know why — but they don't want to shell out 20 bucks for it. Or maybe they want a specific brand of television, even though the picture's the same and the shows all still suck. I don't know, forget about it. Whatever the reason, there's more than a few cents to be made providing for these people, even if what they're getting wasn't made by the company they think made it.

The Triads are even bigger into that than we are, but there's enough to go around, at least until we decide we want their share.

Something else that not even most of the other Families are involved in: Those few dons who know about the Kindred or the other weird shit that wanders around at night have found a way to make that work for us, too. I've charged other Kindred out the ass to sneak them in or out of the country as part of our freight. Even more than that, we've taken cash for all kinds of strange things. Had one Toreador over in Versailles pay a thick wad for a sample of Lupine vitae, and there was one guy, one of those mages, who

## Profitable Anonymity

Any discussion of La Cosa Nostra as it pertains to supernatural entities will eventually beg the question, "Why the Mafia?" Why does this organization in particular draw the attention of so many different powerful groups with so many disparate interests, and yet continue to work outside their respective spheres of influence on the whole? To be honest, more than one answer satisfies the question, and all are equally correct, but in the end it all comes down to one basic principle.

To arrive at an answer, all one must ask is, "What does the Mafia do?" It's a question I endeavored to answer for you earlier this evening. When we realize what an incredible thing La Cosa Nostra really is, "why" starts to become readily apparent. Here's a multi-tiered, highly organized and widespread, profitable organization — a multinational corporation, for all intents and purposes. It is a corporation, however, that engages in a multitude of illegal activities, thus raising its profitability while reducing the amount of outside interference one can expect when dealing with it. After all, we all know what would happen if you tried to go to the police after a car you'd stolen was in turn stolen by someone else. We know, because we've seen it happen to others. There are some prodigiously stupid criminals out there, Don Cardona.

This profitable anonymity is what draws the likes of the Kindred and enterprising warlocks in droves. Such creatures are already beholden to the notion of anonymity by their very existences, and the Mafia provides an avenue by which they may affect the mortal world while still remaining below the line of mortal radar. After all, mortals involved in Mafia affairs typically have just as much reason to stay inconspicuous, making them confederates in anonymity by default, and instituting a *de facto* and mutually necessary honor among thieves. And the idea that those of our kind can turn a profit by doing so... well, that's about as close to a perfect scenario as we could ever hope for, now isn't it?

wanted me to smuggle some old clock to a friend of his in Brighton Beach. There's a lot of money to be made off the strangeness in this world, and we're one of the few Families in place to take advantage of it.

Thus far, sire, I have laid out and examined for you all the various mortal aspects and permutations of this thing of ours. Now it's time for me to get into the nitty gritty of, well...

## The Mystical Side

What I mean by that, Don Cardona, is the extent of our knowledge regarding the supernatural involvement — and often interference — in the affairs of La Cosa Nostra. Oh, you don't? Oh, I see. Well, yes, it has been rather a long time, hasn't it? Precisely 70 years, according to my figures... but of course, I've been keeping count. I've done my best to gather together, from a number of reliable sources, a collection of information on the involvement and activities of the non-mortal element inside and associated with the Mafia, and have synthesized the material therein in preparation for the overview I give to you tonight.

Let me begin by saying that in the time since you laid yourself to rest, there has been a substantial rise in the involvement of the supernatural as an element in what is known tonight as the Mob. As I mentioned earlier, several landmark squealers confirmed the existence of a widespread criminal organization called the Mafia some years ago. I'm well aware that in the early days we were essentially left to our own devices, free to operate as we chose when it came to the affairs of our own. However, it is no longer a simple Family matter between the various mortal organizations that make up the bulk of the Mafia and their secret cabals of undead benefactors. No, I'm truly sorry to say that while you were sleeping, the Mafia has slowly grown into a cultural miasma of the unholy. Pushed and pulled from all sides, the modern Cosa Nostra is forced to contend with all manner of sorcerers, spirits, sinners and shapeshifters, in addition to us...

## Vampires

As I'm sure you are well aware, the history of La Cosa Nostra has been linked to that of its most prominent undead supporters, and in our own family's case, true godfathers. In its early nights in Sicily, the Mafia was considered something of a curiosity to the



undead. No single Kindred or group of Kindred lurked behind its formation, though the rise of the movement did pique the casual interest of several prominent Kindred of the era. Interestingly, the Giovanni of Venice were not among those who took any interest in the young mortal sect. The clan was far removed from the activities of the insular Sicilians back then — and still is, relative to its overstated reputation — as it had only recently emerged on the vampiric scene and was still contending with its own intra-clan squabbles. No, the earliest legitimate patrons of the Mafia hailed from the ranks of the Italian Ventrue and Lasombra, who were less at odds with one another at the time than they would be after the formation of the Camarilla proper in 1496.

And as is the case with most worthwhile ventures, wherever the Ventrue led, others would follow. Several area Brujah who admired the Mafia's grass-roots origins were drawn to the organization. Some saw in it an opportunity to right what they saw as many of Italy's numerous wrongs while others merely recognized the inherent potential of a mortal organization of this sort, and desired to spoil the party for their enemies among the patrician clans. In this manner, other Kindred as well were called to the attention of the Mafia and vice versa, leading us to the diversified — and some would say diluted or even polluted — state of the organization tonight. More so than any other example I can think of, the staggered vampiric history of La Cosa Nostra proves that the childer of Caine share the mortals' propensity for jumping on every bandwagon that rumbles by.

It is difficult to make many definitive statements regarding

## Kindred-Mafia Interaction

but one might draw some general conclusions.

La Cosa Nostra shares a particularly unique relationship with the undead, one that bears, and perhaps even requires, a little bit of explanation. One might be tempted to ask, "Why would a Kindred want to join the Mob?" but this is a loaded question. In point of fact, the Mafia has no set policy on the involvement of the Kindred, or on werewolves or any other creature, for that matter. What it does have is a larger sense of awareness of the supernatural than most mortal organizations — one that its leaders use to their advantage. These leaders have come to a better understanding of the world in which they live — the real one, not the mirage on the surface —

and have a healthy respect for the role the undead play in that subcutaneous shadow world. Over time, this has resulted in what we like to call a healthy working relationship between the mortal heart of the Mafia and its undead "ventricles," and most Kindred in the know have a tendency to view the Mafia at large with more respect than they do other mortals. We simply have too many things in common for us not to treat them as peers or at least as partners, rather than as vessels or simply as something to be used and cast aside.

Politically speaking, the Mafia is an ideal training ground for both neonates and would-be childer. The organization provides the neonate not only with a place wherein he can hone his various skills, but with a built-in distraction from the terrible age discrimination inherent in being a fledgling among the undead. The organization and its operations provide an opportunity to learn the power structure of the Kindred on the streets, to make connections in police and city government, to learn how to deal with and commit violence when necessary, as well as how to get away with it. Perhaps most importantly, it pulls the neonate headlong into the eye-opening experience of operating within an organization that only permits advancement at the expense of brethren who are in constant competition for a discrete amount of both advancement and favor. This also provides the young Kindred a goal to work toward while he waits his turn inside the slow, grinding gears of the vampiric political machine. This is why some of the elders associated with the organization actively encourage the admission of new Kindred into its ranks, not merely to educate and examine, but to help divert some of that willful neonate energy as well.

In return, the new Kindred associate now has a distinct advantage when dealing not only with the mortal world, but when dealing with others of his kind as well. Among the undead, true *paisan* are hard to come by, and one is never certain from where the next bullet or stake will come. Of course, joining the Mafia certainly doesn't reduce the vampire's risk of sudden and violent death, but it does provide him with an immediate circle of well-armed allies who have sworn oaths to come to his defense in times of need.

In the cases where one is born directly into the Family — such as with your own line, Don Cardona — the Mafia provides a training ground of a different sort. As some of us know all too well, the Embrace is never given lightly among most Kindred *mafiosi* and it must be earned by constant and tireless dedication to the

Family at large. More often than not, the would-be childe is forced to enter a period of probation as a ghou, becoming one of what is known as the true *soldati*, before he will be considered for the Embrace. Only then, after years of loyal service — and even then, not always — will a prospective Kindred be granted the Embrace; in all cases, what is best for the Family acts, or at least should act, as the ultimate arbiter of this decision. Thus, perfectly worthwhile candidates may be passed over simply because of the status of the Family at any given time... among other reasons.

[Coughs]

But once the *soldato* does finally receive the dubious distinction of being made, he immediately comes to understand the

## Benefits of Membership

Being made into the Family from the inside is a vastly different situation than already being Kindred and actively pursuing membership from the outside in. In the Families where true lineage is a valued commodity, made *soldati* are often given preferential treatment, as you well know. The Kindred is now considered untouchable by all the mortal adjuncts and allies of the Family in question. Even the *soldati* cannot so much as breathe on him improperly. Among the other Kindred of the Mafia, his overall status stems from a complex combination of age, family, past accomplishments and, of course, Kindred lineage. A neonate may still be just a neonate, but if he has done much for the prosperity of the Family, or if he is the childe of a particularly esteemed sire, then due consideration must be given at all times. As is the case with the mortal side, this aspect tends to be abused a great deal by weaker Kindred members, and we have no shortage of whining daddy's boys in La Cosa Nostra tonight, I'm sorry to say. But generally speaking, no Kindred who has come up through the ranks of a given Family is to be trifled with. Most have more than earned their stripes, as the saying goes, by that point, and should be treated accordingly.

This is not to say that those who were made before joining the Family get no respect, but they are essentially treated as vampiric *stranieri* — Family members of non-Italian blood. Of course, if such an outsider vampire happens to be both Sicilian and an elder, well then, the above considerations obviously still apply. Nobody's really going to "punish" a Sicilian elder for not having come up through the ranks





## The Night of Sicilian Vespers

While you were sleeping through the decades, a single moment passed wherein the entirety of La Cosa Nostra was changed forever. On September 10, 1931, Salvatore Maranzano, then the *capo di tutti capi*, was murdered in his Park Avenue office, signaling the dawn of what many refer to as the “Americanization” of the Mafia. This is due to the fact that his assassination also marked the start of a wave of butchery that stretched across numerous state and Family lines. Nearly 40 Cosa Nostra leaders allied with Maranzano were slain all around the country that night, all Italian-born old-timers eliminated by a younger generation making its bid for power. Among those murdered were Sam Monaco and Louis Russo, along with Maranzano himself and restaurant owner Gerardo Scarpato, and that was just in New York. Other top bosses, underbosses and lieutenants were eliminated in Las Vegas, Kansas City and Chicago, all within hours of Maranzano’s death. Within La Cosa Nostra itself, the night soon became referred to as Purge Day; outside the Family, it has since come to be known as the Night of Sicilian Vespers.

At the helm of this massive effort was Lucky Luciano, who wanted to put an end to “Moustache Pete” and all his Sicilian clones. Luciano naturally denied the allegations, stating that the entire story had been cooked up by overzealous reporters eager to generate hype about organized crime in New York. Still, it would be typical of Luciano’s style to deny everything and downplay the events as would-be sensationalism by the media and other so-called Mafia pundits. The truth, Don Cardona? Well, as always, that is something far more elusive... and unnerving.

To this night, nobody can say for sure where the various non-human groups tie in to the event, but this is nothing new. Most among our own kind, usually the best informed about such things, remain ignorant of any one true story behind the massacre. I did, however, hear an interesting rumor that bears repeating: It claims that though the idea for the mass assassination did indeed originate with and was primarily executed by mortals, the night’s bloody activities were not limited to those mortal *mafiosi* who fell victim to it. No, the evening was reputed to be an equally great success for a nationwide cabal of anarch agents who used their knowledge of Luciano’s plan as a basis from which to organize a series of hits all their own. You ask why I might give this theory any credence? Because several distinguished Camarilla Kindred also disappeared around that time — that very night, according to my sources.

And each and every victim was an elder.

somewhere. Generally speaking, though, among La Cosa Nostra Kindred, mortal heritage matters more than the other considerations such as clan or generation, at least insofar as Family affairs are concerned. And this works both ways: A 13th generation Brujah neonate may go far in the Family if he is of Sicilian blood, while an elder German Kindred — even though he may be Ventrue or Lasombra — will never be able to advance as far. He will be forever limited by the circumstances of his mortal birth.

This is not to say that clan is completely irrelevant. It certainly has its place in the grand scheme of things. Although the Mafia has been fully populated with Kindred of all stripes by this era — or overpopulated, some would say — there are varying degrees with which each clan as a whole has come to be involved. For clan purposes, most “Mob Kindred” can be

categorized as belonging to one of two groups. The first of these is a blanket term we use when referring to those families with the strongest ties to the Mafia over time, or those we have come to call the

## Family Clans

These are the clans that are generally considered to have — and to have had — the greatest interest and influence in the mortal Cosa Nostra since its inception in Sicily. Please understand, Don Cardona, that such groupings qualify as loose definitions at best. I present them for you in this way only to illustrate the general but critical difference between those clans that involve themselves directly in Family affairs, as opposed to those clans whose members involve themselves on an external and typically individual basis. The former —

the five Family clans — are the Ventrue, the Lasombra, the Brujah, the Nosferatu, and the Giovanni. Allow me to provide for you an overview of where each clan stands in relation to La Cosa Nostra tonight.

Once again, Don Cardona, I'll begin at home, as it were, with the so-called

### Blue Bloods

Although I'm sure the assertion would find no shortage of vehement denial among the Lasombra and Brujah, it should be patently obvious to those of us with eyes that the most powerful and prevalent voice within and behind the Mafia belongs to the Ventrue. Despite the preferences of our rivals, the facts are simply on our side. Ours were the first eyes to follow the mortal movement's affairs in Sicily, and we were the first to take an active role in the formation of the organization's structure — which, one might notice, bears a striking similarity to our own *Gerousia*. We are now among the most numerous of the Kindred involved in La Cosa Nostra, even though Mafia Ventrue choose their childer even more carefully than their clanmates outside it. No, despite rumors to the contrary we have been here from the start, a patient and guiding hand behind many of the Mafia's operations. Although the Ventrue have powerful *mafiosi* all over the world, I have to say the spiritual heart of the clan must certainly find its home here in Malta, under the august tutelage and wise auspices of great Kindred such as yourself, Don Cardona.

In theory, the Ventrue of the Family see it as their clan duty to protect their mortal fellows from the slings and arrows of other, less scrupulous creatures. We often act as father figures to the crews with which we are involved, whether or not we are in the positions of authority. While we are not so myopic as to believe that we are or even should be the only non-mortals associated with La Cosa Nostra, we do feel that some measure of purity needs to be maintained, else the entire organization rot itself away from within. It's hard enough keeping mortal *mafiosi* from killing each other. Add a crew of hate-mongering Kindred and Lupines into the mix, and you've got one highly volatile scenario — a scenario somebody has to endeavor to keep under control somehow. To be certain, not all Ventrue take this stance. Merely the honorable ones.

### The Keepers

must, unfortunately, come next on my list. If there's one overall pretender to the Ventrue power base within La Cosa Nostra, it's those damn Lasombra. Their usual tendency to portray history in their own favor flies way out of control regarding our organization. Some of them actually go so far as to claim that it was they, and not the Ventrue, who played the most pivotal role during the early years of the Sicilian mortal movement. This is, needless to say, complete rubbish, as anyone who knows his shadow history would quickly tell you. To be fair, they are indeed deeply involved in the affairs of the Mafia worldwide, and are in fact the most active and directly involved of the Family clans, after the Ventrue, of course.

Nonetheless, it's difficult to argue with results, and if there's one thing that the Keepers are deadly efficient at, it's meeting their ends. And to their credit, most Mafia Lasombra seem to draw a fine but distinct line in the sand where their other obligations are concerned; either that or they just know better than to let such peripheral issues cross over into matters of Family business. Whatever the cause, most Lasombra learn well — and fast — the trick of adeptly and constantly juggling matters of clan, sect and Family without letting any one fall or touch the others. This is of especially singular importance to the Lasombra, as their parent sect frowns on any and all in-depth involvement with the mortals without viable and obvious results to show for it, and Keepers who fail to master this balancing act soon learn the price of failure.

Of course, as befits an organization oft-times called "the Mob," it is impossible to overstate the involvement of

### The Rabble

Although I find them boorish on the whole, even I must admit that some of our most useful members hail from among the Brujah. And though their status as one of the true Family clans comes mainly from their history as glorified agitators during the organization's early stages, we must nonetheless give them their proper respect. The Brujah are a vital part of the Mafia as we know it, the cogs that keep the machine oiled and moving. This fact stems from the two-tiered role in which they serve the Family tonight.



First of all, the Brujah make up quite a considerable portion of our made soldiers on the street. It is a stereotype, yes, but it is one that they have been more than happy to step into, and with some vigor, I might add. Although they are discouraged from establishing "Brujah only" crews of their own, I have heard that it is most often the Brujah who are called together when a piece of work needs doing. This has the dual effect of keeping rival gangs on relatively good terms while keeping the Brujah themselves generally satisfied with their situations.

The second and more important role in which the Brujah serve is as ambassadors and representatives to the other factions of organized crime. In particular, we have met with considerable success in establishing business relations with many of the Russian "Mob" syndicates since the fall of what was known as the Shadow Curtain. Many of those Russian Kindred who were heretofore unable to extend their operations beyond the borders of their homeland have been coming forward of late, looking for assistance and partnership from the Sicilian Mafia. We were hesitant about the opportunity at first, but results always speak for themselves, and the Brujah have been nothing if not productive in this regard. Some of our deepest inroads into Russia's cartels have been made at the hands of several capable Brujah *mafiosi*, many of whom had brothers in blood trapped behind the Shadow Curtain when it first arose in 1990. It is good to see them now using their once ineffectual contacts to bring about some business for the Family.

### The Sewer Rats

are, oddly enough, an equally solid and vital pillar of our organization. If the Ventrue can be said to be the heart and brain of the Kindred of La Cosa Nostra, then the Nosferatu are the circulatory and central nervous systems, all rolled into one. To continue the metaphor, their tireless efforts can be said to keep the life's blood of the organization pumping through and out to all of the organization's many undead extremities. According to my sources, our Nosferatu have used their clan's natural predilections toward cooperation and secrecy to the Family's advantage, often in some creative and profitable ways. For example, they employ some sort of computer code to communicate with other Nosferatu across the globe, allowing them to get the word out quickly when necessary, while simultaneously evading all the usual prying eyes. Indeed, were it not for the Nosferatu, the

long and increasingly adept arm of the law — and all its own supernatural benefactors — might well have caught up to us by now.

These Kindred are capable of getting wind of when and how the police are mobilizing, and they do so with an unsettling ease. Their talents give our boys plenty of time to scatter, leaving behind just the right amount of "evidence" to keep police attentions pointed in the right direction. In addition, the Nosferatu are quite adept at making legitimate evidence simply disappear from both computer and hard-copy databases as well as physical storage facilities. They have even been known, on occasion, to hide moles as well, such as important snitches or soldiers whose faces have been made or whose covers has been blown. The Nosferatu are also intimately connected to the actual night-to-night operations of our various Kindred crews, and a significant number of Kindred *consiglieri* and underbosses hail from the Sewer Rats.

The other, arguably more important aspect of this pivotal Family clan lies in the notion of the word "family." The word is practically a double-entendre to these Kindred, many of whom know no other relations than the other members of their crews. I have heard some Nosferatu refer to their own subterranean family dwellings as warrens, though I cannot imagine any of our Nosferatu willingly submitting to such an unpleasant environment. Most of the Nosferatu with whom I or any of my underlings are personally familiar carry themselves quite proudly, draping themselves in fine clothing and the like, as though their membership in La Cosa Nostra has somehow lifted them from their ignoble plight as the supernatural denizens of the world's sewers. Indeed, it seems as though the taking of the oath only strengthens their bonds of loyalty to one another. As of tonight, if my sources are to be trusted, the Nosferatu claim more "clan only" crews than any other clan — a price willingly paid by the organization in exchange for the many services these valuable Kindred provide.

### The Necromancers

are, of all the Family Clans, the most outside the nightly ebb and flow of true Family operations. Although often given credit for being the most Mafia-like Kindred, they are actually quite separate and distinct from the rest of those associated with La Cosa Nostra. For one thing, the Giovanni were and still are Venetian at heart, not Sicilian, and when La Cosa Nostra first formed, the Giovanni had precisely

nothing to do with it, as you are well aware. Since then, the Giovanni have become guilty by association. While it is true that they have some significant interactions with the Mafia, these are more peripheral than most would think, for two reasons. First, the Giovanni are far more concerned with their own family than they are with anyone else's. To them, family *means* clan — an attitude that, when carried to their flavor of extremes, proves detrimental to the organization as a whole. Second, the Giovanni have apparently never heard of the notion of sharing the wealth, and indeed, have become some of our biggest competitors where the higher-level, white-collar crimes are concerned.

I have even heard tell that the Giovanni occasionally deliberately provoke a violent conflict with one of our own crews. When this happens, the Giovanni bosses are reasonably confident that whatever soldiers they send, whether they be ghouls or childer, are probably going to survive, not to mention the fact that they will now have access to wraiths they can compel, who almost certainly have inside knowledge of Mafia activities. It's rather clever, actually. In addition to keeping their competition at a steady level of weakness, the Giovanni are providing for themselves a steady source of information on Mafia activities that cannot be cut off or traced. While certainly not a foolproof tactic, it is one they might employ if and when they're really at loggerheads with a specific crew or Family. Thus, every once in a while, when the mortal Families get a bit too dangerous to the Giovanni, they act, returning the status quo while obtaining much needed updates on current enemy tactics. Thankfully, this business doesn't seem to be standard practice of any kind, but merely an occasional move for when the clan elders grow nervous.

From this practice and from the other considerable data I've gathered, it becomes apparent that the Giovanni are looking at expanding their own influence within the Mafia, but they're only interested in doing so as a unit, and only to suit their own inscrutable purposes. Although the other Family clans may jockey for position, they do so primarily as individuals and as Families first, rarely if ever as clans. The Giovanni, on the other hand, are competitors in the extreme. They've got their fingers sunk into a number of specific Families in which other Kindred find it extremely difficult if not impossible to obtain any leverage. Because the Giovanni already have so many criminal connections outside the Mob, these Families have an edge over those where the Kindred are

limited by and to their own Mafia-specific connections. Although it's a sobering pill to swallow, the fact that these Families are more than prospering under the aegis of the Giovanni is the simplest and truest testament to the clan's effect upon the organization overall. The Giovanni are considered a Family clan not because they share the Mafia attitude, but because their power in La Cosa Nostra has simply become too expansive to ignore, even though it's still technically a minority presence... for now.

Yes, sire, what you remember of the 20s and 30s was only the beginning. And to be perfectly honest, if I had my way, the rest of us would start concentrating more of our efforts on "encouraging" the Giovanni to stand up and take a side, once and for all.

## Connected Clans

make up the second broad category of Kindred associated with the Family. Although this leaves a number of clans unmentioned, the remainder cannot truthfully be discussed in terms of clan. Each must be addressed individually. But as for those we like to call the connected... with your permission, I'll just go through them one by one, and you can stop me if you have any questions, *buono*?

## The Assassins

have a sporadic but mutually beneficial relationship with the Mafia. Although we typically prefer not to air our own dirty laundry, there arise occasions for which outside expertise is required. On these occasions, some of the less traditional *mafiosi* have been known to resort to calling in one of these dreaded killers. Interestingly, such contracts are not always drawn up for the removal of a rival or errant snitch. Assamites have been called in for a number of reasons over time, ranging from the unusually mundane — I heard once of an Assassin being hired to serve as security for a paranoid Lasombra's mortal niece for a weekend — to the positively bizarre, such as the familiar but nonetheless true story of Easy Wynn Scarpaccio, who once hired an Assamite to accompany him on a hit, just so he could use the Assassin's powers of stealth and silence. Scarpaccio pulled the trigger himself, of course. Now there's a Kindred who's not afraid to get his hands dirty.

In recent nights, however, our relationship with the Assassins has shifted significantly and surprisingly. Recent changes in clan attitudes and



policies have resulted, as with the Russia situation, in an "opening up" of the Middle East — a road we are pleased to find runs both ways. Some among their vizier caste have actually become financial partners to us in recent nights, and have been responsible for illuminating us about the potential monies to be made in avenues of business upon which, frankly, we had never even considered embarking before. In addition, they are well aware of our particular Family's position on the Setites, and have even hinted at some mutually beneficial solutions to the problem. While I have more details in the file, one idea I'm particularly excited about is their strategy to help us alleviate our own need for any services the Serpents might provide for us. Much in the same way we are currently instructing the Russians on self-reliance, the Assamites are offering to teach us how to slowly wean ourselves away from the attractive nuisance the Setites represent; to find alternate routes for our needs, rather than to give in to indolence and accept the Serpents' overtures. Indeed, of all the things I have to report to you, Don Cardona, the current state of our family's relations with the Assamites is one of the most gratifying, and I for one am excited to see where the relationship might blossom in the near future.

### The Outlanders

are the flip side of that independent contractor coin. In the old nights, the Gangrel typically came to the Mafia's attention much in the same way they came to the attention of various local princes. They would pass through a particular crew's area, sometimes staying for a short while before moving on. Now, as the Gangrel are Kindred, the definition of "a short while" is up for some serious debate, particularly where the mortal Mafia crews were concerned. Oftentimes, the Gangrel would be in on the whole arrangement and would voluntarily make his presence and general plans known in order to smooth over any bumps the local crew might have had. It began in this manner, the curiously detached relationship between the Gangrel clan and the Mafia at large, and has since grown into one of mutual respect, non-aggression, and sometimes even profit. Most often, the Gangrel could and usually were willing to provide any of those services that required a distinctly non-Mafia hand. For one thing, between the Nosferatu and these guys, we had ourselves one hell of an information network for a while there, let me tell

you. As good as the Nosferatu are, it's amazing the rumors a single wandering Gangrel can pick up on the streets, to say nothing of their use as couriers. It might even be possible for the Feds to put a tap on a Nosferatu line, unlikely as it seems, but let's see them attach a wire to an uncooperative Gangrel.

Also, though it was never all that common, the Gangrel are sometimes better suited to freelance hits even than the Assamites, if you can find one who is willing to kill for you. For one thing, they're a lot cheaper by and large, and a lot more common in some of the places we frequent. And even an Assamite's gotta find a way through the door or window, but how specialized does your security system need to be to keep out a bat or a cloud of fog?

For some time, then, this is essentially where the Outlanders fit into our overall operations. But while I was assembling this very file for you, I began to notice a peculiar trend among the Gangrel. When the majority of the reports were finally in, I realized that our organization can now claim many more Outlanders as members than most believe to be the case. An increasing number of Gangrel have been brought into the Family over the last few years, and from what it looks like, the majority of them had been mortal *mafiosi* to begin with. Obviously, such a ritual is typically presided over with a great deal of care if not discretion, which is part of the reason we have the information we have on the subject, but our general tendency to downplay clan has resulted in the matter going largely unnoticed. It remains just a theory for now, but I believe a majority of these new Kindred *mafiosi* to have been specifically Embraced as Gangrel for some purpose yet unknown, and I felt that the situation should be brought to your immediate attention. The remainder of my theory involves a hidden agenda on the part of clan elders, or perhaps simply one powerfully ambitious elder. The clan's recent secession from Camarilla politics created a hefty vacuum within the clan. It's a vacuum comfortably filled by the presence of the Mafia, if I'm not mistaken, and I can't imagine a clan as resourceful as the Gangrel not attempting to make the most of their past dealings with us.

### The Degenerates

as a whole hate those of us involved with the Mafia with all the overwrought passion of their undead hearts. Over the last hundred years, we've destroyed or stolen an awful lot that they've directly or indirectly

fought to create or sustain. By and large, organized crime represents the antithesis of everything that many Toreador hold dear, and even those of us who endeavor to sponsor the arts rather than simply to use them tend to arouse Toreador anger or at least suspicion, as they seem to view such measures as fraudulent or somehow cheapening. This stems mainly from the fact that overall the Toreador seem to view the Mafia as a massively destabilizing element that disrupts the smooth-running utopia the clan wishes to construct around itself. In addition, the more involved our organization becomes, the less power and influence there will be available to them, in the long run, which brings us to what I feel to be the real root of their issue with us: jealousy.

Still, some of us continue to try to build bridges here and there — occasionally even literally. In fact, it seems to make some *mafiosi* feel better about themselves and their activities to give something back to the community, most often in the form of cultural endowment. Once they've involved themselves in social gatherings and organizations, they inevitably end up encountering the Toreador who feed on that particular sort of buffet. Some of the less judgmental Degenerates recognize a good thing when they see it, and it is this silent majority we end up trafficking with most often. I'm reminded of one in particular, an auction house owner, who has grown rather fond of selling off various *objets d'art* to individuals who happen to owe us money — a tidy little laundering operation, I must say.

At this juncture, allow me to stray from the point for a brief interlude inside

### The Great Pyramid

Although the Tremere as a clan have no strong ties to the Mafia, they are worth a look if for no reason other than purposes of comparison. The Tremere, as we understand them, have several important qualities worth mentioning. First, they are organized in a pyramidal hierarchy, with a council of seven regional leaders beneath the overall boss, and with seven sub-regional advisors to each regional leader, and so on. Second, the Tremere are taught to respect age, power and, most importantly, ambition. After all, how can one ever hope to achieve the former without the latter? Also, as only a given number of these ranks is available at any one time, the only real way of advancing within the family is to prove that you are the superior of your direct

leader or to remove him outright, but Heaven help you if you are actually caught trying to do so. Any of this starting to sound familiar?

One would think that such a sense of familiarity would make the Mafia extremely attractive to the likes of the Tremere, but apparently it is not. Although we have substantial evidence to support the notion that the Tremere have their many eyes and ears on our activities worldwide, we have very little to support the idea that they are planning to actually involve themselves in those affairs. Indeed, it's enough to make one believe that the Tremere have no absolutely no interest whatsoever in La Cosa Nostra, else we'd surely have heard from them by now.

• Wouldn't we?

Ah, yes. No discussion of vampiric criminals and crime would be complete without paying proper attention to

### The Deceivers

are the charlatans of our kind. At one time, the very mention of the Ravnos would send ripples of frustration through those of us with legitimate business to attend to. Their knack for destroying our carefully cultivated plans or operations for reasons we've never been able to figure out until it's far too late put them at the top of our shit list for many years. Granted, every once in a while — in a blue fucking moon, that is — one of them would flip and become an informant or deep cover operative for us. I even heard from one of our boys in Trenton about a Ravnos shooter who used his tricks to “convince” his marks that they were really dead, and to great effect, apparently. For the most part, though, they tended to disrupt every Mafia endeavor they came in contact with. Their refusal to follow our ground rules, and their involvement with various crimes and vices that usually fall under our own aegis, meant that their very presence proved damaging to our operations. Our personal Family's party line was to avoid at all costs.

But over the last couple of years, all of this has changed. What was once a clan of arrogant and devil-may-care hooligans has become a scattered hodgepodge of quiet and secretive loners. Most of those we used to keep tabs on have dropped from radar entirely, and the few new ones who have been emerging are doing so on relatively open terms, and with none of their usual caprice. Now, we don't know what exactly has got them so spooked, and I for one don't care. All we know is that whatever it is, it's got several



of them scared enough that they're willing to work honestly with anyone who'll watch their backs — something nobody could ever have truthfully said of the Ravnos as recently as a decade ago. And quite frankly, Don Cardona, it is somewhat gratifying, considering all the trouble they've put us through over time. Now they can put their skills toward fucking with those who fuck with us, for a change.

Now, if there's one clan that seems to want to muscle in on Mafia business lock, stock and barrel, it's

### **The Serpents**

Although these slippery shiteels originally stuck to an entirely different circle of underworld activity, the two circles were destined to overlap, and when they finally did the sparks flew. Since then, they've tried to muscle in on our action regarding a number of street-level operations, such as drugs and prostitution, and have begun branching out into other, more esoteric interests in recent years. It is in this latter regard that we find them the most bothersome. When they set their minds to a thing, you can bet that you'll not be the one to change it. The only good thing I can say about them is that their presence has been more than enough to keep the Giovanni's hands full. The underworld interests of the two often conflict, and since the Setites occasionally make use of our own services — it's rare, but it does happen — they're more likely to directly challenge the Necromancers than they are to directly challenge us. Plus there's the fact that the Setites seem to enjoy their would-be underworld rivalry with the Giovanni, and we're sure as hell not going to tell them to play nice. In fact, as far as our particular Family is concerned, the Giovanni are the bigger threat to our business interests overall... for the moment.

Sadly, it seems that only a select few of the older Families continue to hold out against these manipulators, yours among them. One by one, the rest have been bedfellows, at least briefly, with the passive and persuasive onslaught of so-called Setite business practice. The Serpents have just made it too damn difficult not to deal with them. They're making sure that, one way or another, some portion of all the various underworld roads will lead either directly to or right past their door. And I fear that one night, we ourselves may have to take a long, hard look at our own position toward this clan, lest we lose our competitive edge. If dealing with them truly is a modern cost of business, then it's one we may well have to pay eventually. Hopefully,

however, the awakening of our eminent patriarch will prove more than enough to keep these vipers eternally at arm's length.

Although the undead have long been both balm and wound to La Cosa Nostra, let me now address for you the matter of

### **Werewolves**

I'm sure that I don't need to provide for you an overview on the very creatures that you must have engaged on numerous occasions, but I should update you on one important aspect of their involvement in our affairs that has changed since you were last with us, Don Cardona: No longer is it considered improper to openly deal with werewolves. Even I, myself, have engaged in various correspondences, for mutual benefit, naturally, with certain members of their kind. With all of our significant competition these nights, it is simply unwise not to deal with them. Better to come to them openly and with respect, and in so doing, to deal with them on your own terms, than to spurn them as savages and risk them offering their services to your opposition.

Much as with the Setite situation, intercourse with werewolves is becoming increasingly widespread. Quite a few Families have engaged in arrangements with individuals or packs of werewolves to mutual benefit. I use the term pack because that is how my contact among their kind refers to them. The distinction between pack and crew is a complex one, where the Mafia is concerned, a bit of a squares-and-rectangles sort of arrangement. Apparently, any collection of werewolves who run together on a regular basis qualifies as a pack. But not every pack, even the ones in which a particular member might be Family, qualifies as a crew. In general, unless each member is part of the Family, or in rare cases, when just the leader is, the group can be called a pack and nothing more. From what I've seen, packs that keep to their own affairs, while occasionally performing some work with or for the Mafia, are the norm. Legitimate werewolf crews, on the other hand, are quite rare.

In most cases, the Family agrees to perform a particular service or set of services to the pack in exchange for consideration, most often in the form of what this thing of ours likes to call "dirty work." In most cases, the pack or individual in question needs one of its own to be taken care of and comes to the Family for help. Apparently, it's against the rules for one of them to dispatch a fellow werewolf. Amusing,

no? I guess some predilections are universal. In any event, the Family or crew agrees to the piece of work in exchange for that pack or individual's support against its own underworld enemies. Tit for tat. Standard operating procedure.

Oh, I understand, and I thought so too, at first. But if you'll allow, Don Cardona... it is what it is.

Believe me, the great strength of these creatures lies, quite simply, in their great strength. I beg you not to underestimate the value of a soldier such as this. First of all, they appear to be bound by a similar code of honor as we — a werewolf-specific *omerta*, if you will. Their "honor" — such as they know it — is matched only by their ferocity in combat. I, myself, have had the surreal pleasure of watching them work on two separate occasions, Don Cardona. It is a sight I've no desire to see again, even from the sidelines. But then again, I am quite sure that I don't need to tell you how... efficient they are in their work.

Second, they carry with them certain valuable traits by virtue of their very existences. For one thing, let us not underestimate the fear factor. If I send a soldier to squeeze a few extra points out of a delinquent shopkeeper, imagine how much more inclined the target will be to cooperate when our man survives getting blasted with both barrels of the shotgun the owner keeps under his counter for just such a visit. You get my point. Yes, I know it's crass, but you've got to keep up with the times, Don Cardona, and the environment these days is even more brutal than it was in the 20s, if you can believe it. And I've done my homework on this, too; if we're going to have a chance against these merciless Asian Triads, we've got to step up and start using similar tactics. Fire with fire, sire. And let us not forget these werewolves' utility in other ways. After all, the ability of a creature to enter another world and emerge more or less wherever he wants does open up an entire host of possibilities, not all of which are martial in nature. Why, the bank-robbing potential alone is endless, to say nothing of a miracle escape from a police raid or a hail of assassin's bullets. But when we combine these two factors? Well, just ask any Nosferatu about the advantage of surprise in combat.

All things considered, we have a lot more in common with them than may be first apparent. It is no surprise that of all the creatures with whom La Cosa Nostra shares the night, these werewolves are the most connected to the Family and its activities, after us, of course. In fact, with the help of my man on the inside, a Japanese werewolf connected to the Asian and American Triads, we've even been able to sort them into their own distinctive





## Werewolf Families

As I said before, these creatures seem to value honor as it pertains to the Family dynamic, and thus, many of them continue to claim allegiance to their overall breeding, sometimes even before their duties to themselves or their crews. Sorry; I mean packs. But it's interesting, either way. While they're certainly not as tied to their supernatural creation as, say, the Giovanni are, it seems as though they are somewhat more connected to their werewolf families than the rest of the supernaturally attuned *mafiosi* are to their respective groups.

From the information I've been given, we've been able to isolate a number of specific werewolf families, each with strong connections of one kind or another to the Mafia. Now, to give you some idea of perspective, I would say that even these three families are not the werewolf equivalent of any of our own Family clans. Their involvement more closely resembles that of the connected clans in terms of their overall numbers, though not in terms of business or influence. Indeed, a single werewolf *mafioso*, such as my contact among the Asians, can amass quite a bit of underworld influence when he decides to put his mind to it.

The first werewolf family, as such, of the Mafia hails from all over, but has the deepest roots in the United States and the Far East. For what it's worth, I've heard them referred to as Circuit Riders, though I highly doubt that the name is the traditional one for the family. My contact, Hiroyuki, tells me that they are more commonly known as the Glass Walkers, though I'll admit to preferring the former, all things considered. Regardless, these werewolves are extremely technologically adept for savages, and they have often used their considerable prowess with computers to wreak all kinds of brilliant havoc. I'm reminded of one instance where one of these "Circuit Riders" hacked into a highly secured mainframe in order to prove a point. He was eager to do business with us, and felt that this was the way to prove his worth. You can imagine how irritated, not to say embarrassed, the Nosferatu were by this little prank. My own contact, Hiroyuki, hails from this family, and he tells me that they are essentially "all about the bottom line." This is not to say that they are without honor. Far from it. Rather, it is more that they will go where the business takes them, without preconceptions, biases, or even fears. And this I admire.

The second most involved family as a whole is what is known as the Shadow Lords. A bit melodramatic, that, but it is what they call themselves, so we shall do likewise out of respect. Unfortunately, this family's involvement is more along the lines of the Giovanni's, and most of us Kindred *mafiosi* tend to view them as competitors rather than potential allies. Much of this stems from their direct and often instrumental involvement in the Russian Mob. While you might think that that would make them more or less partners, seeing as how the mortal Russians are currently trying to learn from us, such is not the case. No, these Shadow Lords are attempting to wean their mortal counterparts away from any and all involvement with La Cosa Nostra. They believe us to be an unnecessary crutch to their operations, that the Russian crews can get their act together without our assistance, especially with the recent fall of the Shadow Curtain. They've been nudging their mortal counterparts away from all contact with us, and indeed, have grown quite firm in their resolve of late, resulting in a number of tense interactions that have occasionally come to bloodshed. I must admit, the thought of us suffering such losses for our efforts does make me seethe, and though I admire their ambition, pride is ultimately the deadliest of sins, is it not?

The last of the deeply connected werewolf families is arguably the most curious. We have found no particular home base or even name, traditional or otherwise, for this family, and they have numerous crews and operations spread all over the globe. Their communication network rivals that of the Circuit Riders — or even the Nosferatu — but their methods differ. Rather than using purely computerized methods, I have heard that they use their own kind as messengers between crews and bosses. This is not as inefficient as one might think. Remember how they can slip between worlds? Well, apparently they've found a way to use this ability to their advantage, making travel on this world a far less daunting and time-consuming task. This also has the side effect of ensuring the security of their various in-house correspondences, as it offers no risk of anyone hacking into the information en route. Frankly, we know of their existence and involvement because they allow us to, in that they've come to us with various business propositions, and seem to have a knack for knowing just when and where to get in on the ground floor of a given opportunity. To date, the relationship, though mysterious and a bit one-sided, has been quite profitable for both parties, so many in

La Cosa Nostra don't really mind the situation. Some of us, however, are old or wise enough to know that when something looks too good to be true, it usually is. Just so you know, Don Cardona, when I asked Hiroyuki as to why all the secrecy surrounding the identity of this last family, he had no satisfactory answer to give me. He could only shake his head and whisper, "perhaps it is best for us not to know, hmm?"

Now, though most werewolves associated with the Mafia hail from or at least owe allegiance to one of these more prominent families, there are yet other, more independent members of their kind. Those we have come to call

### The *Solitaria*

Although the term "family" is used here to apply to groups of werewolves linked by common ancestry, the word carries more than this one definition and certainly more than this single, limited application. Separate and distinct from these larger families, alienated by both physicality and ancestry, is another "non-family" of werewolves—one that is particularly useful to the Mafia. Unified by ostracism and reared by opportunity, these orphaned werewolves are found in areas where there is little or no presence from the other major families. Hiroyuki, the Japanese Glass Walker of which I spoke, once referred to these creatures—with no small measure of disgust, I might add—as Ronin. Although I'm unfamiliar with the word, I expect it has the same origins or at least applications as our own term for them, the *solitaria*.

For one reason or another, these *solitaria* have been cast aside by their fellow werewolves and thus have no werewolf-specific family to call their own. Instead, they latch onto those who would accept them for who they are, or more often, what they can provide. Most interestingly, these embittered individuals often make incredibly loyal bodyguards and shooters, and one *solitario* can be readily depended upon to do the work of a dozen ordinary soldiers. Some of the best mercenaries come from their ranks, and it is wise—and fairly easy, all things considered—to use their unfortunate backgrounds and predilections to one's advantage.

Although they typically operate alone, sometimes a number of *solitaria* will unite to form a crew of their own. The best example of how well these individuals work together on a large-scale can be found in a small town in Manitoba, Canada. In this relatively remote locale, an entire family of *solitaria* has come into its own, having bred and interbred with the region's

mortals—don't ask me how that works—over successive generations until the entire family is a hereditary crew of its own. By now, everyone involved in organized crime in the area is connected with this family in some way or another; if you are not part of the group, then you are not welcome, and to be unwelcome here is to be marked for death. These insular werewolves severely punish any would-be criminal trespassers on their territory, be it metaphorical or even physical, and have grown quite wealthy on all the monies to be made in the diversified avenues of organized crime. Thankfully, their insular nature and explosive temperament have made expansion an unlikely prospect, but the Manitoba family has nonetheless shown us what can happen when these *solitaria* decide to band together or are left to their own devices.

That said, allow me now to move on to what I believe to be the biggest potential threat to our operations worldwide.

## Warlocks

I'm not sure how deep your knowledge of these sorcerers is on the whole, or what part they may have played in the time before you entered the cold sleep of torpor. What I am sure of is that they've stepped up to take an extremely proactive role in Mafia affairs since that time, particularly in the last 30 years. Now, as I have made it a personal crusade to keep up to date on these individuals and their activities, our information on them is quite substantial and, for the most part, both detailed and accurate.

From what we know, warlocks are organized into groups, much like ourselves and the werewolves. However, these stratifications are based purely on what sorts of miracles they prefer to invoke, rather than any hereditary issue, and are largely inconsequential to their business interests where we are concerned. This, I'm afraid to say, is probably their biggest if not their only saving grace. Nonetheless, a few warlocks pursue activities that are tied to their groups, and thus to their beliefs as a whole, and it is these groups that can be categorized into

## Warlock Families

Thanks to the many eyes and ears I have put to this task, I have for you tonight a reasonably accurate picture of the aims and goals of the five largest warlock families. Some of these only interact with us



peripherally, while others involve themselves as much as any other supernatural group, though possibly not as much as they themselves would like.

The most directly involved group of warlocks is a loose organization called the Cult of Ecstasy. This cult is the most involved in La Cosa Nostra as it pertains to business as usual. Cult members provide both product and customers for Mafia drugs, vice and other entertainments, and they are loath to involve the police in their dealings. Indeed, a great deal of the information on warlocks we currently have comes from a loquacious few of these individuals, who have found both honor and security in their status as loyal Family members. Although they are a bit sketchy on the whole, with their orgiastic ritualism and their Bohemian appetites, their contacts and abilities provide the Mafia with a much-needed thinking element on the streets.

Another group that falls into the "connected" category is one that calls itself the Virtual Adepts, a bunch of technology-savvy warlocks who use computers to work their magic. The Mafia has a few of these in its employ, endeavoring to use the Internet as both a means by which their businesses can grow and as a tool for the defense of Mob secrets. As a result, a handful have even been made for their efforts at securing classified documents and providing nearly traceless electronic paper trails for their businesses. In recent years, several have even learned how to track various sought-after parties through their vast computer expertise. In most cases, we call them in to help locate individuals who have gone underground in order to escape various obligations to the Family, but they have also been known to put their skills to good use in other, more enterprising ventures, such as electronic security systems... and the circumvention thereof. Believe me, Don Cardona, though this may prove to be the biggest adjustment you will have to make since rising from torpor, you must believe that there are truly no limits to the wonders of computers.

The strangest group is the one with the least official involvement in Mafia affairs, but the operative word there is "official." They call themselves the Syndic Progenitors and have a predilection toward magic of a scientific nature. Certain of these "Syndicates" have used their talents to build better drugs, requiring less expensive materials, and some American Syndics have even done experiments on a few of our enforcers in an attempt to make them tougher, stronger or more resistant to injury. These trials have been remarkably and frightfully successful, by all accounts. In your file you

should find a detailed record of the situation in Providence, Rhode Island, to where a good portion of this movement can trace its birth.

Although we don't have a proper name for them — yet — I have here several reports of a group of religious warlocks who seem to view their magic as a gift from God, though I find the very thought of it blasphemous. The majority of their affairs with La Cosa Nostra, best we can determine, involve their unceasing efforts to muddle everything of ours that they can get their hands on. Although we were unsure at first, it has since become readily apparent that this group actively works to suppress Mob activities, presumably because of its associations with the undead, though that could be merely ego speaking on our behalf. This particular family is also noteworthy because of their one radical splinter sect, a group called the Brotherhood of St. John. This secret cabal seems to think the Mafia is actually serving God in its protection of humanity, and they support La Cosa Nostra where they can, so long as it continues to maintain its traditional distance from overarching supernatural influence as a whole. Perhaps they are unaware of how pivotal we Kindred truly are to the Mafia, no? Nevertheless, this splinter group would be a great asset in determining the activities of the other warlocks, assuming we could get them to work for us without setting off their "Kindred alarm," or whatever it is they have.

The last group with whom we have extensive relations is an unnamed collective of theology scholars and thanatologists. From what we know, they view magic as the key to unlocking the door between life and death. This belief is surely bound to get them into trouble eventually, so we are sure to keep them at a distance whenever we do deal with them, and have had reasonably good relations with them up until now. Since we first became aware of their existence, we've sought to use their areas of expertise to our advantage, particularly in the areas of interrogation. As much as I'm reluctant to admit it, we have been known seek out their counsel in the past on matters such as pain tolerance and the threshold between life and death. I have also heard that they have a unique relationship with chance, and when one of these warlocks plays the odds, he is actually playing *with* the odds, rather than the other way around. I have heard that they can influence or at least predict the tumble of a die, a sequence of shuffled cards or the bounce of a roulette ball, and that some have amassed small fortunes from doing nothing but gambling. Interestingly, I've heard that most of them prefer to

avoid this sort of gaudy behavior, probably to avoid the blacklisting that inevitably follows such "good luck" at the tables of the larger casinos.

Lately, however, we've begun to question our association with them, by and large. See, they don't seem to respect our privacy like the others; we always get the sense that we're dealing with them on their terms instead of on our own, and we don't like that very much at all. One in particular, a resident of Boston, seems to be gathering an immense amount of data on our particular family's activities of late, a fact which concerned me enough to put a tail on him just over two weeks ago. You'll be proud to know that one of your own *soldati*, a Boston Cardona named Dominic, is hot on the trail, though he has yet to report back to me. I would certainly hate for anything untoward to have happened to him.

Discussion of such unsavory matters leads me thus to

## The Restless Dead

Can one truly discuss the Mafia and its effect on the supernatural world without paying proper attention to these tortured souls? To my mind, one of the biggest tragedies about our methods is the fact that it leaves

so many homes broken, so many souls shattered. Obviously, this applies less to our own Family than it does to many others, thanks to your codified legacy of honor, but we have been nonetheless responsible for our fair share of ghosts, Don Cardona. Still, it is better to feel remorse at having to take a life when necessary than to feel nothing, or worse yet, to let that very remorse prevent one from taking the same necessary steps the next time around, wouldn't you agree?

[An interval of hushed white noise, lasting a total of 31 seconds.]

I see. Well, I must say, I had no idea you felt that way, Don Cardona.

[Brief pause, shuffling of papers.]

Uh, for the purposes of my report, I found that the most obvious means by which we can organize these restless spirits is by their continuing associations with other, living members of the Mafia, and this in turn leads us to a discussion of their

## Motivations

Most dead people who associate with the various mortal and supernatural members of the Mafia do so for one of two reasons. First, our notions of "family"





create some extremely intense bonds, bonds that sometimes retain their integrity beyond the grave. For example, while I would like to think that my status as a devout Catholic somehow ensures that I will not return as a troubled spirit, there is still something gratifying about knowing that if I did, it would be because I believed that strongly in my vows to uphold my Family's honor. I have collected a number of stories about these determined individuals, some of which I'm sure you heard well before I was even born. I've put them all together for you in this folder right here.

[Sound of clothing rustling, followed by a pause.]

I'll just leave it on the desk then, shall I?

Right, well, to continue... The second most common reason for spirits to retain their connections with La Cosa Nostra involves vengeance — something with which the restless dead are understandably preoccupied. As I said before, organized crime is a veritable "ghost factory," churning out embittered spirits with a frequency roughly proportional to the violence of its current methods and leadership. And as might be expected, many of the ghosts produced were not quite ready to cross to the other side just yet, and thus have something keeping them from moving on. From what we understand, this is the biggest factor in determining who stays and who goes among the dead. And as all Kindred know, anger can be a very strong motivator.

In some cases, the ghost was a hit vic who returns to claim his due on the man — or entire family — who ordered him killed. Now, there's a plus and a minus to these sorts of situations: On the one hand, ghosts are difficult to destroy or even to dispel, and numerous losses might be suffered in the attempt. On the other hand, these types of spirits do tend to fade away once their hunger for retribution has been satisfied. This is not always the case, however, and there are some Mafia-owned locales that have had to be evacuated on a permanent basis due to the presence of a particularly intractable spirit. I have made notations in your file of all the specific places of this sort... rather, all the ones of which I have been made aware.

Other times, such an angry spirit is simply that of an innocent bystander caught in the crossfire between rival gangs or Families, doomed to haunt the site of his own sudden and unfortunate demise. When said site happens to be part of a particular Family's territory, you have yourself a new "ghost in the

machine," a spirit who is here to stay. Now, imagine if you will, what a dose of prolonged gangland warfare could do for the numbers of these resident ghosts.... Indeed, sire, it can grow truly frightening, and some particularly old and violent Mafia neighborhoods are just crawling with the dead by now; places like Boston's Brick-Bottom Somerville and our own Little Italy in New York. For those who live there still, particularly for those who are sensitive to such otherworldly emanations, it has become like dwelling inside a giant mausoleum.

Now, certainly other, less common reasons for spirits to involve themselves in Family affairs do occur, some of which I discussed earlier. It's all there in my report, if you care to look through it, Don Cardona.

But in the interests of time, allow me to move on to

## The Others

As I'm sure you are well aware, these are not the only supernatural creatures with whom we share the night. They are merely the ones of which we have the most detailed understandings, or the ones who have become attached, or one might say indebted, to us by dint of our mutual and often extended criminal and familial associations. But there are others whose connections to the Mafia have heretofore been far less widespread, or at least far less apparent, and we have reason to believe that these "others" are becoming a bigger threat to our operations than ever before. At least they are acknowledging our presence a great deal more in the modern nights, whatever their ultimate designs may be.

Part of the reason for this belief stems from the recent reports that have been coming in from cities like Las Vegas, New Orleans and Los Angeles. Our operations in these places, at one time very strong, have lost significant ground in recent years, and some degree of supernatural influence is suspected. It is, however, an influence we believe to be coming from outside the usual suspects. In all three cases, we've had entire crews go missing, sometimes overnight. Accounts and specific problems vary, as I'm sure you can imagine, but part of it surely stems from the mortal situations we are currently forced to contend with, especially in Los Angeles, where the entire area is in the midst of a general civic redevelopment. The police force is dependably rotten, but honest business has been on the rise, having reached unheard of highs in recent years before the economic slump of this past

fiscal year. These sorts of clean-up privatizations have resulted in fewer places in which the Mafia can dig its hooks. And on top of things getting cleaner, they're also getting stranger and, quite frankly, we are having serious problems keeping up. The Asian gangs are doing better than they have any right to, and there's a whole rising tide of seemingly independent violence. To us, it's like the tales of what things were like for everyone else during our heyday: up against opponents with ideas that aren't just new, but strange.

In short, Don Cardona, we're being outcompeted.

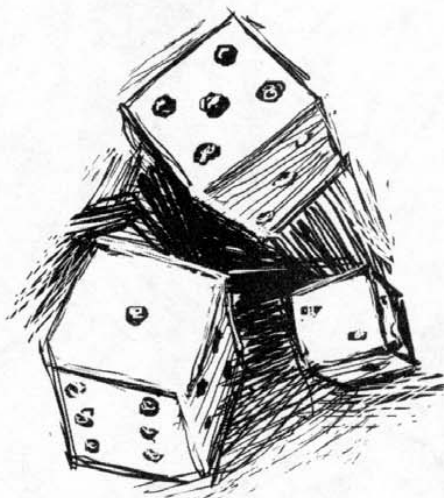
Now, in the case of Las Vegas, we have always had the Giovanni to blame for the Cardona family's losses in particular, but even they have been hit hard in recent years. One source close to all the Vegas families tells us that an uprising of particularly determined and well-informed — supernaturally so, one might say — mortals is to blame, if you can believe it. The source's leads say that this uprising is specifically targeting those vampires with connections to organized crime — such as the Giovanni and ourselves, the Cardonas. Needless to say, such an outrageous theory is far from being confirmed at this time, but you can rest assured that if it turns out to be accurate — if an unruly horde of mortals is indeed responsible — then whatever their motivations may be, they will be treated just like any other mortals who take it upon themselves to interfere in Family affairs.

As to the Los Angeles and New Orleans situations... well, I'm afraid we have even less to go on there, so far as our direct knowledge of supernatural involvement goes. But please trust, Don Cardona, that if it were simply the expanding mortal trends with which we had to contend, we would surely have taken the necessary steps by now, especially in our own family. No, something supernatural is indeed at work in these two fallen cities, Don Cardona, and it seems to be doing its level best to wrest influence over any and all underworld traffic away from ourselves and the other supernal entities within our organization. And it is succeeding... for now.

This [clears throat] is more or less the extent of the information that's been made available to me. So, as my father used to say, *finita la commedia*.

And let me say, Don Cardona, that I appreciate the trust you've shown by giving me this assignment. I must admit, I expected you to call upon one of your own — a true Cardona — subsequent to your awakening. Some of the others were displeased with your choice, of course, but I am simply gratified that our don does not allow mere names to blind him to true ability.

I trust that I have not disappointed you.  
Don Cardona?







# Chapter Three: Character Creation

*Where do these creatures emerge from?*

John Gotti, testifying about his “alleged” Mob connections

Not surprisingly, characters for **World of Darkness: Mafia** chronicles use the same basic Traits as characters for the other World of Darkness games. Unless your character is one of the supernatural denizens of the night, however, certain restrictions apply. For example, “normal” *mafiosi* do not have access to such things as Disciplines, Gifts, Spheres and the like. Aside from that caveat, however, much of the character creation process is the same as what experienced players will recognize.

As a general rule, **World of Darkness: Mafia** characters are presumed to be ordinary mortals who lead unusual lives as far as the rest of society is concerned. Thus, the Traits discussed herein are geared largely toward “ordinary” mortal characters. This is not to say that vampires, werewolves or other supernatural creatures cannot play characters using

this book, merely that the following information is “lowest common denominator” material, if you will. A *mafioso* who finds himself Embraced, for example, would gain access to vampire-only Traits (such as the Herd Background), *in addition* to those presented in this chapter. Such a character may very well end up with ratings in two totally different types of Status, for example, before very long. Likewise, possessing some of the Traits herein does not preclude a character from entering an altered state of existence. For example, a Garou who is born into the Family does not lose all his organized crime-related Merits upon entering his First Change; the player simply accounts for the new state of being on the character sheet. When all else fails, use the Rule of Common Sense to adjudicate what Traits are appropriate for a given character.



## Choose Concept, Nature and Demeanor

A character's concept deserves a little extra consideration in a Mafia chronicle. After all, if everyone in a troupe were to do the bare minimum, they'd all have "criminal" written in their concept section and the point would be a bit moot.

Think about concept for a minute. In the other games, the character's concept is what he did for a living or an ideal he held onto before experiencing whatever change turned him from human to monster. For vampires, a character's concept is an idea of his lifestyle before the Embrace; for werewolves, it is a reflection of what she was before her First Change. Use concept in the same manner here. That is, define the character by his life before he became involved with the Mob, before he became aware of the supernatural, or prior to whatever event you think most shapes the character's direction in life or unlife. If your character's concept doesn't take that life-changing event into consideration, it really doesn't do much for the character. After all, concept is not a game mechanic, it's simply a skeleton on which to build a character. If your character just plans on moving forward, unaffected by her environment, he's not likely to contribute much to the story.

Also as part of a character's concept, consider which Family claims him as a member, if any. If you wish, consult with your storyteller on this matter, as she may have a specific Family in mind for the story. Likewise, some Storytellers prefer to create their own Families, whereas others favor using those present in the real world. Storytellers may have created branches of existing Families or might wish to restrict Families that play key roles in the story.

A character's concept can be defined by more than just his occupation or his responsibility to his Family (bookie, *sgarrista*). It can be how he sees himself (the would-be don, *primo* of the crew), the player's desires for the character's role in the story (kingmaker, redemption seeker), or anything that serves to give the character direction. Don't limit yourself to traditional interpretations of the concept, and don't relegate concept to an abstraction of a character's "class" or skill set.

Not all of the Storyteller games use Nature and Demeanor, but **World of Darkness: Mafia** assumes that they are part of the basic collection of Traits that helps define characters. Experienced players likewise may choose to ignore Nature and Demeanor, but

### Character Creation Cheat Sheet

This is a quick-and-dirty version of the mortal character creation rules that will appear in various forthcoming World of Darkness titles. Rather than page through this chapter every time you want to create a mortal character, you may simply refer to this sidebar for convenience.

#### Step One: Character Concept

Choose concept, Family, Nature and Demeanor.

#### Step Two: Select Attributes

Prioritize primary, secondary and tertiary Attribute categories (6/4/3).

#### Step Three: Select Abilities

Prioritize primary, secondary and tertiary Ability categories (11/7/4).

#### Step Four: Select Advantages

Select Backgrounds (5) and Virtues (7).

#### Step Five: Last Touches

Note your character's Humanity (Conscience + Self-Control) and Willpower (equal to Courage), then spend freebie points (21).

they are highly recommended not only for new players, but also at the start of character creation to give the character additional direction. A Demeanor is a one-word summation of how the character acts toward the world around him, whereas Nature is his "true self," how he genuinely responds when no one is watching him. Demeanor can change frequently, but Nature, the character's "core," should change only in very rare and momentous circumstances. Like concept, these Traits have no mechanical effect. They are just guidelines that establish a basic idea of what the character is like before numbers become a part of the process.

Players don't have to worry about using established Natures and Demeanors for their characters. Some Storytellers opt to allow players to regain points of spent temporary Willpower when acting in accordance with their Nature. If this is the case, a player should consult with the Storyteller before the chronicle begins, so that a fair watermark can be set for this.

With that one minor concern aside, players are encouraged to use their Natures and Demeanors to round out their characters' behavioral bent. Like concept, these ideas can be twisted, applied seemingly incongruously or even set at odds with the character's desires. For example, consider a loyal Mafia soldier whose greed gets the better of him when no one's looking, or a compassionate third son of a *mafioso* whose ancestry drags him into the world of blood and treachery represented by La Cosa Nostra. With just these simple statements of idea put into the terms of Nature, Demeanor and concept, characters can become more than flat support roles or one-dimensional archetypes.

## Prioritize and Assign Attributes

As always, Attributes are the common defining characteristics of an individual. **World of Darkness: Mafia** assumes that its characters are mortals, and it uses as baseline that allocation of dots. A player may assign six dots to her character's primary group of Attributes, four dots to the secondary group and three dots to the tertiary group. Remember also that characters are assumed to have a basic, free rating of one in all Abilities, before any point allocations are spent, to reflect their basic human potential.

## Prioritize and Assign Abilities

Dot allocations for Ability groups are assigned in the same primary, secondary and tertiary groupings as Attributes. A player receives 11 dots to divide among her character's primary Abilities, seven dots for secondary Abilities and four dots for tertiary Abilities. At this stage of character creation, a character may not have more than three dots allocated to any single Ability, though the player may spend freebie points later to raise one of these Traits above three.

## Specialties

In the interests of keeping the Storyteller System streamlined, we have built the core group of Abilities small — the more Abilities a game system has, the more incompetent its starting characters are, having to decide whether to put their valuable points in Bookkeeping, Black Powder Weapons or the Castilian dialect of the Spanish language. Rather than creating a huge cluster of niche capabilities, we have made the Storyteller System granular enough





to make a given character useful in a broad area of expertise while rewarding specialization if the character devotes himself to focused study.

What this means in terms of *mafioso* characters is that the unique abilities they possess are better represented as specializations of existing Abilities rather than by all-new Abilities. For example, safecracking doesn't need to be Safecracking; it works just as well as a specialization of Security. That way, any character with Security can attempt to open a locked safe, but a character who devotes himself to learning the fine art of confounding safes by taking safecracking as a specialization at his fourth dot of Security gains all the bonuses to die rolls as described in the core rulebooks, which makes him more capable at it than the Security generalist.

Yeah, that's wordy, but it's a long way of saying, "Keep it simple." What follows is a brief table of criminal activities and the Ability that governs them. Characters may attempt to do any of these activities (as long as the Ability permits — remember that difficulties increase by 1 for Skill rolls if the character doesn't have the pertinent Skill, and rolls involving Knowledges not possessed can't be attempted at all), but if they specialize in the activity, they may reroll any 10 as normal. Note also that these are just examples. Storytellers may choose to make critical Abilities that arise in their chronicles specialties of existing Abilities. And, as always, the story should come first — just because a player has six dice in his money laundering pool doesn't mean that he can automatically give it a shot if the Storyteller's plot involves a botched money laundering attempt.

#### Activity Ability

Safecracking	Security
Lockpicking	Security
"Cooking the Books"	Finance
Bookmaking	Finance
Money Laundering	Finance

## Advantages

The basic Advantage set for *mafioso* characters is largely the same as that of any of the supernatural character types, barring their mystical powers. Wiseguys have access to most of the Backgrounds that other characters do, as well as Willpower (which is computed a little differently than it is in some of the World of Darkness games).

## Backgrounds

As with other denizens of the World of Darkness, *mafiosi* have connections to the world around them, as represented by Backgrounds. Indeed, many wiseguys, given the fact that they're mortal, have better connections to the mortal world than do many of their supernatural counterparts.

New characters are allowed five dots worth of Backgrounds from the following list: Allies, Contacts, Fame, Influence, Mentor, Resources and Retainers, as well as the Mafia-specific Backgrounds presented below.

Obviously, some Backgrounds are utterly inappropriate to *mafiosi*, especially ones who don't have any connection to the supernatural world, and that's why they're excluded from the list. Unless a wiseguy is a mage, he's not going to have any Avatar to speak of, and Past Lives won't even enter into the equation unless the gangster is a werewolf. Players should be mindful of this and not select any Backgrounds that don't fit their character concepts. Storytellers should enforce these guidelines as well, making sure that nothing "slips through," as a character who has no supernatural inclination really has no business with any justification of Arcane.

Several of the Backgrounds from existing World of Darkness games are well suited to *mafiosi*, or can at least be reinterpreted in the context of the Mafia.

Allies, for example, is one of the quintessential Mafia Backgrounds, representing people who have a vested interest in the success of the character in question. Allies can take any form, and need not always be allied gangsters, *soldati*, hoods or hangers-on. Allies can be crooked cops, a federal agent on the take, a smuggler who provides goods for distribution or even a sibling who's part of the legitimate business world and can provide help that's not part of the Mafia's normal sphere of influence. A detective willing to cover up a character's involvement in crimes he's suspected of, a newspaper reporter who can redirect public opinion or a public official who can lobby for lenient (or strict) laws also make fine examples of allies. Remember that the Allies Background usually works best in circumstances that don't involve combat but are more hands-on than informational (which are better served by Retainers and Contacts, respectively). Think of taking Allies for a character who wants others to be in a position to do things for him, rather than leak secrets to him or break legs for him.

If Allies is the penultimate *mafioso* Background, then Contacts is the ultimate background for the Mob. It reflects connections the character has made throughout his history: people he knows who provide him with valuable information. Granted, this isn't a change from the normal scope of the Contact Background, but it truly is the *mafioso's* bread and butter. Practically anyone can be a Contact; this Trait is even more versatile than Allies. It is less functional than Allies, however, in that the primary purpose of a Contact is to provide information, whereas an Ally provides help, assistance or some other capacity. Information is a very valuable thing, though, which is why this Background is so favored among mobsters. Information is the Mafia's stock in trade, which it parlays into other assets. For example, a police officer who is a wiseguy's Contact would be able to tell the character when a sting operation is scheduled to go down, thereby allowing criminals in the know to avoid the dragnet. A Contact in a rival Family can provide intelligence or diplomatic information. Even a truck driver can be useful, as he knows when valuable shipments are due to hit the roads — and if his truck just happens to be one of those hijacked, well, as long as he keeps his mouth shut, his Mafia confidant will probably keep him comfortably compensated.

As it is in all stories, Fame can be a blessing and a curse. Famous mobsters are going to attract attention in their own right. When under public scrutiny, it can be difficult to maintain the low profile that most *mafiosi* require to go about their business undetected. Still, some wiseguys thrill at the prospects Fame offers them. John Gotti, for example, thrived on public attention and Al Capone's name was synonymous with Chicago headlines for almost the duration of his reign.

These are merely examples for how Backgrounds can be "flexed" to accommodate the Mafia setting. Other Backgrounds can represent the Mob's far-reaching sphere of influence, as well. Influence, itself, can reflect the ear of a senator or even a president-to-be (as, according to rumor, Frank Sinatra used Sam Giancana's help to have John F. Kennedy voted into office). Resources is always helpful to a mobster, and what self-respecting *capo* would be caught dead without his Retainers? Even the Mentor Background can be adapted to Mafia life to indicate a powerful boss or well-connected relative.

## Virtues

Virtue Traits define a character's outlook on life — they shape a character's ethical code and describe his commitment to his chosen morality. Virtues exist to help give a character a sense of being, not to force players to portray their characters in a given way. The moral struggle of **Vampire: The Masquerade** is the primary vehicle for the use of Virtues, but that same moral struggle is present in this book's depiction of the Mob. As such, we're including the Virtue Traits for those World of Darkness Storytellers who don't have access to the **Vampire** rules.

Sometimes, an act or situation may force a character to consider exactly how she should react to a given stimulus. Virtues come into play when a character does something ethically questionable (according to the character's morality) or confronts something that terrifies or disturbs her. Note that mortals, unlike Kindred, do not have a Beast. Their responses to their own faltering morality may well be very different from a vampire in a similar state of moral decay.

Note that some of these Traits function differently for mortals than they do for Kindred.

## Conscience

Conscience is a Trait that allows characters to evaluate their conduct with relation to what is "right" and "wrong." A character's moral judgment with Conscience stems from her attitude and outlook. Conscience is what prevents a vampire from succumbing to the Beast, by defining the Beast's urges as unacceptable. By the same token, in mortals it reflects a subscription to cultural mores — murder, theft, rape and other personal crimes are wrong, but what other transgressions might cause a pang of guilt or a hardening of the soul?

Conscience factors into the difficulty of many rolls to avoid committing a transgression. Additionally, Conscience determines whether or not a character loses Humanity by committing acts that do not uphold her moral code. A character with a high Conscience score feels remorse for transgressions, whereas a character with a lower Conscience may be a bit more callous or ethically lax.

- Uncaring
- Normal
- Ethical
- Righteous
- Remorseful



## Self-Control

Self-Control defines a character's discipline and mastery over her urges, id or other desires to place herself before the greater good. Characters with high Self-Control rarely succumb to emotional urges, and thus are able to restrain their darker sides more readily than characters with low Self-Control.

Self-Control comes into play when a character faces adversity in which the sensible response would be a heightened state of emotion, acting utterly upon the way he feels instead of rationally deciding how he would respond. Self-Control allows the character to resist whatever exaggerated emotional state would overcome him. For example, a character witnessing a brutal gangland execution might have the overwhelming desire to run for his life, wrestle the gun away from the killer or shove the victim out of the way. By succeeding at a Self-Control roll, the character could stay and take conscious action of his own choice.

- Unstable
- Normal
- Temperate
- Hardened
- Total self-mastery

## Courage

Courage is the quality that allows characters to stand in the face of fear or daunting adversity. It is bravery, mettle and stoicism combined. A character with high Courage meets her fears head on, whereas a character of lesser Courage may flee in terror. It differs from Self-Control in that it is not based upon ethics, but a more primal self-preservational drive.

- Timid
- Normal
- Bold
- Resolute
- Heroic

## Humanity

The Trait of Humanity is integral to the underlying theme of **Vampire: The Masquerade**, as well as lying close to the core of **World of Darkness: Mafia**'s own ethical quandaries. It is a moral code that allows people to retain their humane sensibilities in the face of their transformation into criminals. In essence, it is what keeps a person from becoming a murderous thug, enslaved by his own desires.

Humanity, unlike most other Traits, is rated on a scale of 1 to 10, as it is more complex than a 1-to-5 quantification would allow. Also, just because people follow the tenets of Humanity doesn't mean they are automatically friendly, congenial saints. Criminals, especially, are predators by nature, and Humanity gifts them with the ability to deny their selfish urges. It is an inward morality that protects a wiseguy from himself.

Unfortunately, the very nature of existence as a maverick who places his own wants ahead of the rest of the world's welfare is anathema to one's Humanity. As the body count and a character's rap sheet grow, a moral rot takes hold and people become progressively less concerned with the well-being of fellow human beings. As such, *mafiosi* are likely to lose Humanity over the course of the game.

Note that, as mortals, *mafiosi* typically follow the principles of Humanity, though they do so largely out of ignorance: Most don't know that they can be anything else. As such, this mechanical system for morality normally doesn't come into play for them. The weight of a wiseguy's crimes have so much bearing on the state of a character's soul, however, that **World of Darkness: Mafia** elevates the importance of Virtues and Humanity to almost the same degree of importance they have in **Vampire**.

- Horrific
- Bestial
- Cold
- Unfeeling
- Distant
- Removed
- Normal
- Caring
- Compassionate
- Saintly

## Effects of Humanity

A character's Humanity score reflects how much of a character's humane nature remains despite the deleterious effects of his behavior. It influences how well a character may deny her id.

• Humanity affects a character's Virtues. Whenever a certain Virtue is called into question, a player may not roll more dice for a Virtue than her character has dots in Humanity. Obviously, as the character sinks ever more deeply into his own id, ego and superego, questions of morality and self-

preservation mean less and less. As Humanity depletes, the character creeps slowly toward the night when he loses all self-control.

- If a character's Humanity score would ever drop to zero, don't actually drop it to zero (unless the character is a vampire, in which case those rules supersede these). Instead, the character's Humanity remains at 1 and he acquires a derangement. Derangements are discussed on p. 222 of *Vampire: The Masquerade*, and in various places of the other World of Darkness core rulebooks (such as the Fits of Madness metis deformity in *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*). Storytellers should consider whether that persona is suitable for use as a player's character. Completely controlled by his urges, the character is probably a mindless slave to his own immediate desires and may fall under the Storyteller's control.

Humanity scores fluctuate based upon the Hierarchy of Sin (see below) — if a character accidentally or purposefully commits an act rated lower than her Humanity score, she must roll her Conscience Trait to see whether she accepts the act (and thus loses Humanity) or feels remorse and maintains her current level. Humanity may be *raised* only by spending experience points on it.

## Degeneration

Despite all efforts to the contrary, a person who consciously chooses to flout the established social (and legal...) order is going to succumb to moral failure sooner or later. Willfully or otherwise (hence the importance of Self-Control), a character occasionally commits atrocity and risks losing his Humanity. If the character feels remorse for his actions, he knows that his Humanity is still intact. If he commits a wrongful act and callously disregards it, however, his Humanity is obviously waning. Thus, it is extremely important to use morality and Humanity in a consistent, dramatic manner. If the Storyteller allows the players to (sometimes literally) get away with murder, the story will suffer, as some of the gravity of the criminal life vanishes. If the Storyteller is too strict with Humanity rules, though, all the characters will be ravaging, knife-wielding maniacs by the end of the first session. Keeping a handle on Humanity is a hard thing to do, but the Degeneration system is designed to help that.

The system is simple: Whenever a character takes an action that the Storyteller decides is morally questionable, the character may suffer degeneration





— a permanent loss of Humanity. If degeneration is a possibility, the player whose character commits the act should make a Conscience roll for that character. The difficulty is 8 — reprehensible acts are hard to justify — though the Storyteller may modify this difficulty. Willpower may not be spent for an automatic success on this roll, as all the ego in the world won't protect a character from guilt.

If the player makes the roll with even one success, the character loses no Humanity — he feels enough remorse or somehow manages to justify his transgression. If he fails the roll, the character loses a point of Humanity. If the player botches, the character loses a point of both Humanity and Conscience, and also gains a derangement, decided upon by the Storyteller (who should make it appropriate). Obviously, morality is not something a wiseguy can afford to take lightly. Remember that, at the Storyteller's discretion, a character whose Humanity drops to one might be no longer suitable to remain a player's character. Honestly, characters

with low Humanity scores aren't particularly appropriate either, but can be enjoyably tragic figures in comparison to their nobler counterparts.

### Using the Hierarchy of Sin

Degeneration checks may seem arbitrary or ill defined. To some degree, they are, but this is intentional. Moreover, degeneration checks are not random so much as they are subjective. A Storyteller has *carte blanche* to monitor character morality in her chronicle. This is a huge responsibility for the Storyteller, but one that ultimately makes for a great deal of tragedy and horror, as the characters gradually descend into a state of utter monstrosity though they desperately rail against it. Storytellers, beware — players should never feel that you are screwing them out of Humanity or, consequently, their characters. Use degeneration checks consistently but sparingly, lest the tragedy erode to an incessant series of failed die rolls. Because this mechanic is so heavily entrenched in the Storyteller's line of duty, her own morality is often reflected in how she applies the rule. This balancing act is encouraged, as it illustrates literally what a Storytelling game may do only in allegory.

To lend a sense of order to degeneration checks, consult the Hierarchy of Sin here. Whenever a character commits a dubious act, see how that action relates to the hierarchy. If the action is *at or below* the level of the character's Humanity score, a roll is warranted — as a character falls further down the Humanity scale, she becomes increasingly callous, and minor peccadilloes cease to bother her. The use of the term *violation* in the hierarchy is deliberately vague, to aid the Storyteller. A violation may be anything questionable and is presented to avoid inclining the scale toward any single transgression. Violation may be killing, callous injury, rape or any other villainy the Storyteller considers wrong.

It seems hard to slide to the lowest echelons of the scale, but consider how jaded a character grows as his Humanity falters. Sooner or later, the character will be committing depravity outside her own volition. The Storyteller is free to decree that characters of low Humanity (4 or less) occasionally act according to various urges and impulses that must be resisted with Conscience rolls or Willpower expenditure. Here is the crux of morality in the game setting — how closely can the character skirt indulging himself before he mires himself in damnation?

#### Humanity Hierarchy of Sin

Humanity	Moral Guideline
10	Selfish thoughts
9	Minor selfish acts
8	Injury to another (accidental or other wise)
7	Theft
6	Accidental violation (drinking a vessel dry out of starvation)
5	Intentional property damage
4	Impassioned violation (manslaughter, killing a vessel in frenzy)
3	Planned violation (outright murder, savored exsanguination)
2	Casual violation (thoughtless killing, feeding past satiation)
1	Utter perversion or heinous acts

As Humanity erodes, characters not only become capable of, but also actively pursue, ever more depraved acts. It is important, then, to know how characters change as their Humanity scores deteriorate. Even a mortal's behavior, even under the auspices of Humanity, may become so utterly depraved and brutal that the very thought of him causes discomfort in others. After all, a low Humanity score indicates that very little connects the character with her humane origins.

## Keeping Records and Spending Freebies

At this point, all a player has left to do is determine her Willpower and Humanity and spend her freebies.

Willpower is simply the character's Courage rating. Note that this value is recorded *before* any freebies are spent. If a player increases a character's Courage with freebies, doing so does not automatically raise his Willpower score, which must be raised separately. Humanity is the total of the character's Conscience and Self-Control. Like Willpower, this Trait does not increase if the defining Virtues are raised with freebies. It must be increased separately.

The freebie-point costs of various Traits are as follows.

Attribute	5 points
Ability	2 points
Background	1 point
Virtue	2 points
Willpower	1 point

## New Traits

Although the Storyteller System is flexible, sometimes a situation arises in which none of the extant Traits adequately describe how a certain character's potential can affect the story. To that end, we include a few new Mafia-related Traits to flavor certain characters. As is typical, we prefer to err on the side of simplicity, but if one of these new Traits suits your character to a tee, by all means, use it (pending your Storyteller's approval).

## New Archetype

### Soldier

The Mafia has a strict, almost militaristic, hierarchy that is founded on its members following orders and respecting their superiors. The Soldier believes in this system with all his being, and recognizes that the Family has come as far as it has by holding fast to its chain of command. Soldiers often point out that the greatest losses suffered by La Cosa Nostra over time have come from within, and they struggle at all times for intra-Family unity and loyalty. Executioners, bodyguards and newly blooded *piciotti* are good examples of Soldier Archetypes.

— Regain a point of Willpower whenever following orders turns out to be the best course of action. Also, regain a point of Willpower any time you decide to follow orders despite the advice of those around you or despite your own better judgment.

## New Backgrounds

### Family Status

Family Status is something critical to the life of every *mafioso*, as it is his overall standing within La Cosa Nostra. A great many factors come into play where Family Status is concerned, but this Trait represents the bottom line and measures how much weight the character's name carries in Family circles. Note that unless the Storyteller plans on running a high-stakes chronicle, Mafia characters may begin play with no more than a single dot in Family Status. Any further status must come as a direct result of game play. The acquisition of rank, title and respect is a core element of most Mafia stories and should not come cheaply or easily under any circumstances.

If a character acquires at least four dots in Family Status, he gains the equivalent of having been "made," even if such a boon hasn't officially occurred yet (see the Made Man Merit, below). Anyone who puts a hit out on someone possessing Family Status of four or more is likely to face extremely harsh repercussions. It is important to note here that one cannot "make" another *mafioso* unless he himself possesses the Mentor



Background at a level equal to his own Family Status. Higher ratings indicate the ease with which a potential candidate's confirmation is likely to pass. A *mafioso* with a rating of five in both Mentor and Family Status could decide to arbitrarily make his own limo driver (so long as he was Sicilian), and the move would be likely to fly with the Commission.

- *Picciotto*: Button Man, or low-ranking soldier
- *Sgarrista*: Wiseguy, or respected family man
- *Caporegime*: Lieutenant, or Crew leader
- *Capo Bastone*: Underboss, or second-in-command
- *Capo*: Don, one of the infamous "Mob bosses"

## Favors

There's a common saying that has special resonance among the members of La Cosa Nostra: "It's not what you have, it's who you know." This adage is especially true for those ambitious *mafiosi* trying to climb the rickety ladder of organized crime. Individuals with this Background have accumulated a set number of favors that they can call in during times of need. These favors come from one or more individuals who actually owe the character something, thus distinguishing them from Allies or Contacts. Unless the Storyteller says otherwise, each favor may be used only once (players must keep track of remaining favors) and the Storyteller is the final arbiter of what a single favor may accomplish.

- One favor
- Two favors
- Four favors
- Seven favors
- Ten favors

## Merits and Flaws

These optional Traits can add extra dimension to a character, but be wary of overusing them. Merits and Flaws fit more seamlessly with some of the World of Darkness games than others, and as always, the Storyteller has final say as to whether or not Merits and Flaws are permitted, as well as having veto power over individual ones.

Still, these Advantages have their uses, most notably in quantifying those aspects of the characters that aren't so easily defined by other categories of Traits. When looking to assign one or the other, consult your Storyteller beforehand, both to obtain permission and to determine whether what you're looking to do couldn't fall under some other category, for simplicity's sake. For example, having a mansion might qualify as a Merit in some chronicles, but in most it can probably be assumed that a character of sufficient Resources has one already. Use Merits and Flaws to augment the character, not to tweak an extra bit of benefit from the rules.

### Stand-Up Guy (1-pt. Social Merit)

At some point in your checkered past, you had an opportunity to rat out members of the Mafia in exchange for your own freedom. You opted instead to maintain your vows of *omerta* and *rispetto*, to seal your lips and take your pinch like a man. As a result, many wiseguys afford you at least a grudging respect for the loyalty you have demonstrated. You receive a -1 bonus to the difficulty of all Social rolls made around any who know of the sacrifice you once (or more than once) made for the Family. Note to Storytellers: Don't let a player whose character has this Merit act all uppity — *everyone* is *supposed* to keep his mouth shut and do his time. A character with this Merit is merely someone known to have done his duty. In these cynical times, that much is noteworthy.

### Snitch (1-pt. to 3-pt. Social Merit)

You have a secret informant inside one important bureaucracy or another. This individual has access to special information that precludes the relationship from falling under the standard rules of the Contacts Background. The number of points taken determines at what level your snitch is involved: One point might represent a mid-level numbers cruncher inside the IRS, whereas a three-point snitch could be someone in the office of the district attorney herself.

### Made Man (5-pt. Social Merit)

Your name is "on the books"; you're one of the men a Family considers untouchable. Nobody can fuck with you, and if they do they're going to get hit so hard that they wouldn't dream of doing it again. This Merit represents one of the penultimate

expressions of the Mafia's esteem for an individual, as it means that the Family (or even the whole Organization) will exact vengeance on anyone who crosses you.

Note that this status doesn't mean you're invincible. It does mean that you have a powerful and violent institution behind you, one ready to protect you in return for your service to it. In some cases, this benefit is a posthumous one.

### **Dead Man Walking (2-pt. to 5-pt. Social Flaw)**

An open contract has been taken out on your life. The greater the number of points devoted to the Flaw, the larger the reward for the contract's successful completion. Thus, a two-point Flaw would indicate that a minor underboss or scheming *consigliere* was responsible for your contract, and probably represents a personal grudge more than anything. For five points, however, someone very high up seems to want you out of the way, and will spare no expense to see the job done.

### **Jaded (3-pt. Mental Flaw)**

You've been a part of La Cosa Nostra for a while, and the Life has taken its toll on your moral outlook. Instead of the standard complement of seven dots of Virtues, you receive only five. This Flaw may be taken only at character creation. Storytellers, watch this one for abuse — don't let the gumbies take it to buy further dots in Firearms while simultaneously allowing their characters to kill without remorse. Note that this Flaw yields only three extra freebie points, whereas Virtues cost two freebies each. That's intentional.

### **On the Lam (3-pt. Social Flaw)**

You are wanted by the authorities. Perhaps warrants for your arrest are outstanding, or maybe you even executed a brilliant jailbreak sometime in the recent past. Whatever the cause, the effect is that you are actively pursued by various law-enforcement agencies and must take steps to conceal both your identity and your movements. Undead *mafiosi* must take extra special care, lest they find themselves apprehended and thrown into a jail cell with a window facing east....







# Chapter Four: The Veil of Secrets and Lies

Mother is the best bet, and don't let Satan draw you too fast...  
— Dutch Schultz, on his deathbed in 1935

*Our Father who art in Heaven,  
hallowed be thy name...*

*I've come to the conclusion that duty is a peculiar thing. Indirectly or otherwise, it can achieve just about anything. It can end wars just as quickly as it can begin them; set two brothers at one another's throats, or set them both together at someone else's; it can raise and lower spirits, flags, defenses or egos — seemingly at will. Hell, sometimes duty can even bring back the dead....*

*Oh, yeah; if there's one thing I've learned in my time as a hundred-year veteran of the Life, it's to never underestimate the power of duty.*

*Actually, I've been thinking a lot about duty lately, even before tonight. And tonight, well, tonight has just been more or less fuel for the fire. Half an hour ago I was standing on a pier jutting out over the Charles River, watching this mark from my so-called safe point. The would-be vic was down below, under the trellis, seemingly no more aware of my presence than he had been in the 13 days since I'd first received the order from Malta — from Nicholas Romero himself, no less — to begin shadowing the guy. A half-hour ago, I was holding the high ground... in every way. I had my mark in*



my sights, a job that I thought I enjoyed, a beautiful set of wheels, even a nice house on the waterfront. A half-hour ago, that is.

Then again, half an hour ago I was still alive.

## Boston

Logan International Airport, 9:32 PM

It's funny. I always used to wonder why it is that people who get on planes always look like they've just seen a ghost. I guess that the answer is because sometimes, maybe they really have.

I'm sitting in a smoking lounge as I write this, waiting for the man who murdered me to show up. I'm not sure how I know that he'll be here. Just a feeling I guess, but I'm no less confident that he will. I've had this crazy sense of both purpose and direction ever since I woke up on the bottom of the Charles River (all of 35 minutes ago, now) and I've already come to trust it. After all, it led me out of the river real quick like and straight to this airport: do not pass go, do not collect 200 bucks. No shit.

I don't even remember much of what actually happened back there. I recall standing on the pier, watching the mark and drinking one of those nasty bottled orange drinks. One minute everything was fine; the mark was busy fiddling with his coat and I was trying to enjoy my Orangita or whatever the hell it was called. The next thing I know, the mark is turning around to face me, pulling this huge fucking heater out of his sleeve like there was no end to it. I don't know if I was just sloppy or what, but I swear that I've never been made so fast or played so hard. The fucker probably knew I'd been tailing him from the word go, now that I think about it.

Anyway, I remember trying to shift my position — to dive for cover while I'm reaching for my own gun — and I realize that I can't even move. I look down, and my feet are sliding through what looks like thick, greasy oatmeal. Whatever this shit is, it's hardened just enough to distract me from making my move, and I look up just in time to see my former mark staring me dead in the eyes as he lifts his shotgun. Then, boom, both barrels, straight to the chest. Blasted right through my bottle of orange whatchit, and sent me sailing over the railing and into the river.

If you want my honest opinion, I think I was gone before I even hit the water.

But then my eyes snap open all of a sudden, and I realize that I'm floating. Looking around, all I see is the blackness of the river, but somehow I can still make out every detail underwater. Important detail number one: I ain't breathing. Keeping that in mind, I pull myself to the surface. I remember it being harder than it should have been, but that I still had no problems doing it (if that makes any sense). Fighting the current, which was slow but strong, I make my way to the shore and drag myself up onto the dirty sand.

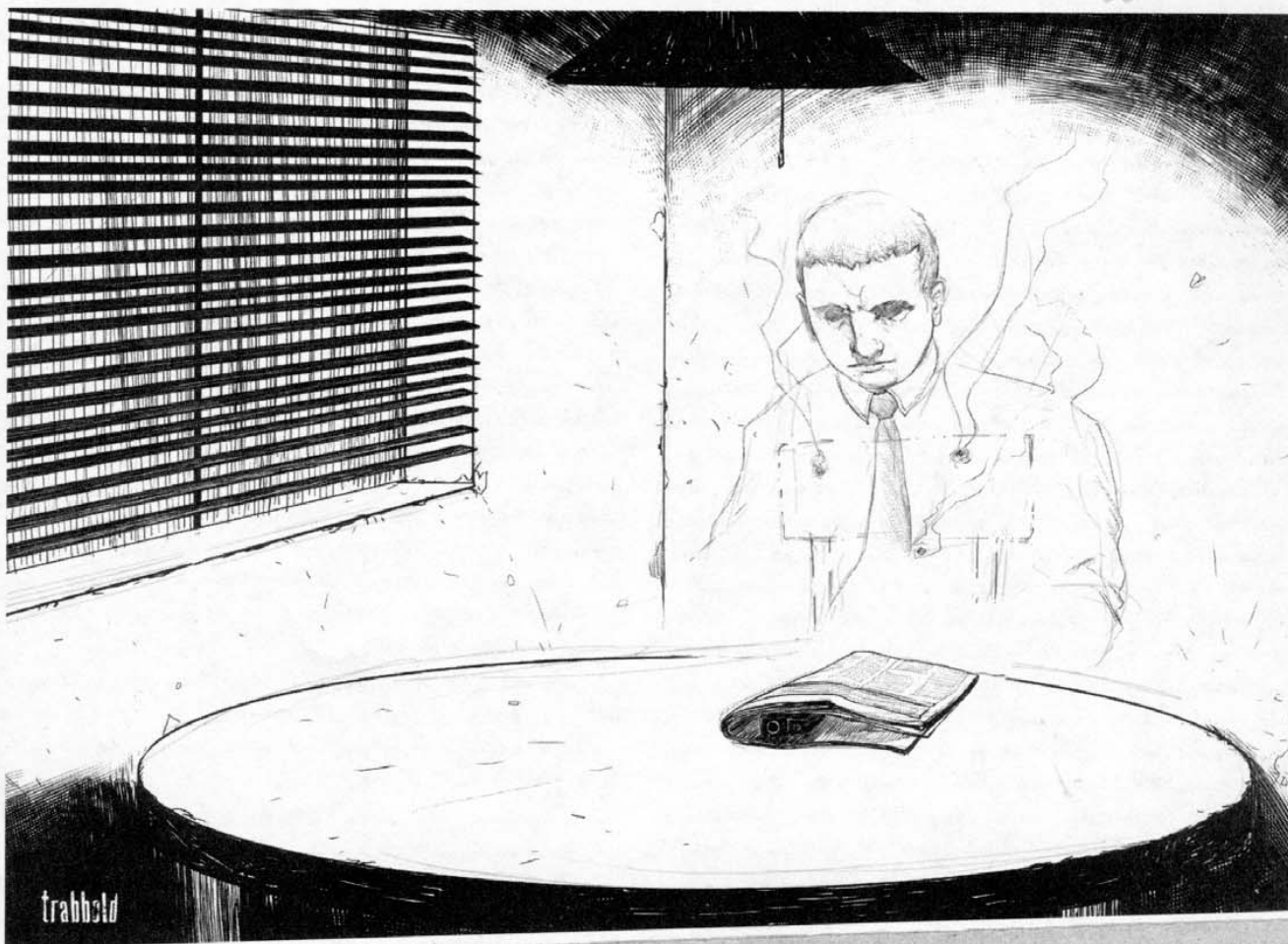
Looking down, I realized that I still had that gray shit on my shoes and it seemed to be setting a little. I gave both feet a good kick against a nearby iron rail and the stuff cracked, crumbled off in chunks. Seems I'd been standing in still-wet concrete. Dumb fucking luck, huh?

Right then I felt this pull inside to head east toward the bay, and without really thinking much about it I followed the instinct. About 30 minutes later, I arrived at Logan and sat down here to wait. Once I realized that, yes, I was honestly and truly dead, thank you very much, I started to think about why. I still haven't been able to come up with a satisfying answer, but I think it has something to do with the vows I took when I was made one of the soldati. It roughly translates to "no murder of any family member can go unavenged," so I imagine that I was brought back to put this fucking shooter in the ground, where he tried to put me. Anyway, that's when I saw this stationery sitting there, and I decided that I should write some of this down. After all, it ain't every day you get shot dead, fall into a river, and then rebound into your own dead body.

I suppose if I'm really gonna go through with this journal bullshit, I may as well do it right. So, first things first: My given name was Dominic Cardona, but nobody ever really called me anything but "Dumb Sonny." It all started with "Dom," the obvious shortening of Dominic, but eventually the Somerville boys perverted it to "Dumb" after one of the more embarrassing goofs of my early days. Something involving a young lady and this mark I was supposed to be looking after, but that's not really important here. As for the "Sonny" part, there's actually this invisible "Jr." at the end of my name. The Dominic Cardona was my father, see.

And there you have it.

It's really amazing how much time I've actually spent getting to know this city. I mean, I was born here in 1897, the year after my father emigrated



from Sicily — okay, Malta (same difference, as far as most schmucks are concerned). In the previous year, the United States had proudly made its announcement to the world that the first working subway system had been installed and was up and running in a town called Boston, Massachusetts. Seeing the obvious opportunities, my father took his young bride, Rosa, and left Malta to make a new life on the shores of the Charles River. Just over a year later, at around dawn on the morning of May 5th, she died giving birth to me in a noisy, cramped corner room of Mass. General Hospital. I've been all over the country — all over the world actually — in the century or so since, but something's always brought me back here to Boston.

As a front line in the conflict between the Irish and Sicilian families, Boston was the violent face of organized crime in the early days of the American Cosa Nostra. My father was actually a beat cop in those days (if you can believe it), but was both crooked and clever about it, forever running quiet

scams on the side for the Messina family. Yeah, that Messina family — that of Gaspare Messina, the earliest true boss of Beantown. A long time before Prince Street would become the hub of Boston's organized crime operations, there was Gaspare Messina and his gang, running the show out of various supposedly legit businesses in an area of South Boston that was known as Brick-Bottom Somerville. Messina waged a constant, bloody war on the Irish likes of Frankie Wallace and the Gustin Gang, who themselves were busily trying to muscle the Italians right out of organized crime in Boston.

What I didn't know growing up was that my father, in fact my whole family, was part of a greater unit, a secret society of Cardonas, if you like, reaching back to Malta and back through time. I soon came to realize that this group was something far beyond the Mob, beyond even humanity as I knew it. They were real old and real powerful, to say the least, and they operated in some weird fucking circles, including some really bizarre occult shit. It



wasn't until much later that I realized that my father and I "belonged" to an extended family of Kindred. Bloodsucking undead creatures of darkness. That whole thing.

It turned out that what my father did for Messina all that time was more of a front than anything else, a test on the part of his Maltese superiors to see whether or not he could handle the pressure of being what he liked to call "one of the true soldati" for the Cardona family in Boston. And growing up on those streets in Brick-Bottom Somerville taught me real early about what was okay and what wasn't, as far as the family was concerned. I often shadowed him on his actions for Messina, and I took note of where the lines were drawn and how. After a while, my father sat me down and told me how "one of these days" he was going to move up in the family; that he expected to be made by one of the higher-up Cardonas (that is, one of the Kindred). But when the family came calling, it wasn't Papa they were looking for... it was me. I was brought to a family office downtown one night, given the rite of introduction (along with my vows to uphold omertà and rispetto), and made to drink from this goblet they called the "chalice of life." Liars. From that point on, they said, I would be beyond death... so long as I was theirs.

But even in those rough early nights, the operation had a stitch of class. Nowadays, in Boston it's Whitey Bulger, the Winter Hill gang, and others of that ilk. Hoods who don't understand the first principle of organized crime, namely that civil prosperity is good for business. That when all the Joe Averages in your territory are doing well for themselves, then they're also doing well for you. Of course, Whitey Bulger — psychopathic deviant that he was — never seemed to latch on to that key concept. You know, I even had the displeasure of meeting ol' Whitey himself once, at a meeting the Sicilians had called in the late 70s to discuss (possible) peaceable operations between the two Boston outfits. I was unimpressed (I knew I would be) and I still regret not killing the sonofabitch when I had the chance...

But what really bothers me is all the behind-the-scenes bullshit. Whitey Bulger and his primary accomplice Stephen "The Rifleman" Flemmi would have been brought down 15 years before, had it not been for their partner-in-crime, an undercover FBI agent named John Connolly. What most people didn't know was that Bulger and Flemmi had been

among Connolly's 7Es (Top Echelon informants) since the mid-70s, and he would have done just about anything to protect them. See, Connolly had a hard-on for the "real" Mafia — the Sicilian Commission — and couldn't have cared less about a run-down gang of Irish hoods like the Winter Hill characters. To him, guys like Bulger and Flemmi were a means to an end: the end of the Italian Mafia. This goal blinded him to so-called lesser offenses, and allowed Bulger to build an empire of rot on the backs of Boston's poor and working class. That's right, our very own FBI was partially responsible for (among other things) the degradation of an entire generation of young Boston girls — Bulger's "tasty morsels" — as well as their subsequent emotional instability as adults. Of course, when the bureau's long-term sting was all over, after all the indictments had been handed down, the government started looking Connolly's way. Serves him right, if you ask me.

Looks like that DC-10 I've been eyeballing is getting ready to board. Guess I'd better get a move on if I have a hope in hell of catching the shooter before he leaves Rhode Island.

*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in Heaven...*

## Providence

*High Annie's Bar and Grille, 10:47 PM*

It's strange... I lived through the entirety of the last century and in all that time it never once occurred to me that I should (or even could) keep my own account of all the shit I've seen. After all, diaries are for self-indulgent skirts, right? But still, all that life experience and not a single personal record of any kind to show for it? Well, whatever; I'm doing it now, for God's sake, and that's what counts.

*Better late than never, right?*

So I'm sitting here in this greasy spoon, looking over my notes from Boston, and it occurs to me: How the hell did I know that the shooter was headed to Rhode Island? Search me. But the fact is, somehow I did know. Because he's here, all right, checking out one of the strip clubs down the road a piece (if this weird tracking sense is as precise as I think it is). I figure I'll just do what I always did back... before. Just wait for the guy to finish his business and leave, probably in the wee hours, and then follow him to a shady spot. Have a few words with him then.

*Speaking of strip clubs, the Mafia's been really crazy into that stuff around here, lately. Originally, all the New York families oversaw Providence, and thereby all of Rhode Island's underworld activities, and they stuck to the usual suspects: protection, extortion, and the like. Then a guy named Frank "Butsey" Morelli moved down here during the war (the first one) and immediately started running operations in parts of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut, using Providence as his home base. And let me tell you, he was a real firecracker, this guy.*

*A true boss, Morelli's reign would last from 1917 to 1947 — about 25 years longer than the average Chicago boss' supremacy — and the stubborn bastard only gave up then because he was dying of cancer. Eventually, Joe Lombardo (from Boston) put wiseguy Philip Buccola in charge of Providence's operations and let Morelli die peacefully. But until then, Morelli's gang was responsible for all kinds of mayhem, not the least of which was the infamous double murder of two shoe company employees in South Braintree, Mass., in 1920. Why was it infamous? Because two men named Sacco and Vanzetti were falsely arrested for the crime, arrested because they were immigrants and because they were anarchists. In a sad twist, the two men claimed (all the way to the electric chair, in fact) that they had been set up. And they'd been right about that, but they were wrong in assuming it had been the government who did it. It was Butsey Morelli. The old guy even told me once, when I had occasion to pass through here on business, about how Sacco and Vanzetti "took it on the chin for us. That shows you how much justice there really is."*

*Couldn't have said it better myself, Frankie.*

*Of course, that was all back in the day. I've done my level best to avoid Providence since it became the capitol of the so-called "New England Crime Family" under Ray Patriarca. Patriarca's gang took over in the late 40s, and he immediately began staking his claim as the boss of all southern New England. In the 50s, Patriarca's headquarters was a two-story building on Atwell Avenue that housed the National Cigarette Service Company and Coin-O-Matic Distributors. Guys in the Life called it "the Office." The whole neighborhood became Patriarca's territory, and Atwell soon grew to resemble other mob-ran districts like Mulberry Street in Little Italy, or our own Prince Street up*

*in Boston. Patriarca even gave Atwell the same accessories: an armed camp, paid "spotters" on every corner, the whole nine yards.*

*Yeah, Patriarca was a heavy hitter, that's for sure. One of his biggest claims to fame is that he supposedly selected Maurice Werner, a small-time hood from Brookline, to be the shooter of choice back in 1960 when the CIA paid us four million bucks to go off to Cuba and whack Fidel Castro (I wasn't actually there for this). But, locally, Patriarca was just everywhere, and that was his real strength. He had staying power, to say the least, and after he died in '84, some of us old-timers actually started missing the guy. We were missing him even more when his idiot son, Ray, Jr. took over. Junior wasn't the brightest candle in the chandelier, and it was his uneven management, in my humble opinion, that led to the current state of affairs in Providence.*

*The main reason I like to steer clear of Providence these days is because of the weird shit the family's been getting into in this town. Speaking of fuckhead warlocks ('cause I've got a weird suspicion that the wet concrete wasn't any coincidence), there's actually a movement going on in this town to — I don't know how else to say this — experiment on wiseguys. See, back when Junior took over (and immediately got himself embroiled in a whole shitheap of legal troubles), a couple of the local capos uncovered a plot by a third to "beef up" his crew, using a bunch of weirdo potions and spells and shit. It turns out that this third capo — a guy named Salamanca — is supposed to be a fucking warlock, has been for years, and that he's been putting select soldiers and wiseguys through a series of fucked-up, in-house experiments. To "improve them," he says. I heard a rumor that Salamanca's not the power behind the operations themselves, that he's got warlocks "on staff" or something like that, but it doesn't much matter to me. Whether you're the inspiration or the gun itself, somebody ends up just as dead. Now, the other capos involved could have bitched up a storm or started a crew war (or any one of a number of egg-headed moves), but they didn't. They wanted in. So, in exchange for oaths of loyalty (and a cut of the profits, of course), Salamanca agreed to work up select members of other crews across town. In a fucked-up way, they're even starting to look like a family again.*

*Whatever the cause, these trials have yielded disturbingly strong results, which, in turn, has led other bosses and crews across New England to ask*



for the Providence boys' secret methods. I think the Mob is back big-time in this town, and I don't think it'll be long before the phrase "New England Crime Family" means something again, for better or for worse.

As I'm writing this, I'm noticing that something strange is going on with my hand. It's not shaking or anything, but it is, however, dead. My hand is dead flesh, and I still can't get used to the fact. I'm also just now realizing that I've been holding my lucky rosary in my other hand as I write, and I have no explanation as to why or how it stayed with me at all. When I tipped over into the Charles River yesterday, I lost my gun, my hat, my wallet... even one of the buttons on my jacket. And yet my lucky rosary turns up here, wrapped around my wrist, looking as though nothing unpleasant ever happened anywhere near it. And still, my hand doesn't...

A moment ago, while I was thinking about my rosary, my fingers suddenly seized up and I couldn't open my hand for a second. In fact, something shuddered inside me then. Don't know why, but jamming the pen I was holding into the back of my left hand seemed like the thing to do. It seemed to jolt some life into the thing, though, and all appendages are working just as right as rain now.

It's funny. I was a completely fearless sonofabitch while I was alive. Stupidly so, you might say. Now I'm dead, and I find myself gripped by this ridiculous and absolutely overwhelming anxiety, and I just can't shake it for the life of me. I think that I'm going to have that picture — a pen planted in the back of my own hand — stuck in my head for quite some time.

## New York

Old St. Patrick's Cathedral (Little Italy),  
11:33 PM

I feel a little bit better now.

When I first got into town, I came straight to this place; again, do not pass go, do not collect a damn thing. It's been a routine of mine... man, for over 80 years now. First thing I do when I get into the Big Apple is head for Old St. Pat's. There was always something comforting about it before; hell, it used to be my church here in town, and I got into some big trouble in nights past because of this place. But this time, for some reason, once I arrived in Little Italy the old place just wouldn't let me come inside. Worn out my welcome by dying, I guess.

The whole thing just destroyed me. I'd really been looking forward to coming back and taking in a Mass or something here. It felt necessary for some reason. But when I got to those big, beautiful, double doors, I just couldn't cross the threshold. I felt my rosary tighten (it hasn't left my hand since I crawled from the bottom of the Charles River) and then something strange started happening to my eyes, a twitch of some kind. It took me a minute to figure out that my dead eyes were trying to cry for me, but that they had no tears to give.

So I just sat down on a bench across the way here and started to, I don't know, drift off, is probably the best way to describe it. I don't think I really sleep per se; what I do, it's more like fuzzy daydreaming. My eyes cloud over and I start to see images, sometimes of places I've been, sometimes of where I'm headed. This time, I saw the double doors of Old St. Pat's open up on their own, and a bright, white light spilled out into the street. I wanted to get up and run in — for some reason I felt like I could actually enter now — but my feet were rooted to the spot. All I could do was watch. And as I watched, a delicate figure emerged from the light to stand in the doorway; a woman, and a beautiful one at that. Her head tilted ever so gently, and her arms rose and spread outward, like she was welcoming the warmth of a coming embrace. She beckoned to me, but I still couldn't move. My legs felt dead beneath me. After what seemed like forever, she returned her head to center and slowly lowered it, as though disappointed. Then she faded back into the light, those beautiful doors swinging silently shut before her.

You know, I've been hurt before. Tortured, even. Sometimes real bad, too. But having that daydream right then, while I was sitting right in front of the place... well, that was just cruel.

But this place is still beautiful, and it still means every bit as much to me as it did yesterday (or was it the day before?). They built the place was originally in 1815, and it had the distinction of being New York's very first cathedral. It was also the first Roman Catholic cathedral to be dedicated to the patron saint of Ireland. And on the very same grounds stands the city's only Russian Catholic church, St. Michael's.

Back in the day, I used to look up to this place as the one true common ground for all New York's many immigrants. In addition to the sharing of space by the various Catholic faiths, there was a sense of centralness to St. Pat's — like it was a

crossroads for the community and, in a way, it was. People of all nationalities and backgrounds gathered here for worship and, for maybe just a few hours each week, they all seemed to forget their differences for a while. That sense of community only grew over the years. One of its buildings (now a school) served as a hospital during the Revolutionary War and later became an orphanage where the country's first saint, Mother Elizabeth Seton, established an order called the Sisters of Charity. St. Pat's is also the burial site of New York's first bishops and many of the city's founding fathers. One of them, Bishop Hughes, is still considered the "savior of St. Pat's" after he defended the church from anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant mobs during the 1830s. He even armed the Ancient Order of Hibernians and positioned them on walls surrounding the cathedral.

All this was before my time, but I understood what Bishop Hughes and the others were trying to do. St. Pat's was more than a beautiful place of worship. It embodied American cooperation and faith, and it wouldn't stand to allow bigotry and intolerance to tear it down. And that's why, about a hundred years after Bishop Hughes made his stand, I took up a similar cause of my own, this time against my own "betters," the Kindred.

The Kindred in question belonged to a family called the Giovanni. During the heaviest period of immigration, when the numbers in Little Italy

swelled to bursting, a few of these Italian bloodsuckers came over with the intention of taking over the neighborhood. Once a hood, always a hood, I guess. Anyway, these Giovanni characters seemed a little fixated on acquiring St. Patrick's, for some reason. A pug-ugly stooge I know in the Bronx called Uncle told me once that what the Giovanni were really after was "underneath and all around the cathedral," rather than inside it. I never could make much sense of what that guy said to me.

But whatever the Giovanni were after, I'd be damned if I was just going to let them take it. So I made myself into kind of a modern-day (well, at the time anyway) version of old Hughesie, and I fought them tooth and nail. I packed up my home operation full-time for a while, moved down to New York and picked up a place right down the street from St. Pat's. Over the course of about 10 years or so, I was the secret mastermind behind an underground movement in the family to thwart the Giovanni at every turn, especially where St. Pat's was concerned. And it was brilliant, if I do say so myself. I used local wiseguys and button men to do my dirty work for me. Every time I found out something about the enemy's plans, I'd send these guys to fuck it up somehow, and they never traced it back to anybody, because there was nobody (really) to trace it back to. It really felt good there for a while, sticking it to those bloodsucking assholes.

## Keeping up With the Joneses

Lately, a lot of shit's being talked about the state of organized crime in New York. But I say here and now that La Cosa Nostra will be just fine. Sure, they may have hit a few snags here and there along the way, and yeah, New York's taken a lot of the heat for the rest of us wiseguys, but that doesn't mean much. We've always been a stubborn and resilient bunch.

Most of the original information on the Five Families came from the infamous Joe Valachi, the first rat fuck to break omerta. He spilled his guts to the Feds back in 1959, but so much has changed since then. As somebody who knows what's been going on, I want to fill in the blanks on what shape the Five Families are in in the Big Apple these days.

Gambino: Hands down, the most powerful of the Five Families. Sure, everybody knows about John Gotti, Jr., taking over after his pop was sent to jail and diagnosed with throat cancer. What most people don't realize is that his successor, "Little Nicky" Corozzo, has been in charge of the family since 1996 (even though he got himself arrested on racketeering charges). Supernatural types who go near the Gambinos these days end up with the Giovanni all over them and their business.

Colombo: Originally the Profaci crime family, Joseph Colombo was brought in by Joe Profaci's successor in 1961 to dispatch Carlo Gambino and Thomas Lucchese — the heads of two other families. But after Colombo rattled out the plan to Carlo Gambino, the Commission made this would-be hitter head



of the Profaci family. The Colombo family, long considered a sidearm of the Gambinos, is currently run by Alphonse Persico and his consigliere, Joel Cacace, and is currently embroiled in some heavy legal concerns — much like the other four families.

*Genovese:* After the death of its patriarch, Vito Genovese, in 1969, the family struggled under a series of lukewarm bosses for the next 25 years, culminating in its current leader, Vincent "The Chin" Gigante, the man who once screwed up a point-blank hit on Frank Costello. In his waning years he came to be known as "the Oddfather" due to his practice of wandering around Greenwich Village in his pajamas and muttering to himself. He's running things from prison nowadays.

*Lucchese:* This family's seen an awful lot of grief lately, mainly for its high-profile assassinations of several high-profile vics, including a top-ranking DEA agent. Thanks to the appointment of Vic "Jesse" Amuso and his chief aide, Anthony Casso, the New York Lucchese family is all but lying in ruins, though it still retains strong ties to its perennial cash cow, heroin. The current boss of what's left of the family is a man named Steven Crea.

*Bonanno:* Exiled from the Commission until recently, the Bonanno family has done the most of the Five Families (with the possible exception of the Gambinos) to pick itself up by its bootstraps. Since his release from prison in 1993, the current boss, Joseph "Big Joey" Massino, has been returning some much-needed stability and order to the family. This earned him the new nickname "the Ear" for his uncanny ability to detect potential threats to his operations.

Of course, the sabbatical ended pretty quick once my little vendetta began to spill over into a full-fledged family feud. What I didn't realize was that the Giovanni were really in tight with the Mangano family, and in those nights, Mangano was really soaring high in New York. He was chairman of the Commission at the time, and one tough sonofabitch to boot. Figure from there that the Kindred go whine and complain to their Mob boys that somebody in the Life has been fucking things up for them — on "their" turf, in Little Italy, no less — and what the fuck are they gonna do about it? The Mangano answer (what a surprise) was to flex a little Sicilian muscle and put the heat on everybody who wasn't with the program.

And you know what yours truly got for his part in all this? I got deported. See, it's really easy in the Life to piss people off, but you can also impress them at the same time. In fact, it's almost impossible to really impress mobsters without doing something irritating, or at least creatively criminal. So what I got for my troubles was a "reassignment." To Chicago.

Seems that the Cardonas wanted a man of my caliber in the outfit.

## Pittsburgh

Three Rivers Stadium, 12:52 AM

There's just something about the Steelers, you gotta admit. I don't mean now of course, not under that idiot Cowher they've got in charge these days. But you know, back during the heyday of the Steel Curtain. God, I used to come all the way down here from Boston just to watch 'em play the way they did back then. Now that was what I call a dynasty, man. L.C. Greenwood, Dwight White, Ernie Holmes, the one and only Mean Joe Green: You could feel it whenever they took the field. You knew that they knew what a team was supposed to be about. For a few brief and glorious years there, man... they were a family, those guys.

So, what do I find when I get down here tonight? They're planning to tear the fucking place down! Yeah... Three Rivers Stadium. And for what? To make room for the latest new thing, of course. For more seats, more parking spaces, more bullshit... and a big goose egg for the diehard fans. Christ, isn't anything sacred anymore? I know it's stupid to get all worked up about it now, but there were some truly incredible moments experienced here. There really were.

I remember this one time, Old Man Graziosi invited me up to his private box to watch the game and join him for drinks in the Allegheny Room.



Carmine had apparently called ahead — you know, as a courtesy — and informed the old man that I'd be down that night for the game. Graziosi was old-school in every way, a Sicilian Brujah with hot iron for blood and balls the size of church bells. He was an eternally vocal proponent of good relations between Sicilian mobsters, hence his generosity to the Cardona family, and he often let me take advantage of his considerable hospitality whenever I was in town.

The game that night was a good one, too. The Steelers taking on Oakland again, their conference rivals. I still remember how good it felt, that feeling of being special — you know, a somebody — standing above the crowd like some kind of Roman emperor or something. And I remember how the field had never looked so good to me as it did from where I was that day.

Match, the Steelers kicked the shit out of 'em again.

Now, even though the Graziosi Family had a serious hold on the betting and numbers rackets (I don't know of a single bookie in town who never

received at least a visit from one of Old Man Graziosi's soldiers), just about everything else, especially anything pertaining to protection and extortion, was the realm of the notorious John LaRocca. The LaRocca Family took over in Pittsburgh in 1956 when the previous boss, Frank Amato, retired under curious circumstances.

LaRocca became known for his adept handling of what was called "the Philly Issue." In those days, Pittsburgh was doing its level best to cut the cord from the larger and more powerful Philadelphia families to the east. Pittsburgh was actually the more genuinely Italian of the two cities (third highest Italian-American population after New York and Chicago, actually) and it wanted its independence, and how. LaRocca was tired of the training wheels he had inherited from Amato, and by the late 50s, he figured it was time to burn some serious rubber.

Once he got going, LaRocca started raking in money hand over fist, primarily through the extensive gambling rackets he'd cooked up with Kansas City boss Nick Civella. Like his predecessor, LaRocca also tried leaning on the city's various steelworkers



unions, but also like Amato, met with frustratingly little success. In fact, his insistent and often clumsy efforts soon brought down some serious heat from those concerned parties whose interests lay in seeing LaRocca stick to his own game. But, no, if there was one thing LaRocca had proven that he was truly terrible at, time and time again, it was minding his own fucking business.

So, like gunshots in the night came the attempts on LaRocca's life, one right after the other. Or at least that's what people were led to believe. Personally, I have it on good authority that whoever it was put the hit out on Boss LaRocca didn't actually want the guy dead, just scared shitless. Either that or they wanted to put on a show and make it look like they really were trying. A show for who, I'm still not sure. In any case, it had the end result of making LaRocca seem untouchable after a while (the first "Teflon Don," after a fashion). I find it amusing that in the end it wasn't a well-planned hit, but a 20-year long battle with the Big C that finally brought John LaRocca down. No rival gang or family, no pissed-off bloodsucker, not some pain-in-the-ass "shooter-for-hire." Just a disease. And what a bitch she is, isn't she?

The kicker, though, was that when LaRocca finally died, I guess in '84 it was, he was succeeded by one Michael James Genovese. That's right. Vito Genovese's cousin, in point of fact. Are you starting to see, now, how all this actually works?

That weird sixth sense is nagging me again, and that means the shooter's back on the road to Chicago, so I'd better be making my way. It's just as well, I guess. I'm looking forward to seeing my old hangout again, and sitting here in this quiet old stadium alone is just making me depressed anyway.

I can't believe they're just gonna tear this place down.

## Chicago

*Windy City Pizzeria, 1:06 AM*

No, I really can't actually eat the food here anymore (dammit), but I can still enjoy the place, soak up the atmosphere and whatnot. At least my nose isn't as dead as the rest of me, thank God; this stuff is heavenly. This place has a lot of good memories for me, and I used to come here to think sometimes when I lived nearby. After the whole St. Pat's debacle in New York, the bosses sent me over Chi-Town for "an indefinite period."

I figured that I'd be overseeing family interests in the new, post-Capone Chicago, or maybe even to get involved in the town's sticky web of bloodsucker politicking (after all, I'd just demonstrated that I could use my resources to stand toe-to-toe with some tough customers). Well, that's what I figured anyway. But, no, the Family sent me to Chi-Town to get pinched and thrown in the slammer.

Now, of course they didn't come out and tell me this. They just set me up in a nice apartment and gave me a bunch of shit assignments that resulted in my arrest and imprisonment, but it amounted to the same thing. Especially since it had been their plan all along. How do I know it had been their plan all along? Because I was encouraged not to make bail and to take a plea bargain before the trial, and because I just happened to get placed on the same cell block as one Alphonse Capone. And that, my friends, is why I was sent to Chicago.

Thankfully, I wasn't "encouraged" to accompany Big Al when he was transferred to Alcatraz (I think I almost got sent along, but I'm not sure how close I came to that), but I was grilled to no end about my experience as "Capone's neighbor" when I got out. I can tell you that. That week was particularly memorable for me, because it was the first time I met the upper echelon of the Cardona family. A few suits from the homeland turned up in Chicago after my release (or before, depending on how much credit I give my lawyers), took me to a house we had outside of town (which I never even knew about, of course), and debriefed the shit out of me for about seven nights.

Then a weird thing happened. One of them offered to make me, on behalf of Don Cardona himself. Stupid me, I thought they were talking about making me one of the true soldati, so I said, "I was already made, wasn't I?" They all gave me this shitty little thin-lipped smile and then shook their heads. It was then that I understood: They wanted to make me Kindred.

Well, the hell with that! I didn't care how much power and prestige were supposed to come with being made again, there was no way I was going to take that particular ride, thanks. And you know what? That was one of the few smart choices I've made in a long life of bad decisions.

Strangely enough, my refusal to accept their offer only resulted in them trusting me more (or in them being ordered to trust me with more; one of the two). As a result, I spent the next few years getting

to know the dark(er) side of organized crime in Chicago. And believe me, there's a lot of dark shit going down under the surface. Shit it's probably best I don't write down.

But one thing you can be sure of is that Kindred take their business very seriously in this town. For many years, everyone had to play nice under the Chicago boss of the Kindred (they called him a prince, I think), a no-nonsense player by the name

of Lodin. Under Lodin, no undead businessman (whether Family or not) could step into certain areas of city influence — city police, certain civil bureaucracies, and the like — without stepping on Boss Lodin's toes. This caused no small amount of unrest among his "subjects," many of whom believed that Chi-Town should represent the land of opportunity for the undead that it had always been to the living.

## The Outfit

Just to give you (whoever you may be) some idea of the kind of turnover rate we see in the Life, here's a brief chronology of the Chicago leadership. You'll notice that the average "reign" for a boss in this thing of ours was a little over five years. Better than a single presidential term, yes, but think about it: How many presidents leave office by taking two to the back of the head?

**Anthony D'Andrea (1915-1921)** — Shot to death while returning from a late card game.

**Mike Merlo (1921-1924)** — Most likely responsible for the assassination of his predecessor. Died of "natural causes."

**Antonio Lombardo (1924-1928)** — Ruled with an iron fist, but was eventually brought down by his support of one Alphonse Capone, who thanked Lombardo by having him killed in order to take over his faction.

**Al Capone (1928-1931)** — The most notorious gangster of them all. Credited with hosting the 1931 meeting that resulted in the establishment of the Commission. Eventually brought down by the formidable (and redundant) tag-team of syphilis and the IRS.

**Frank Nitti (1931-1943)** — A.k.a., "the Enforcer." Committed suicide when ordered to take the fall for the family, the pussy. Nitti was technically in charge after Capone went to prison, but the real power behind the Outfit during his tenure was always...

**Felice DeLucia (1943-1945)** — A.k.a., Paul "the Waiter" Ricca, ironically sent away after Nitti took his own life for his complicity in the big Hollywood extortion racket.

**Anthony Accardo (1945-1957)** — Also called "Joe Batters," Accardo would accomplish more for the Outfit than any other boss, but voluntarily turned his leadership over to...

**Salvatore Giancana (1957-1966)** — "Momo," as he was known, kept a much higher profile than his predecessors, ultimately leading to his arrest, conviction and eventual assassination. Is often believed to be connected to the plot to kill President John F. Kennedy.

**Sam Battaglia (1966-1967)** — "Teets" was a good successor to Giancana, but got himself arrested for bribing officials after calling the shots for only a year.

**Felix Alderiso (1969)** — Old "Milwaukie Phil" was arrested only months after swearing in for his attempt to defraud a Chicago suburb bank.

**John Cerone (1969-1970)** — An old protege of Accardo's, "Jackie" Cerone was and still is often seen as one of the greatest bosses ever, despite his short reign. Imprisoned for racketeering.

**Joseph Aiuppa (1970-1986)** — One of the longest-lived bosses in Chicago, Aiuppa was an active player in external businesses, especially in Las Vegas casinos. Received much attention for the murders of Sam Giancana and labor-leader Jimmy Hoffa. Finally jailed at the age of 78.

**Joseph Ferriola (1986-1991)** — A brutal boss who ordered many hits in order to keep secrecy about the Outfit's operations. Developed cancer and handed over the reigns to...

**Sam Carlisi (1991-1993)** — "Wings" Carlisi called the shots until he was sent away for racketeering, gambling, extortion, arson, conspiracy to commit murder, tax fraud and loansharking.

**Joey Lombardo (1993-Present)** — Released from prison in 1992, Joey "the Clown" Lombardo cannot even associate with known members of the Outfit due to the terms of his parole, so he operates primarily through his cousin, Joe Andriacci.



All this tension came to a head during a massive, all-out war that turned Chicago into a battleground. However, rather than the war with Lodin's subjects you would assume would have been the case, it was a war between species: vampires vs. werewolves. Werewolves in Chicago is not what most people think of first when they think of the Windy City, but there it is. And those guys are all over the place, actually, and most of us never even know it. Kinda like the Kindred. And this particular family of werewolves had had just about as much "vampiric prosperity" as they could stomach for one century, and in the end they all blamed Lodin.

For the most part, Boss Lodin's subjects remained loyal to him when the bullets (and claws and who knows what else) started to fly. In fact, many of the Lodin boys went down fighting to save their boss. But in the end, it didn't matter much. Someone did get to Boss Lodin eventually, and with him died his hold on the city, which left it wide open for other interests to finally take root.

Oh, yeah... My kinda town, Chicago.

Anyway, as I write this, I've been realizing that I don't even know who's ever going to read it. I'm hoping that somehow it'll actually be of some use to somebody one day, but I've been coming to the realization over the last couple of days that I probably won't be around for very much longer once I've repaid this little debt of honor. My joints are beginning to stiffen up, like I've got crushed glass inside them (which, by the way, isn't entirely inaccurate; remember that bottle of orange whatsit? Well, the flesh on my chest and neck is embroidered with bits of frosted orange glass now), and I realize I've been "drifting off" more often each day.

I suppose it's a sad thought but, hey, what can you do?

Forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us...

## St. Louis

Omni Majestic Hotel, 2:23 AM

I usually don't bother to ask myself this question, as it has an irritating tendency to get me into trouble (at least it did, you know... before), but I just have to know: What the fuck am I doing here? I followed the shooter south out of Chicago, down Route 55 through Springfield, and this is where he ended up. Fucking St. Louis.

Why would the shooter decide to come here, of all places? If my original suspicion was true, that the guy was taking some kind of traveling census of Mob towns, then why would he drop in here, rather than across state in Kansas City where all the real action is? My first assumption was that the hit back in Beantown had been politically motivated from the start, that the Sabbat of St. Louis knew not only who I was but where I was, and that they wanted me rubbed out. I figured that they could have easily sent this goombah warlock to Boston to dig me up, and now he was returning to deliver his report and collect on the other half of his payoff. Naturally, I immediately saw one small problem with this theory, that being that it's completely fucking off base.

Why in God's name would the Sabbat of St. Louis (of all places) want me, a Boston button man with no interest in bloodsucker politics, to be taken out of the picture? So, no, that couldn't be it. But then why St. Louis? Did the shooter know the Sabbat here, even if he didn't work for them? Also unlikely. From what I know of these guys, they'd just as soon kill and eat the shooter as talk to him, never mind set him up with a penthouse at the Omni Majestic. I briefly considered that this might have been a personal vendetta on the part of the shooter. Shit, I've sure killed enough people in my time — law of averages states that at least one of them must have been either a warlock or someone related to a warlock. Two things made me discard that idea. First, make no mistake about it, this was a professional hit by a professional killer, not an act of revenge by some bereaved lover or brother. Second, I don't see how I would or could have come back to settle the score with the shooter in that event. See, he and I would already be even then.

So why did the shooter come here? Well, the answer probably lies in the unique criminal situation of this town. While it's true that the Sabbat around here have been trying like hell to take this city for decades now, that's only the political situation. Always, always remember that one should never confuse the two where business is concerned. They're often inextricably connected, true, but are certainly not the same.

In St. Louis, crime has always been connected to the supernatural and vice versa. Back in the early days of La Cosa Nostra, St. Louis actually became one of the first true mob towns. Kindred Mafiosi made the trek up from New Orleans shortly after the end of the Civil War (Black Hand extortion activity

was going on here as early as 1876), and began to build a small empire out of local gangs of small-time hoods. They fought the war for dominance of St. Louis' underworld through the likes of the Green Ones, the Pillow Gang, Egan's Rats and the Cuckoos.

The real trouble started in April of 1932, just before the end of Prohibition. The Cuckoos gang, formed after the Great War by three highly unstable brothers, had led themselves astray through inter-gang warfare, internal losses and strife, as well as all-around poor management. In a desperate attempt to regain a foothold, they lent their muscle to another group, the East Side Gang, in a war with a rival gang. Their hope was to cash in on the skyrocketing business that would obviously follow a victory in this battle. Unfortunately, the Cuckoo brothers were ill-prepared (as usual) and all three fell that night in a hail of bullets.

This would have been fine, had they stayed dead, but some crazy fucking Sabbat happened to be on the scene — he was rumored to have been running with the East Side's rival gang, hence the latter's growing success of late — and something about the Cuckoo brothers impressed him, though I sure as hell couldn't tell you what. He made them then and there, returning to action not only the dead brothers, but their dead gang as well. The Cuckoos have been a force in the city ever since, not for the Sabbat, but for themselves. Oh, they're still as crazy as they ever were, but all the more powerful for it now. And I wouldn't be a bit surprised if a big source of the Sabbat's problems in this town came not from some concerted effort on the part of the Camarilla, but from this one pack of deranged undead hoodlums.

So what's the bottom line? Well, if you're an organized crime fan and a warlock, the good money is on St. Louis, not on Kansas City, for sheer information and entertainment value. And that shows not only taste, but some serious balls on the part of the shooter... and that makes me like the guy. Too bad I'm supposed to whack him, right?

Still, there's nothing that says I gotta do it tonight, is there?

## New Orleans

*Le Faubourg Tremé, 3:17 AM*

I've been here for almost an hour now, and I still can't figure out which one of these idiots is packing heat. I used to be so good at that, you know, picking





out which guys in a group were the shooters and which ones were the VIPs. But I've been staring at this pack of motley drunks for way too long not to have guessed every detail of their operation by now.

Christ, now I'm losing my touch too, of all things.

Not to worry, though. I'm not here for them (and vice versa, if they know what's good for them). If I were, I wouldn't be scribbling away at this journal, would I? No, I'm waiting on an old friend of mine, this guy named Sal. Sal was my number-one snitch in this town in the old days, and even though others gave him no end of grief for being an Italian-Creole crossbreed, he was also my friend. You could always find him hanging around down this part of Esplanade Ridge, where all his ancestors lived and where he and his family still live. I remember how he used to tell me, "Sonny, I was born on dis 'ere ridge, and ahm gwan die on dis 'ere ridge." Man, you really are a character, Sal... I just wish you'd turn up one last time for me. For old times' sake.

Here he comes now.

Well, that was... not at all what I expected.

I saw the kid come down from the ridge, through the fog, and walk over to the gang of hoods I'd been eyeballing for an hour. I could tell it was Sal by the bright red sweater he always wears; hood up, hands in pockets. It was Sal, all right. He stood around with them for a few, his hood tilting my direction every so often. Then, as though coming to some decision, he slowly walked over to me.

I could tell something was wrong by the way Sal was standing — a little too far away and intentionally out of the lamplight — but not exactly what it was that was wrong. I asked him how he was doing this evening. He responded only by backing up a step or two, further into the shadows. After letting me sit and stare into the darkness for a while, he spoke at last.

In an unusually soft voice, Sal began to relate to me of how much things had changed around here since last I visited. He asked me if I remember a story he once told me about a powerful vampiric voodoo cult that mysteriously vanished decades ago. I told him I did. He then asked how much I knew about voodoo in general. Not much. I

admitted. In a scratchy voice, Sal then related to me the story of a local voodoo houngan named DeRouen who had been torn to bits by his own congregation in an orgy of blood and sacrifice some years before. He told me of how DeRouen had been seen in the poorer sections of Bywater and the Ridge lately, alive and well and possessed of a new congregation — a growing congregation that was now spreading out across the quarter, taking over various criminal operations, eliminating any larger competitors and subsuming the smaller gangs along the way. He then asked if I had any idea of what the future now holds for the poor people of Fauborg Tremé. I could only shake my head.

After a pause, he quietly asked if I remembered his favorite phrase from the old days, the one he always used to say to me. I whispered that I did. And then he said one more thing to me, and it was this next thing — the last thing he'd say — that hit me like a gunshot to the head.

"Death is a door that swings both ways," was what he said. And with that, Sal looked up.

His eyes, once a deep cobalt color, had darkened due to a massive eight-ball hemorrhage; black veins stretched across both eyeballs in a jagged criss-cross pattern, and the irises themselves had filmed over. Beneath his gentle jawline I could make out another jagged pattern, this one a hellishly wide gash stretching from ear to ear. The wound was so deep and so wide, I don't see how his head could have stayed in place at all... but for the hood, perhaps.

As I stared — how stupid I must have looked then — Sal slowly turned, and before I could say another word, he vanished back into the fog, leaving me alone on the ridge.

And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil...

## Cuba

Miami International Airport, 5:13 AM

All right, so I'm not actually going to Cuba, but the shooter is and that's what's important. I'm not going for three reasons: First, there are the obvious logistical problems in trying to obtain transport to Cuba from the United States (I have no idea how the shooter's pulling it off). Then there's the fact that certain groups are on the

lookout for me (and any other known members of the Cardona family — more on that in a second). Last, I know where the shooter's going when he leaves Havana, so there's really no need for me to go. I'll just head him off at the pass.

Still, I fucking hate this place. I had a dream once about a herd of angry youngsters standing on the northern border of Florida, each with a saw of one kind or another in hand. With a smile, the kids begin sawing away at the ground in front of them, and in no time flat, the entire state is removed from the union and merrily sent to drift off into the Gulf of Mexico.

Florida: God-forsaken pit cleverly disguised as a vacation spot, if you ask me.

But let's get back to Cuba (before I get started on Florida again). Since ousting Batista in January of 1959, Fidel Castro has had a hidden cadre of undead supporters — a group of agitators calling themselves the Brujah Council — who are the last vestiges of the Brujah experimentation with communism. In the beginning, this council worked alongside the Cardona family of Ventrue in a joint endeavor to support Castro and drive the Lasombra out of Cuba. Castro's sudden shift to socialism a few years later, however, masked the Brujah's sudden and efficient removal of Cardona (and, therefore, Ventrue) influence. Three wisequips I knew very well died as a result. Thankfully, the council's influence with Castro has never been as strong as they would like (they tried to steer him more along the lines of Soviet communism), and has been failing even further in recent years.

Despite the Council's efforts, we still have some cars on the ground in Cuba. One of them, a warlock named Marco Constance, was recently made by the Cardona family for his contributions in keeping our interests afloat in Havana. He is still technically under the influence of the local capo, a guy named Alighieri, but he's been regularly feeding us info about his boss and his moves, and has demonstrated a genuine loyalty to Family first. For now, we're encouraging him to support Alighieri to the fullest, as he is one of the most powerful people involved in what is called the *Revolución Nueva*, a combined effort of several Cuban factions to overthrow the current regime. Although not a Cardona (or a Kindred or even one of the true *soldati*), Alighieri is a man of many connections who has proven himself time and time again to the Mafia at large.

From what Constance tells us, however, the situation with his capo is becoming... strange. Although his underground casinos continue to thrive, Alighieri seems to be withdrawing from the front lines of late. He takes private meetings without informing his crew, and is often away from his offices without leaving any word as to where he's going or when he'll be back. Lastly, Constance reports reading something odd about his capo while running some kind of magical "scan" of the wisequips in his outfit. It's nothing he can put a description to, but it concerns him nonetheless, and he was kind enough to let us know about it.

Either way, it's not really my problem anymore. I do hope that everything works out for those guys — Lord knows, I hate those Brujah snobs as much as the next guy — but I just don't have the time now. My concentration ain't what it was even two days ago, and I feel like I only have just enough energy to make this one last trip.

Back home.

For Thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory...

## Malta

Grand Harbor (Valletta), 6:05 AM

I finally caught up with the shooter this morning.

Some way, somehow, I just knew that all this would lead me back here. Malta has been the ancestral home of my family since the 15th century, when a man named Antonio Cardona bought the island from King Alphonso V of Sicily for 30,000 florins. Cardona then transferred governance of the island to one Gonsalvo Monroy, who proceeded to piss off the Maltese people so much that they, in turn, offered to pay Monroy the 30,000 florins just to get him the hell out and thus let them gain their right to self-governance. The request was accepted and, by royal charter in 1482, the legal right of the Maltese was confirmed. That was the real start of the Cardona story.

Now, what most folks don't know is that Cardona had masterminded the whole thing. He set up Monroy as a stooge — the means by which eventual Maltese independence could be won — and quietly faded into the background of Maltese society. In reality, Cardona was establishing himself as the patron of an entire people who would owe him their freedom. It was brilliant.



Since then, one Don Cardona, a devout Catholic and one of the Knights of the Order of St. John (later the Knights of Malta), has prospered on this island, through thick and thin. He has built an entire network out of the Cardona family from this island, encouraging the prosperity of his mortal descendants above all others. Although a Kindred himself, he is more concerned with how his descendants fare worldwide than in creating an army of Cardona Kindred at his command. In fact, he sees vampirism as a biblical curse and only bestows it upon those who either ask for it, or whose existences must be preserved for eternity for the sake of the family. I heard one rumor concerning Don Cardona that would go a long way toward explaining this devotion to his family: It tells that the Don has a particularly restrictive diet. In fact, he may only obtain nourishment from the blood of his own familial line. Thus, it would follow that the Don does all he can to ensure the prosperity of the Cardona line... when it dies, so does he. The question of whether or not Don Cardona — the head of the powerful Cardona family — is the Antonio Cardona has always been something of a mystery, and it's likely to remain so. I for one have never had the balls to call him on it.

When I arrived last night, the vision of this beautiful harbor at sunset just dumbfounded me. I wondered how it was I could go so long without seeing this place again. And I haven't left since then. I've been wandering around the harbor all night, watching the moon shimmer off the water and listening to the tide slap against the boats.

And then it just happened. At a little after three in the morning, a small private yacht pulled into the harbor and docked within sight of where I was sitting. A man in a tight slicker stepped up, onto the railing, and began tying the ratlines. It was him. My assassin.

I stood, watching him, and, just as I was making to walk over, I suddenly drifted off again. Across my eyes blew a rapid haze of blurry images, scenes of my life, from before and after I was made. In them, I saw my father, my friends from childhood, the old neighborhood in Somerville... the mother I never knew. And it really made me miss you, Mama, so much. From somewhere behind the haze, I was aware

of my mark getting away. He was stepping off the boat and crossing the harbor to a parking lot. I realized that I would lose him if I didn't make my move now... and then, somewhat dimly, I realized that I didn't really care.

So I've been thinking about duty again tonight, Mama, and about you. I know my father never forgave me for what happened to you in that hospital, but I've always wondered what you were thinking in those first moments of my life, in the final moments of your own. I wonder if you thought about what your new baby boy would grow up to be when he became a man, or whether he'd make a good butcher or baker or candlestick maker — or maybe even a police officer, like his father. And I wonder what you would say to your boy now, if you knew of how he'd chosen to become the first of that distinguished list in the most undistinguished way.

I might also wonder what Papa would say if he saw me now, but I think I'm afraid of the answer to that question. I know he resented me there at the end of his life, but I had always thought that it was because he had blamed me for your death. My birth had effectively robbed him of his wife, his only true love. Only now do I see that he resented me truly because I'd been chosen over him in the end; because when I was made the Family was opting to pass right over Dominic, Sr. — in favor of the "newer model" — thus dooming him to a slow and painful and ignominiously human death. He knew that I was aware that his being made was the only way that he could live on, and he resented the fact that his own son would steal time away from his dying father.

But Papa didn't know the truth about life as one of the true soldati. He didn't know that the time I'd been given was, just like everything else in the Life, stolen to begin with and not theirs to give. The terrible and perfect irony of it, Mama, is that I wouldn't have wished this life on anyone, least of all my own father. Papa has no idea that what I really did when I let him die a human being was to save him. I saved him, Mama; I really believe that I did. And I hope that that fact in some way allows me to see you again, now that I'm finally finished

down here. You see, Mama, my biggest fear now, here, at the end, is that all the things I've done during the time you gave me will keep you just as distant from me in death as you were from me in life.

And as God is my witness, I am sorry. For all the lies and for the hurt I've caused, for the complete and suffocating meaninglessness of this... fucking duty. I'm sorry for all of it, Mama; I just don't know if it's enough. I don't know if what I've gone through these last few days is the penance I must pay, or worse yet, just the beginning of a penance I

have yet to pay. So I'm scared, Mama, scared because it's truly terrifying not knowing; not knowing where I'll be going when I leave this place, or worst of all, whether or not I'll be able to see you when I get there. Still, I think that there is one thing that old Dumb Sonny does know for a change...

He knows when it's high time for an old wise guy to finally wise up.

Forever and ever...

Amen.







# Chapter Five: Storytelling

*This American system of ours, call it Americanism, call it capitalism, call it what you will, gives each and every one of us a great opportunity if we only seize it with both hands and make the most of it.*

— Al Capone

So you've decided that you want to run a Mafia-based chronicle. Maybe you want your players to be sitting at the top of the heap, the Al Capones or the John Gottis or the Michael Corleones of your game. You salivate at the thought of them pulling the strings, hobnobbing with (and bribing) senators and judges, and ordering hits on rival wiseguys.

Then again, maybe you're looking for something more visceral. Your players' characters aren't at the top; they're nowhere near it. Instead, they're the soldiers, the guys on the street. They're hijacking trucks, working the casinos, even blasting away at those same rivals with cheap shotguns (and it isn't a shame, dramatically speaking, that the Tommy gun fell out of use?).

One type of story tends to be more political, the other more action-oriented, but both can be a hell of a lot of fun. But there's a lot more to running a Mafia-

oriented chronicle than giving the characters names like Guido the Lip and having them say "Fuggeddaboutit!" and "I'ma gonna make 'im an offer he can't refuse" every other sentence. This book is filled with hints and discussions about the culture of the Mafia and the sort of people who get involved in it. The Mafia's history has a powerful impact on the organization's current activities. Remember, too, that joining the Mafia isn't something done lightly or by just anyone. Only individuals willing to place themselves outside of society's bounds, to put loyalty to the Family above the laws of the world around them — and even their own well-being — are going to make the cut. Storytellers, pay particular attention to Chapters One and Two (especially the sections on "Family" and "Made Men") and put that information to use when creating your supporting characters. Suggestions and rules for creating Mafia characters



have already been covered in Chapter Three, but that, of course, is the players' responsibility. Yours, as the Storyteller, is a little more complicated.

Take a quick look at the front cover of this book. Yes, your games may focus on the criminal activities of the Family; your characters may, in fact, be everyday mortals who think vampires and mages are nothing but costumed children who beg for candy on Halloween. But the setting is still the World of Darkness, and it's still one designed, first and foremost, for horror. Ignore the criminal element, and you end up playing just another Storytelling game with mortals instead of night-stalking monsters. Ignore the horror, though, and there's no sense in setting the game in the World of Darkness at all. Although a Mafia-based role-playing game set in the "real" world might be fun, it's not what we've got going here.

This chapter is intended to give Storytellers advice for putting together a Mafia chronicle. It focuses primarily on the nature and activities of good

Family men, yes, but we've tips aplenty for working the various horrors of the World of Darkness into the game as well. So read on — but make sure you don't open your big yap about what we tell you. Nobody likes a rat.

The ethos and activities of the Mafia allow for an enormous range of potential stories. Just trying to navigate successfully the labyrinthine Mafia culture presents choices and challenges aplenty, to say nothing of the dozens of external conflicts faced by *mafiosi* characters on a regular basis. By simply recombining various aspects of conflict and setting, the Storyteller can create stories and chronicles as rich as anything to be found in any World of Darkness game.

### History Versus Hollywood

The Mafia of *The Godfather* or *The Sopranos* is most assuredly not the Mafia of the real world. Oh, they have more similarities than differences, but the

### Violence Begets Violence

Even if you're playing characters at the highest levels of a Family, or on the Commission itself, a Mafia-oriented chronicle is going to be violent — more so than the average political chronicle, at any rate. Dons are often the targets of hits, underlings try to knock you off to move up through the ranks, the children of guys you've ordered whacked are coming back for revenge, and the Feds are lurking just around the corner, waiting for you to make that one mistake.

It's even worse for street-level operators — and players' characters. Violence is a common pastime for them. Even assuming the poor slob you're shaking down doesn't suddenly grow a spine or a Smith & Wesson, you've got cops, rival wiseguys, mavericks who think the Mafia's rules don't apply to them, people in your own ranks who hold grudges, and sometimes even the bosses who decide you're expendable.

It's worse still if you're running a chronicle with the Mafia as adversary to the characters. The amount of firepower the Families can bring to bear against someone who really pisses them off is downright obscene. Even a vampire or a werewolf is going to go down under a large enough hail of machine gun fire.

What all this boils down to is that while a Mafia chronicle need not be heavily combat-oriented, it is, by nature, going to have more combat than, for instance, a political **Vampire** game. Thus, your characters are going to have a higher than average mortality rate.

Common instinct among many Storytellers is to fudge it. Let the characters miraculously survive where death seemed certain. Many Storytellers don't like to let the dice decide such things; they want characters to die only if and when it's dramatic for the story.

That's certainly an acceptable approach, and in some styles of chronicle it really is the best option. A Mafia-oriented story may not be one of them, though. Sudden, bloody violence is an inescapable part of Family life. If you remove the danger of abrupt — and often frequent — character death, you remove an important factor of the game. Characters in these games *should* be nervous, and death *should* potentially lurk around every corner and in the chamber of every cheap .38. To do less is to weaken the impact of the violence that, in the final analysis, makes the Mafia what it is.

image most people hold, a composite acquired from hours of stylish cinema, is not an accurate one. The Mafia of the real world is dirtier, grittier and even less reliable than that portrayed, as Nicholas Romero remarked in Chapter Two, by DeNiro and Pesci.

In the real world, the Mafia does not have codes of behavior nearly as civilized as those in the movies. The violence isn't nearly as restrained — yes, you read that right. Furthermore, the Mafia of today isn't what it used to be. While still an active presence in organized crime, La Cosa Nostra has been on a downward slide for decades; it hasn't nearly the power or the clout that it used to.

But who cares?

The Mafia of Hollywood is a lot more fun to work with. Feel free to play up the fictionalized, even romanticized Mafia of the silver screen. Portray the aging don with a sort of ruthless nobility, a love for his people that excuses, in his mind at least, all the distasteful things he's done through the years. Let the battle-weary *sgarrista* try to ease his way out, to go legit, even though his capo keeps dragging him back for just "one more job." Even the hitman with morals, the guy who won't hurt anybody not already guilty of some sort of crime — horribly clichéd as the concept may be — can be fun in the hands of the right player.

Bottom line, don't worry too terribly much about being ruthlessly true to the source in this particular instance. **World of Darkness: Mafia** is constructed at least partially on the Hollywood model of La Cosa Nostra; there's no reason your chronicles shouldn't be as well.

## Rank and File

One of the first decisions you'll have to make as a Storyteller is where, exactly, the characters fit into the Family hierarchy. You'll have to choose from quite a number of different ranks, but for purposes of developing the story, you'll need to concern yourself with three particular categories. Deciding which one (or which ones) the characters fall into defines the very nature of the chronicle.

## The Boss

This story puts the characters at the highest levels of the Family. Perhaps one character plays the don and the others his *capos bastone* or his *consiglieri*. Maybe they're all lieutenants to a Storyteller character

don. Maybe, if you're really looking for a story charged with intrigue, they're all dons of separate Families, each with a seat on the Commission (this last is not recommended for beginning Storytellers or ones with a low tolerance for pain). *The Godfather* trilogy is definitely one place to see inspiration for an upper-echelon chronicle.

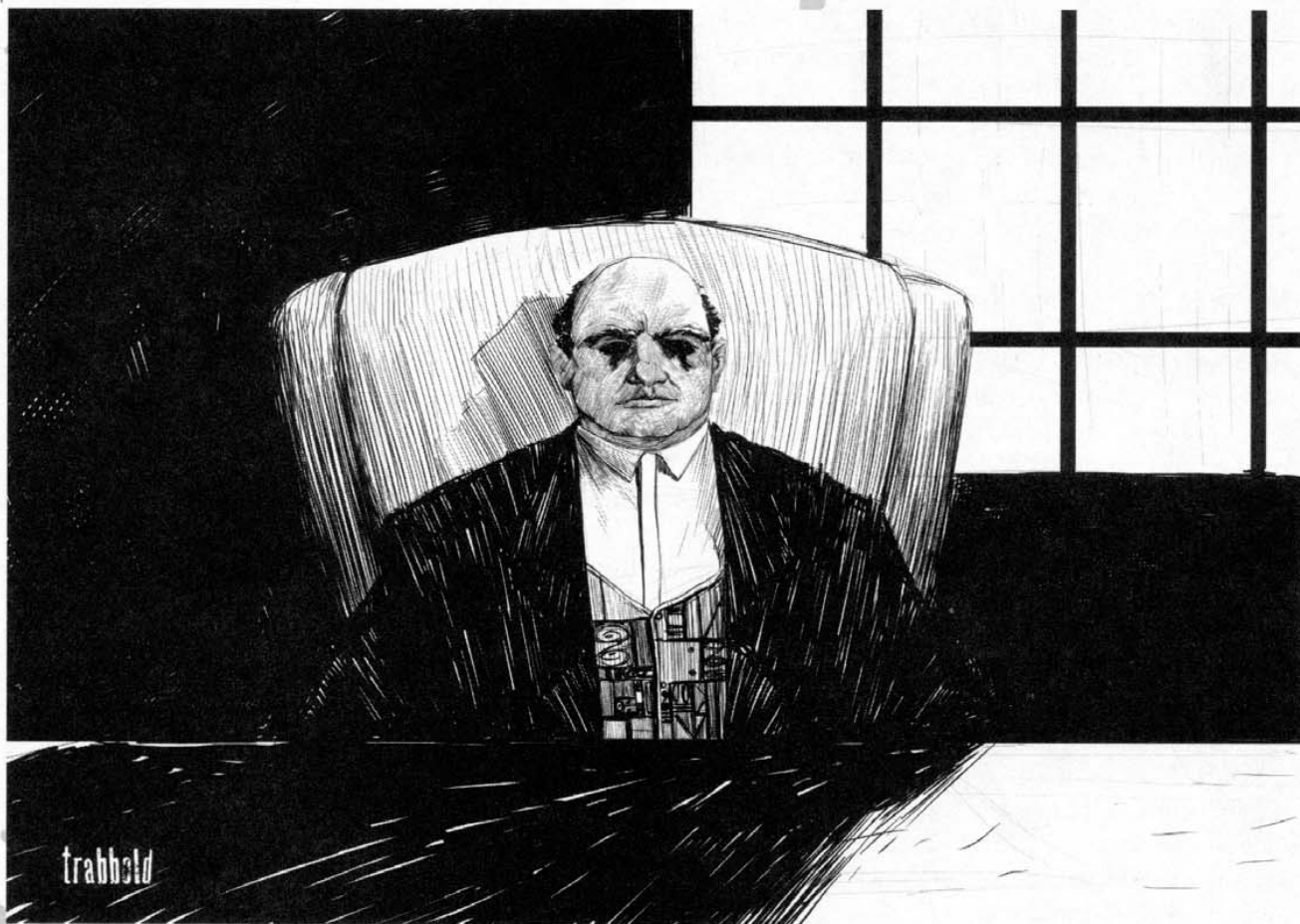
Whatever the specifics, the characters in this sort of story are responsible for maintaining the Family, making decisions, organizing operations, and so forth. They probably aren't getting their hands dirty directly (though odds are pretty good they did so quite a bit in their younger days). These games are not going to involve running battles on the streets and car bombs — or rather, they will, but the characters will be ordering such things, rather than participating in them (usually).

This sort of Mafia story is particularly well suited to those Storytellers and players who enjoy political chronicles. If you prefer hobnobbing in Elysium and influencing the governor to battling the Sabbat; if you prefer tribal moots and plays for leadership to shredding Black Spiral Dancers; if you prefer verbal sparring in the court of the sidhe to butting heads with a troll — this is probably the Mafia story for you.

Most Mafia dons and their immediate underlings are very well connected. Both player and Storyteller characters will need to have substantial amounts of the Allies, Contacts, Influence and Resources Backgrounds (or, if you prefer not to give your Storyteller characters actual dots, just make sure they have a huge number of strings they can pull and favors they can call in). It's extremely important that the Storyteller knows precisely who her characters' connections are and how they interact, since it's possible — even likely — that the players will eventually move to nullify those contacts. For more on how to define a character's web of influence, see **The Gilded Cage**; though intended primarily as a **Vampire** supplement, the advice given therein can usually be applied to any well-connected character.

One of the primary jobs of the men at the top is to keep things looking good for the police, the press and the public. A Family has to have legitimate businesses to cover its less-than-legit enterprises. The don and his underlings — and their cadres of lawyers — have to keep up the appearance of respectability. Congressmen won't be seen hobnobbing with someone who doesn't have a sparkling public persona, after all.





## Made Men

Technically, someone in the upper echelons is also “made,” but in this case we’re referring to *capos* and *sgarristas*, operators and soldiers. Chronicles set primarily at this level are going to involve a lot more action on the part of the characters. The bosses may give the orders, but these are the guys who make things happen. More than just leg-breakers and hitmen, characters at this level are executing the operations. They can still have some authority — maybe one of the characters is the *capo* of a crew — but these guys are primarily doers, not planners. If you want to tell a story that delves deeply into the dirty, blood-soaked day-to-day criminal endeavors of La Cosa Nostra, this is the chronicle for you.

That said, there’s plenty of politicking even at this level, if only in competition among wiseguys for advancement. Everyone wants to be the next guy promoted, and if your players can make the other contenders look like fools, hey, more power to them. Of course, your Storyteller characters should be trying to do the same thing to them.

The thing to remember about playing a soldier of any sort is that when orders come down from above, you follow them. Period, end of discussion, no debate. Or you die. It’s called *rispetto* — respect — and short of *omerta* itself, it’s the most important part of a wiseguy’s worldview. Make *absolutely certain* that your players are prepared for that situation, as they will inevitably wind up receiving orders they don’t want to follow (otherwise, how can you call yourself a Storyteller?).

## Associates

This is pretty much the lowest level you can go and still call it a Mafia chronicle. The “associates” aren’t made men yet. Most of them will do anything to get made, and that means they get stuck with the *really* nasty stuff. Make your players do the real shit jobs: dirty hits, disposing of corpses, holding off the cops while everyone else gets away clean — anything you can think of that you know they’re not going to want to do.

## Equal Rights

What if one of your players' characters is female?

As discussed earlier, women do not hold official positions within the Mafia. Any authority they hold — and many of them do hold quite a bit — comes from their ability to throw around the name of their husband/father/son/boyfriend/brother/whatever. Some people may enjoy the challenge involved in roleplaying such a character, but others might not.

Your options are, unfortunately, not as varied as they might be in another sort of chronicle.

If you want to play an active female character in a Mafia game, you *might* be able to squeeze by playing an associate. It's just possible that a female operative could prove her value sufficiently that the *capos* would be willing to use her as an additional gun. She'll never be made under any circumstances, though, and never hold any real power, save over those citizens she can intimidate.

The same holds true for characters of non-Italian ancestry. There's no reason to limit your players to Italian characters (unless you have other, story-related reasons for doing so, of course). And people of other nationalities traditionally hold some positions, such as *consigliore*. But again, it is your job to make sure that your players who choose to play non-Italian characters go into this with their eyes open, knowing full well that they'll never rise in the ranks.

Unfair? Absolutely; but it's also the way the Mafia operates.

As Storyteller, of course, you always have the option of saying "Well, the Mafia works differently in my world," and allowing anyone to hold any position, male or female, Italian or otherwise. If this makes your game run more smoothly, go for it; but you'll lose a substantial amount of Mafia feel.

Maybe, if you're really nice, you'll even let them get made one day and move up a notch. Assuming they've got the right ancestry to be made, of course; if not, they're stuck at this level forever.

Remember, too, that you can torment them with *all* your other Storyteller characters. Let them make some enemies among the *sgarristas*. They can't do much of anything about it, can they? If *The Godfather* is good for inspiration for high-ranked stories, you'll definitely want to give *Goodfellas* a look for these poor slob.

But hey, that's what your characters wanted, right?

## Mixing and Matching

Not all the characters, of course, need to have the same level of authority. It would be a simple matter for one player to portray the *capo* in charge of a crew consisting of a mixture of made men and non-made men — in this case, the other players' characters. Having one character portray the don while the others are *sgarristas* might be a bit tougher, as the Don rarely involves himself directly in his operatives' activities, but a resourceful group might find a way to pull it off.

This sort of situation works, however, only when you're dealing with a group of mature players, all of whom have agreed to the situation beforehand. It's never a wise idea to put one player in charge of the others unless it's been agreed upon in advance. Some players dislike their characters being made subservient to another player's character. Others feel like the group's leader will almost invariably hog the spotlight (a common tendency and a mistake on the part of the Storyteller, one you should watch for if you do intend to set up your chronicle in this fashion). Ultimately, a mixed group isn't for everybody; make sure your players are okay with the idea before you start planning.

## Conflict

As with nearly any story of any sort, the primary defining characteristic of a Mafia chronicle is conflict (that's "conflict," not "combat"; despite what some people would have you believe, a substantial difference exists between the two). Once you've chosen a starting point for your players, you need to decide what the conflict is for any given story. Not every plotline has to revolve around Mafia-specific issues — maybe you want to have a story in which your characters happen to get caught in a flood — but we're going to focus on those elements that are



specific to La Cosa Nostra. Many of these conflicts impact the various levels of authority described above in different ways, but they're all applicable in one form or another.

## Internal Conflict

As might be surmised, an internal conflict is one that a character wages with herself. This can, in the hands of a good Storyteller and a good player, prove to be one of the most intense and most horrific stories to be told in a World of Darkness game.

A character normally develops inner turmoil of this sort as the result of a moral quandary. Hollywood has given us the notion of the noble mobster. Yes, he does all these hideous things, but it's all for the good of family. He's torn, forced to do evil to protect what he loves most. Every day it's a new fight, a desperate struggle to reconcile who he is with what he must do.

Of course, if that's a little over the top for you, even the most hideously immoral, nastiest, vilest of people normally have some line they won't cross, some behavior that violates even their own anemic sense of right and wrong. Some players in a Mafia story might decide that their characters have no problem slaughtering other wiseguys but won't touch women or children. Others may consider even children fair game, but balk at harming a priest. Another might be willing to kill just about anyone, but he'll cut off his own right hand before hurting a cat. The point is that

even the most jaded, violence-inured characters should have some limits to what they're willing to do — and you, as the Storyteller, can force them to push those limits and see how they react.

(As a side note, it is possible that some players will want to portray *mafiosi* purely as an outlet for their own emotions and to play a character who truly has no limits. Such people do exist, and it's not an impossible character — but it really isn't much fun to roleplay the Terminator in a setting of this sort. You have the right to veto such characters in your chronicle. Use that power wisely, but don't hesitate to use it.)

The mobster wracked with guilt or otherwise stuck in a moral quandary is an old standby of Mafia fiction, and that's because it works. Michael Corleone, after everything he'd done, wanted nothing more than to turn the entire Family legit before he died, to pass on something pure to those who came after him. The don trying to go straight, the soldier who turns state's evidence because his orders finally crossed the line — or, alternatively, who grits his teeth and blows away the kids as he was ordered, and watches that much more of his humanity (or Humanity) slip away: All of these situations provide viable plots for a Mafia game.

The introduction of a conflict of this sort is also the perfect way for the Storyteller to drive home the horror of what *mafiosi* — and the characters —

## Humanity

The morality of the Mafia is a particularly sticky spot when it comes to Kindred characters. It's bad enough for the average mortal (or even werewolf, imbued, mage or what have you) to slowly sink into the depths of depravity, but when the Kindred fall, they fall hard. For most vampires, it is only by desperately clinging to their precious Humanity that they can stave off the ravages of the Beast.

They're going to have a hard time with that in La Cosa Nostra. Many *mafiosi* truly don't care about the despicable acts they commit. Sometimes they justify it by claiming it's "all for the Family," or they confess like it's going out of style. None of those options is viable in the long term for the Kindred; justifying horrific acts is exactly what gets them into trouble. The same behavior that is going to let them advance — or allow them to survive — in the Mafia is going to plunge them into Wassail at truly dizzying speeds.

Most vampires, then, prefer to maintain contacts and alliances within the Mafia, rather than become members outright. A rare few — such as Cardona's brood on the isle of Malta — actually are part of the Mafia and have the strength of will to hold onto the last dregs of their Humanity, though it's a near thing for most of them.

Is all this meant to discourage Kindred *mafiosi*? Not at all; if anything, we say go for it! Again, however, it is the Storyteller's job to ensure that the player knows precisely what she's in for before she sets pencil to character sheet.

actually *do*. It's all too easy for characters and players both to forget that ruining people's lives is what they do. Take the opportunity to remind them, poignantly, and see how the player respond.

Gore is not the best way to handle this sort of revelation. A character who's just planted a car bomb and watched from afar as it detonates might be revolted, but not particularly stricken with guilt, should some of the victim's blood happen to rain down into the street before him.

If, instead, what lands at his feet is the seared head of a little girl's doll, with a fine mist of blood sprayed across its formerly pink cheeks, the character — and the player — might stop for a moment and really think about what's been done.

Storytellers be warned, however. You cannot *force* an internal conflict onto a player who doesn't want one. No matter how many tough moral decisions you throw at him, no matter how many hints that the character's actions are becoming more and more vile, the player's going to respond to them only if he wants to.

You can make an effort to nudge your players in this direction. Mortals in the World of Darkness have a Humanity score. Although a mortal lacks the Beast that rages within vampires, she is still quite capable of falling into a bottomless moral pit. Humanity is used to measure that degradation of morality, and the Storyteller is well within her rights to insist that players choose their actions at least partially based on that Humanity score.

Still, it can be an uphill struggle. If your group consists of experienced players who enjoy getting into their characters' heads, give them this sort of quandary to deal with however they see fit. If they lean toward the more action-oriented style of play, however, you might do better simply to skip such internal conflicts entirely and move on to something that can be more easily defined by the dice.

## External Conflicts

An external conflict, obviously, is one in which the character or characters are pitted against an outside opponent. The trick, though, is finding suitable conflicts for the characters that have that particular Mafia feel. Some of them focus specifically on the players' characters, whereas others affect the entire Family, but they're all very distinctly Mafia-esque.

## Character Versus Superiors

This one's a bit tough to pull off if one of the characters is the don, but it's absolutely perfect for anyone else — and even the don might have trouble saying no to the Commission.

The Mafia is perfectly set up for this sort of story. As discussed above, if a wiseguy is given an order by a superior, he follows it. He has no choice. Obviously, practical limits to this exist — no sane *sgarrista* is going to agree to a suicide bombing, for instance. But beyond the blatantly ridiculous, anything goes.

This setup can lead perfectly to a moral conflict of the sort discussed above. *Mafiosi* don't just obey orders out of fear of punishment (though that fear may certainly be a motivating factor); they do it because they've been taught that following orders is the right thing to do. Refusing to follow such an order actually goes against their morals and the aforementioned code of *rispetto*.

The Storyteller can have a great deal of fun with this. If the characters have always made a point of not harming innocents, have their *capo* order them to hit a traitor's children. If they have friends working at a particular restaurant, give them the order to burn it down for failing to pay once too often. This isn't just Storyteller cruelty; the Mafia often makes a point of ordering friends to hit friends. It proves loyalty.

At the same time, don't overdo it. Not every order — not even a significant minority of them — can be unpalatable, or else the players are going to start getting upset. One or two distasteful orders make for a good story; 12 probably make for a miserable chronicle.

Conflict with those above need not be limited to following (or disobeying) orders. *Capos* worry about their underlings replacing them. Dons see traitors in every run of bad luck. And absolutely everyone holds grudges for even the tiniest offenses. If your boss doesn't like you, your life is going to become very difficult, and there's not a damn thing you can do about it — openly, at least. How does a *sgarrista* — or even better, a group of associates, who have no right to stand up to any made man, let alone their direct superior — fight back against a *capo* who's deliberately giving them the most reprehensible and dangerous jobs? The Storyteller can construct entire stories around the characters' attempts to find some way to make the bastard back off without breaking the rules and taking him on directly.



## Character Versus Underlings

This example is the flip side of the previous one. Having just hammered home the point that one's superiors are always to be obeyed, how could any of the character's subordinates pose a threat?

The characters, frankly, aren't the only schemers in the Mafia. Associates want to be made men, *sgarristas* want to be *capos*, *capos* want to be *capos bastone*, *capos bastone* want to be dons. Nobody can move openly, of course, but how often are sabotage and assassination open? If the players hold any rank at all, it's almost guaranteed that someone beneath them watches them with hungry eyes and an itchy trigger finger.

The fact that the characters may be "in charge" doesn't give them *carte blanche* to deal with the situation. The rules about not killing made men apply to everyone, even if the wiseguy in question is of lower rank than the characters. Associates are a little easier to take care of, but even they can't be killed without good reason; they're too useful. Furthermore, the last thing any *mafioso* wants is a reputation for killing his subordinates. That only encourages them to move against him all the quicker.

Not all problems from below come in the form of attempted coups. The Storyteller may simply stick the characters with a truly incompetent underling, one whose foolishness is endangering the characters' operations — and yet whose close blood ties to the don mean they have to walk very carefully around him, despite his lack of any real authority. On the other hand, perhaps the underlings are spies for the don, who has been led to believe (correctly or not) that the characters are conspiring against him. Or the underlings have, in their spare time, engaged in some side ventures that have now gone sour and threaten the entire crew, or even the entire Family. The underlings must stall or, if necessary, remove the characters before their misbehavior comes to light.

## Characters Versus the Family

By setting the characters against a substantial portion of the Family, the Storyteller can really put them in a bind. Presumably, the characters haven't managed to get the *entire* Family mad at them, or else the story is quickly going to become a desperate game of hide-and-seek. While this sort of story can be a lot of fun, the Storyteller probably doesn't want to push things to that level until and unless she's prepared to move the chronicle away from the Mafia into other

venues, as the characters (if they somehow manage to survive at all) will probably not be welcomed back. Consider that this setup needn't indicate direct confrontation. As always, the conflict can be waged a lot more quietly.

If the don himself supports the Family behavior with which the characters come into conflict, this sort of plot can greatly resemble a characters versus superiors story, but a subtle difference exists. In this case, it's not that the don has a personal grudge against the characters (or vice versa), but rather that the characters and the don disagree on what is best for the Family.

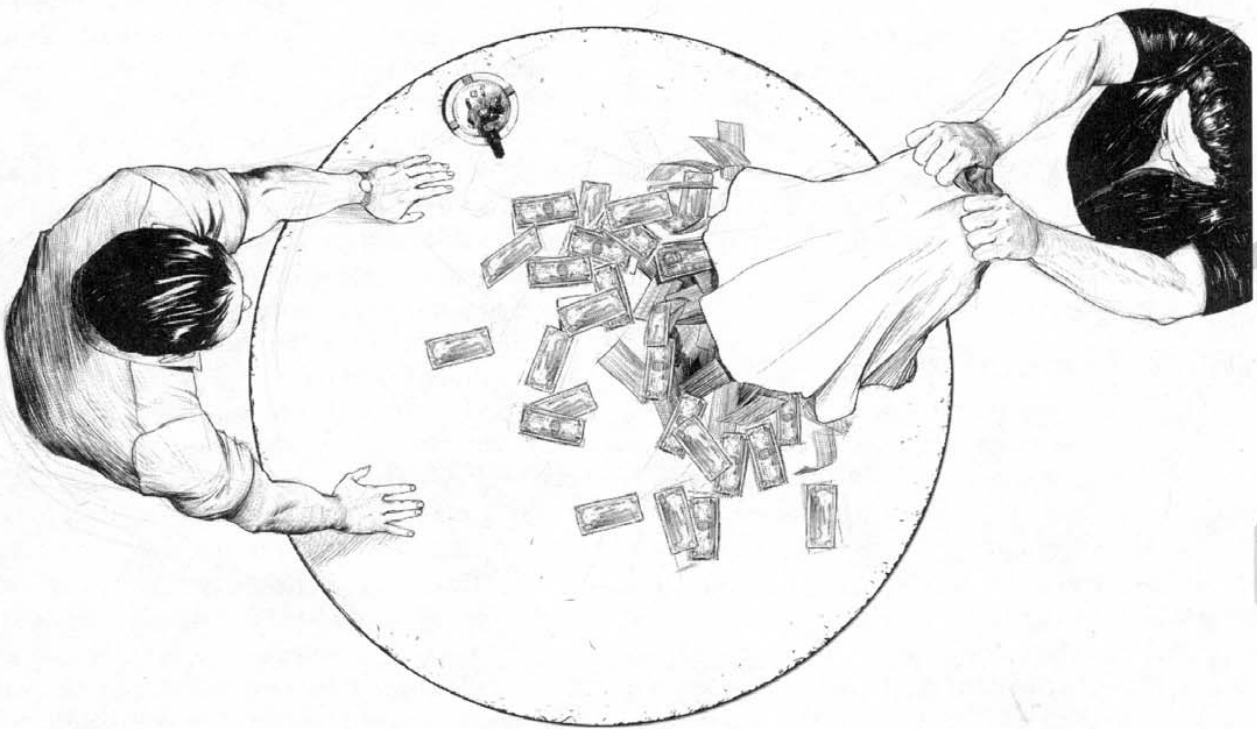
For instance, suppose the characters are of the younger generation. They may feel that the various traditions to which the "Old Man" clings are slowing down the Family. They could accomplish so much more, they feel, if the restrictions were relaxed just a bit. This attitude puts the characters at odds with the Family as a whole, in attitude if not in action, and yet it doesn't pit them directly against any single opponent. The reverse is also possible. The characters may be members of the old guard, trying to find a way to rein in the younger portion of the Family — which is now, unfortunately, the majority — without turning the confrontation violent or attracting police attention.

In any case, the tricky part of intra-Family conflict is that it must be waged politically. Any overt use of violence can erupt into a bloody conflagration. The characters may wind up in a race to determine whether they can maneuver their rivals into a position where action may be taken against them legitimately before their enemies do the reverse.

Although stories involving the Family as adversary don't lend themselves to violent confrontation, they can turn out that way. They are rare, but "civil wars" — that is, prolonged, armed conflict within a Family — are hardly unheard of. A story of that sort can turn the entire Family order on its head, allowing characters to grab for positions far above those they've held — or to be thrown down amongst the lowest *giovane d'honore*.

## Characters Versus the Law

Cops and robbers is the classic story, with some peculiar twists when it comes to La Cosa Nostra. At times, the FBI or various other law-enforcement agencies will focus their attention on an entire Mafia Family, and the characters can be assigned to deal



trabhold

with the problem in whatever fashion they think best. In other instances, though, a particular detective or federal agent might focus on a specific *mafioso* or crew — in this case, the characters — which can make for a much more personal feel than a general “the Family’s being investigated” story.

When this happens, the Family as a whole often takes a step back, distancing itself from the potential problem until they see whether the characters are competent enough to handle it themselves. A particularly dogged agent or team of agents can make an effective recurring adversary for a Mafia chronicle. The players want to be Capone? Give them an Elliot Ness.

Some of your players might consider it expedient to have their characters take the snooping officer out of the picture and bury him in a shallow grave somewhere. By all means, let them. The shitstorm they’ll reap when the officer’s entire department follows up on his investigations will make it all worthwhile. There’s a reason the Mafia normally keeps its hands off the cops, and it’s not because they particularly like the folks in blue.

No, the characters are going to have to find other, less bloody ways to handle any police problems you throw at them. Bribery is often a favorite — until you decide that the cop they’ve been paying off wants more, pronto. Or maybe the players are under surveillance, only gradually becoming aware of the situation. You can squeeze several stories out of nothing more than their attempts to permanently elude the pursuit and to find out what the cops already know.

If it does finally come down to a shootout between the players and the cops, it’s important for the Storyteller to remember that, in any extended conflict, the police always win. Read that again. Even with towering werewolves or deathless vampires, *the cops are always going to win*. Yes, when it first begins, the characters might have the heavier armaments and the better shooters — but the longer it drags out, the more cops show up. Eventually, the heavier weaponry gets called out, and very few players’ characters can stand up to a SWAT team. Don’t portray the police as pushovers. They’re just about the most dangerous opponents any character in the



World of Darkness could face.

The law takes forms other than just the police, though. If the characters are portraying the upper echelons of a Family or mobsters who hold seats on the Commission, they may find themselves targeted not only by the FBI but also by the IRS. If they're *truly* important, the Storyteller might even want to stage a Senate hearing, such as the one quoted above from *The Godfather Part II*. Poke holes in their veneer of respectability, until they're absolutely scrambling to patch things up before the cops find some real evidence.

### Characters Versus Rival Families

Be it political or physical, Mob warfare makes for almost the quintessential Mafia story. It shows its ugly head in the vast majority of Mafia-related movies and fiction, and it captures headlines across the nation when it erupts in real life.

It's easy for the Storyteller to involve characters at any level of the Mafia in a war of this sort. The *sgarristas* and the associates are on the front lines. When the lead flies and the blood spills, these are the guys doing the killing — and the bleeding. A war story of this sort should be fast-paced, full of action, though action need not mean scene after scene of rampant combat. Planning a strike, escaping a hit, trying to elude the police after killing one of your rivals — these are all critical components of waging war.

The don and his lieutenants have it even tougher in some ways. No, they're not on the front lines, not ducking bullets nearly as often. But when the enemy makes a deliberate hit, these guys will be the targets. So, while arranging for their own protection, the bosses are also scrambling to keep up the Family's appearance of respectability, warding off the probes of both the press and the police, and trying to strategically outthink the enemy. The players, not just the characters, are going to have to think tactically in this sort of game, as they are in charge of the war effort, and they will determine which way the war goes. Storytellers should be quick to reward creative tactics and equally quick to take advantage of mistakes.

The Storyteller can add a healthy dose of political maneuvering within the Family as well, regardless of where the characters stand in the hierarchy. The characters' subordinates take the opportunity provided by the chaos to try to move up in the ranks.

The group's superiors take to giving all sorts of orders that make no sense. The characters can either follow these orders — at the risk of being killed or losing the war — or ignore them at the risk of being killed by their own Family before they can investigate the purpose of those strange orders. The characters might receive information suggesting that the war is, in fact, covering up for something bigger. In such a case, they need to find out what it is so they can put a stop to the conflict before both Families are left in ruins.

One particularly complex, yet ultimately rewarding war story is to have the players portraying characters on both sides. Yes, they can be fighting against one another, but it might be more interesting to force them to work together, either to end the war or to avert an even greater threat. They'll have to operate in secret, because they'll be marked as traitors by their own people if word gets out that they're consorting with the enemy.

Yet another way the Storyteller might wish to approach a war story is to have the players portraying members of a third Family, one not involved in the war. Their duties might not involve fighting at all, but simply trying to protect their own interests or to mediate for the feuding Families. Perhaps, at the behest of the Commission, they're involved in trying to cover up evidence of the other Families' warfare, to keep the worst of the violence from reaching the newspapers or the cops. Characters don't have to be directly involved in the war to be affected by it.

### Characters Versus Other Criminals

The *mafiosi* are far from the only criminals wandering the streets, and it's hardly uncommon for interests to clash head on. Sometimes when that happens, arrangements can be made. At other times, the Mafia once again goes to war.

War with other criminals can be a bloodier affair than even war between Families. When two Families go at it, they've usually got a pretty good idea of who they're trying to hit, where they need to strike to cripple the enemy fast. And if they get too far out of line, they always have the other Families or the Commission to slap them back into true.

When war is waged against crooks outside the Mafia, such information is harder to come by, no outside authority will step in if things go too far — well, none except the cops and the Feds, and nobody wants them to get involved.

## Street Thugs

Sometimes, the little guys refuse to follow the rules. Whether it's an independent crew that's been stealing from the Mafia's casinos, a small-time hood extorting from shopkeepers in the characters' territory, or even an urban street gang muscling in on a Family's turf, La Cosa Nostra sometimes butts heads with criminals who would normally seem too small to draw their attention.

It would seem that such a conflict shouldn't pose much of a problem. The Mafia should be able to step in and squash small operators like the bugs they are, right? Nope; it's your job as Storyteller to make sure the characters find themselves facing an actual challenge in bringing down these guys.

Sure, even a single Family-backed crew can probably take down a band of thieves and extortionists — if they can find them. But where are you going to look? Knowing that they operate in, say, the greater New York area doesn't narrow down the field very much. Even when you've found them, most criminals these days pack some impressive firepower. Even as well equipped as the Mafia is, going up against a street gang in a toe-to-toe showdown is no laughing matter. And what about whoever's supplying the gang's drugs? Remember that some of these "petty" crooks have the backing of organizations just as nasty as the one to which the characters belong.

## Other Organizations

As dangerous as they might be to a single crew, small operations like those mentioned above aren't a long-term threat to a Family as a whole. When the outsiders get organized, though, even the Mafia has cause to worry.

Throughout the world, one can find literally dozens of crime organizations that are either comparable to the Mafia or at least approaching the same league. Chinese triads, Japanese Yakuza, South American cartels, Russian *mafiyas*, Jamaican posses, Nigerian gangs — the international crime scene is getting downright crowded. Furthermore, each and every one of these organizations has some interest in the United States, the land of opportunity, and one of La Cosa Nostra's primary stomping grounds. War has long since moved past "inevitable." It's damn near constant.

With a war of this sort, it's much harder for the characters to specifically target the enemy's weak points, as they're unlikely to have a clear idea of what those weak points are. Storytellers may wish to

involve their players with gathering information, rather than simply engaging them in constant shootouts. Make them discover where the enemy leader is holed up, or which businesses they skim money from, before they can even begin to wage war effectively. In the interim, the violence is bloody, random and usually accomplishes nothing more than taking out some of the hired guns.

Truly devious Storytellers may want to work the characters into a three-way war. Mafia versus the triads versus a cartel-backed street gang, for instance. Or perhaps it's the Mafia, the Russian Mob, and the cops mixing it up (while the Mafia is often paid to advise up-and-comers such as the Russian Mob, that doesn't mean their interests never clash). Even better, pit two rival Mafia Families in a three-way war with the Yakuza. It's enough to make the characters' — and the players' — heads spin.

But why be obvious? Not every enemy organization the players might run up against is a criminal organization in the traditional sense of the word. What about terrorist groups? No, one doesn't normally think of the Mafia running in those circles, but groups like the IRA and the Basque Separatists have to get their arms from somewhere. The Mafia's not a particularly large arms dealer to these organizations but they do interact from time to time, and if they interact, sooner or later (sooner, given the temperament of most Storytellers) a deal's going to go bad.

As another suggestion, maybe the organization you're pitting your players against is a fringe group of some sort. Suppose the players represent the main strength of a small Mafia Family — maybe even just a tiny collection of crews in a relatively small city. Now suppose that, after a massive economic slump, the local branch of the Klan or the Aryan Nation decides it's the fault of "all the damn wops!" A war of that sort is eventually going to go badly for the fringe group. Even if they manage to take out the small presence the Mafia has locally, word will eventually reach the Families, and they're not going to want to let the precedent stand, but in the short term, it can prove dangerous in the extreme for the characters.

## Characters Versus the Supernatural

As mentioned earlier, this game is still set in the World of Darkness — and that means the characters are going to have to deal with things far worse than they are. A Storyteller has several ways to approach such clashes, while still keeping both the feel of a Mafia chronicle and the horror of the supernatural alive.



### Ignorant Characters

Sometimes, the best games are ones in which the characters, if not the players, are ignorant of the various awful truths of the World of Darkness. Run the game as though the characters were “standard,” real-world *mafiosi* utterly unaware that they are far from the worst predators to stalk the night. Slowly, over the course of games, they learn that these *other* things exist.

What does this crew of wiseguys do when they discover that there’s a reason everything seems to go wrong when they try to shake down that mousy occult bookstore owner? When the guy sent to whack them suddenly gets up — and up, and *up* — from a hail of bullets, suddenly sprouting fur and Bowie knife-sized claws in the bargain? When they learn that the “business associate” of the don’s is feeding him more than *scungilli* at their meetings, and the entire Family now dances at some undead creature’s whim?

Many players are skilled enough at portraying characters to act only on what their characters know, even if the player herself has memorized the rulebooks.

Still, the Storyteller is encouraged to throw even the most experienced player for a loop. If the characters are supposed to be ignorant, make the players ignorant as well. Change the rules. Alter Gifts, Spheres and Disciplines. Be consistent with your new rules, but change things up just enough so that the players, like the characters, have no clue what to expect.

The slow revelation of the true nature of the world the characters thought they understood can make for a sense of creeping horror simply unavailable in games where the characters assume the “facts” already. Finally, as they begin to piece it all together, the chronicle will slowly shift focus toward a slightly different style of play.

### Characters in the Know

Once you’ve played through the characters’ slow understanding of the world around them (or if you’ve decided to begin your chronicle with the characters already aware of the supernatural) the story can still go in wildly different directions. It’s particularly important for the Storyteller to be prepared for multiple eventualities here, as there’s no way for him to be certain which way the players are going to



trabhold

jump. If you've played up the nastiness of the creatures they've encountered, the players will *probably* think of them as the enemy, but — assuming they aren't completely cowed by the Delirium — they just might try to make the big, furry maniac an offer. Alternatively, despite all your hints that the strange guy with the bad vibes and the phobia of churches can make the characters very rich and powerful, the players may decide that he's a threat and try to blow him away.

Opportunistic as most wiseguys are, there's a good chance they'll end up working with some supernatural entity at some point or another. This eventuality opens up all sorts of story possibilities for the Storyteller. Most of the supernatural creatures in the World of Darkness have their own conflicts and their own goals, and they have no qualms about dragging mortal colleagues in with them. One of the Kindred might be using her influence over the don to acquire bodyguards. Imagine a Mafia crew as the peacekeepers and doormen at an Elysium, or as the sheriff's high-caliber backup! Perhaps the company the characters are trying to muscle out of town happens to be a subsidiary of everybody's favorite holding company, Pentex, effectively putting the crooks on the same side as the Garou.

Of course, not all collaborations of this sort will focus on supernatural politics. Sometimes, the mage or mummy or whatever the eldritch thing happens to be just wants to establish his own territory among the various squabbling Mafia factions. Smart *mafiosi* are going to realize very quickly that having a boss who can control people's minds, alter probability or take on an entire crew in a straight-up brawl can help them go pretty damn far in the underworld.

When the players have decided that the circumstances are all opportunity and no drawbacks, that's the best time to hit them in the face with the dark and gritty side of the coin. Slowly start immersing the players in their ally's horrific behavior. Blood-drinking, murderous rampages — as the characters get deeper and deeper, play up the inhumanity of their ally. Eventually, even hardened wiseguys should find themselves sickened at the thought of their own behavior.

Let the characters sweat between their ally and their Family. Does the Family even know about this creature, or are the characters working on their own? Did they bond themselves to the vampire to gain the power of a ghoul? If so, what happens when their

domitor has something for them to do on the same night the don expects them to attend a meeting with him? Or worse, when he starts giving orders that conflict with the Family's interests? Who do the players side with (assuming they even have a choice)? And at what cost?

Alternatively, characters might not work with the supernatural at all. Maybe they view these creatures as perversions of God's order (many *mafiosi* are devout Catholics, after all), or they simply view them as competition, but for whatever reason, the players may decide that these things are the enemy.

The Storyteller is encouraged to play up the irony for all it's worth. In this sort of story, the Mafia — or at least your characters' small corner of it — has actually become something of a protector of humanity, even if that wasn't their intention. The players are at a severe disadvantage, of course. They have no mystical powers, no supernatural strength, and they tend to stay down when shot or raked with claws. Then again, wiseguys are nothing if not persistent, and they often have access to enough weaponry to make even a Silver Fang think twice about getting back up. They might just have a chance.

No less horrific than a story in which the characters are working with the supernatural, the horror of this sort of story is a much more visceral thing. The horror of "Dear God, what have I done?!" is very different from the horror of "Dear God, what is that AAAGGHHHH?!" but they're both quite effective as storytelling tools.

### Supernatural Characters

Although **World of Darkness: Mafia** is geared largely toward "normal" human characters, there's certainly no reason you can't run a chronicle in which some (or all) of the characters are supernatural creatures themselves. Not all werewolves spend their days fighting the Wyrms (though a case could almost be made that they are, in fact, aiding the Wyrms by joining the Mafia). Not all mages have ulterior goals beyond enriching themselves by any means necessary. Not all imbued choose to use their newfound powers in the way they were intended. Like any profitable and powerful enterprise in the World of Darkness, the Mafia's going to have its fair share of members who are more — or less — than human.

That said, it's vital that the Storyteller keeps a tight reign on the creation of such a crew, in order to keep it from becoming some comic-book society of supervillains. For a Mafia crew to just *happen* to



## The Mafia as Adversary

La Cosa Nostra provides all sorts of plot elements — and not all of them require that the characters be a part of that not-so-august organization. *Mafiosi* are “bad guys,” after all; why not use them as such?

Characters might be police or other law-enforcement officers, slowly working to shut down their city’s biggest Family. Alternatively, they might simply be shopkeepers, truck drivers, city councilmen, rich homeowners, the jury in a Mafia trial — anyone with the misfortune of having something (or even being something) the Mafia wants. Or they might be criminals, but not wiseguys, trying to move in on Cosa Nostra territory or preparing to defend their own interests from Mafia incursion.

The Mafia makes a great adversary for supernatural characters (and their players) who are convinced of humanity’s inferiority. Many players fall into the trap of scoffing at mortal Storyteller characters, thinking of them as nothing more than food or victims. The Mafia, though, keeps coming at you. They come after you, your friends and your family. They’re wonderful for making your players sit up and take notice of the *people* who populate the World of Darkness.

One option available to particularly experienced Storytellers is “camera switching.” Let the players create two groups of characters — one group of *mafiosi*, and one group of cops, normal folk, “standard” World of Darkness monsters, or anyone else who might find themselves in opposition to the first group. Switch back and forth over the course of a chronicle, or even over the course of a given session. This changing allows the players to see both sides of the equation, participating in both the underground, violent brutality of the Mafia and experiencing the emotional and physical repercussions of those actions.

This technique can get confusing, yes, and inexperienced players may find themselves making use of out-of-character knowledge between groups. For players who can handle it, though, it allows complete immersion in a storyline that is unattainable through one side of the conflict or the other.

include a vampire, a mage, a changeling and a ratkin is not only damn near mathematically impossible, it’s just silly. Far more likely, a crew consists of a Kindred and his ghouls, or an entire werewolf pack that has run together since before they were *mafiosi*. If you must have a mixed bag, consider a more deliberate cause behind the crew’s formation. Perhaps the don, fully aware of the supernatural creatures in his Family, deliberately put this crew together for a specific purpose. Of course, the boss is probably not aware of the animosity most of these creatures have for one another, and it’s entirely possible the crew will tear itself apart before they’ve spent two nights together. Still, Family loyalty *may* keep them away from each other’s throats just long enough to accomplish a specific goal.

And the goal should be specific. It’s unlikely in the extreme that such a group could function together for the long term — not impossible, of course, as this is your game to do with as you please, but unlikely.

Again, such a setup allows the Storyteller all sorts of opportunities to turn the screws on the

characters. Even if they have no interest in the standard maneuverings and politics of their own “species,” that’s no guarantee they’ll be able to avoid them. For instance, a Mafia crew hijacks a truck full of bleeding-edge computer hardware. Unfortunately, that shipment belonged to a company in which the local Kindred prince has a great deal of influence. Under normal circumstances, the prince, while furious, might chalk it up to bad luck. Should he catch wind that there was another vampire in the crew, though, it becomes enemy action — even if the poor Kindred involved had no idea who he was fucking with. Or a group of imbued who have banded together for mutual protection discover that the guy strong-arming the shops in their old neighborhood is one of their own — one of their own who’s clearly misusing his power, and needs to be taught a lesson. This last is particularly effective if the imbued learn only that the criminal in question has supernatural abilities, without learning their precise nature. They may embark on the hunt assuming that he is a vampire or a mage, learning only later on that he is,

in fact, just like them. The self-doubt and soul-searching to follow — if even we couldn't tell the difference between one of us and one of them, then what are we? — can drive an entire story on their own.

## Characters Versus Real Life

Conflict, as mentioned earlier, doesn't necessarily equal combat. There need not be a specific adversary, or even a specific objective, for every story. Sometimes, a Storyteller can extract a great deal of drama from a simple "day in the life" story — and a day (or a night) in the life of a *mafioso* in the World of Darkness can be very dramatic indeed.

Think of all the various little problems and tasks that face a wiseguy in a standard "business" day. He has to make the rounds of his subordinates, make sure their operations are all going smoothly; collect from those who've borrowed from him or those he "protects"; deal with whatever orders are coming down from above, possibly even meet with the *capo* or the don and explain why he's not bringing in as much as he did last year. He has to deal with the recent police raid on the illegal casino in the back of his bar; avoid the maneuvering of his rival in the downtown crew; and, quite possibly, satisfy the demands of any supernatural allies, or maybe even his own inhuman nature.

And while he's doing all this, he's more than likely trying to juggle a family life. Not all *mafiosi* have families, of course, but most have either steady girls or wives (or both), and many even have kids. The Family likes it when you look respectable, and damn it, you *will* look respectable, no matter who (or what) you have to marry to do it.

Sure, the Storyteller can incorporate all of this into other plots (and is in fact encouraged to do so). A rival Family can hit a character's casino, or the Yakuza kidnap his daughter, or a Kindred rival have one of her police ghouls assigned to the ongoing racketeering investigation. But even without these larger machinations, enough is going on at any given time to provide multiple games' worth of story ideas, just by following the wiseguys through the course of their normal activities.

Perhaps more surprisingly, a "normal life" Mafia story is rich with horrific potential. Nothing emphasizes the horror of a character's bloody behavior like juxtaposing it with scenes of a tranquil, suburban home life. Simply cutting from a character's weekly dinner with friends and family to scenes of the

character's crew beating an informant to death with a crowbar can drive home the point more strongly than any Humanity roll.

And what happens when little Paulie, the character's 12-year-old son, decides he wants to see what Daddy's up to every night and hides in the back of the car? What happens when he watches the crowbar rise and fall, hears the bones break, sees what his father truly is? Or when the other wiseguys realize the kid has seen all this... and that he's now a witness?

## A Mixed Bag

One of the greatest challenges a Storyteller faces when starting a new chronicle is deciding how to bring the players' characters — often very different sorts of personalities — together. In a Mafia chronicle, it's easier than in some; odds are pretty good the characters know one another already or at least answer to someone with the authority to bring them together into a cohesive unit.

What happens, though, when a Storyteller, either for reasons of her own or due to the desires of the players, has to incorporate wiseguy characters into a group that's not entirely Mafia-oriented?

If the characters are inhuman in addition to being *mafiosi*, it's not as difficult a feat as it might be. Enough plots and stories can be found throughout the various World of Darkness games to draw the characters together. If a new pack of Garou is forming in order to deal with a sudden upsurge in fomor activity, for instance, does it really matter whether the Glass Walker and the Shadow Lord are wiseguys and the Bone Gnawer and the Silent Strider aren't? If the city is under siege by the Sabbat, is the prince going to care that some of the Kindred battling back against the incursion are made men?

When the players are portraying normal mortals, however, or when the Storyteller doesn't wish to draw the characters into a monster-laden storyline like the ones suggested, she can still bring together such a disparate group without resorting to "You meet in a bar over drinks, decide your abilities complement each other and head out to slay the drag — um, that is, thwart your underworld rivals."

Perhaps the single easiest way to incorporate wiseguys and regular Joes and Janes is through friends and family. Even people born into the Family are



likely to have uninvolved friends, and maybe even relatives, who chose a different path. Certainly, individuals who had to work their way in still have friends and family from their days before being made. If one of those friends or relatives gets into trouble — or, alternatively, if the wiseguy himself gets in hot water and can't turn to the Family — well, what are friends and family for, if not to help each other out of a jam? Taken a step further, perhaps the group consists of *mafiosi* and a few of their family who want to be wiseguys, and insist on tagging along no matter what. Although this situation may appear to be comic on the surface, portraying a slow but inevitable loss of innocence is truly a horrific experience and it can give a good player something to sink her teeth into.

The whole “common enemy” concept works wonders for convincing all sorts of people to cooperate. If your chronicle is designed to portray the supernatural in the World of Darkness as the enemy, any and all types of characters can come together to work against them. A *mafioso*, a college student, a shopkeeper and a cop might all discover the horrors that lurk in the shadows, and find themselves allied against it. Yes, it reads more like a group from *Call of Cthulhu* than the World of Darkness, but that doesn't mean it can't work.

For added drama, put the characters in roles adversarial to one another, until they're finally forced

by circumstances to cooperate. For all that it's an action movie cliché, there's real story potential in making the wiseguys work with the cops against a greater danger. That danger doesn't even have to be supernatural, though a rampaging werewolf would certainly do the job. If the city's been invaded by a particularly brutal tong or Jamaican posse that's making things far too hot for the Mafia and the police both, a covert alliance might indeed be in everyone's best interests, just so long as the judge, the commissioner and the justice department don't hear about it. And if it turns out way down the road that the foe *wasn't* entirely mundane, that there was indeed a Kue-jin or a malicious wraith behind the incursion, well, that's the way things work in these stories, isn't it?

Why limit your options to cops and robbers? If some members of the group are playing *mafiosi*, let other players portray the waiters and gamblers the wiseguys are constantly shaking down. When the tables turn, when everyone in the neighborhood realizes that they've got vampires hunting them in the alleys and that the cops are completely ignoring their plight, you very well might have a Mafia hitman working side-by-side with the local butcher and the guy who sells flowers and newspapers on the street corner. All working for a common goal — to make the neighborhood safe enough for the Mafia to start victimizing it again.



# Obsequies

by Ed Hall

## I. Waking

"—ama."

The woman in the hospital bed opened her eyes, which fluttered for a moment and closed again. The young man leaned forward on his cane and spoke once more.

"Mama. Wake up, Mama. It's Salvatore."

The woman inhaled audibly. Her eyes opened, and she said, "My baby."

A nurse stopped in the hallway at the open door to the room. "Sir? I'm sorry, visiting hours—" Then she realized that the woman in the bed was struggling to sit up. The nurse ran across the hall and activated an intercom. "Missus Ruggiero is awake," she said. "Get a doctor down here *now*."

## II. Speaking

"Your doctors say the stroke couldn't have made you lose *all* your Italian, Mama. They think you don't *want* to understand it. So be it. We'll speak English." Salvatore Ruggiero sat and waited for his mother to reply.

Minutes passed.

"Tell me what happened to your Uncle Emilio, child," Cristina Ruggiero said finally. "No one else is talking."

"No one else understands."

"You do?"

"Maybe."

"So?"

"Emilio went through the window of your hospital room."

"I know that," Cristina said. "I heard him try to call my name just before he fell. I told them that. I heard every word he said as he sat here with me. Every awful word. That's not what they're not telling me."

Salvatore sat back and took his turn at silence. At last, he said, "People in other buildings saw him fall. Two of them swear he caught fire *after* he came out the window."

"Are they calling it suicide?"

"They're calling it a mystery."

"Either way," Cristina said, "it's a closed-casket ceremony."



### III. Telling

"Pietro told me his side of what happened in Sicily. Emilio didn't tell you the real reason Pietro came to see him."

"And what was it?" Cristina continued to chop garlic as she spoke with her son.

"Everything you told me, I had heard from Pietro," Salvatore said. "But after Emilio and the others beat the Ben—the Communists, Pietro told Emilio, and I quote, 'I'm glad Papa's not alive to see what a monster his little boy grew up to be.' Pietro cried when he told me that story."

Cristina scraped garlic into a skillet. She covered the four chopped garlic cloves with olive oil, added a cube of butter and set a low flame under it all. "How did Emilio react?"

"Pietro said Emilio was speechless." Salvatore paused as the scent of cooking garlic joined the steam from boiling linguini in the tiny kitchen. He said, "Where is my father?"

"I don't know."

"Why did you come to the United States, Mama?"

"To save my marriage. I failed."

Cristina quartered six plum tomatoes lengthwise. "When we learned you were in a coma," she said, "your father was convinced that Pietro had involved you in something... unsavory. He told me that he suspected Pietro might be a pedophile because your uncle had never married. I said that was crazy talk. He said if we didn't remove you from Pietro's care that he was leaving. Not just me, but Italy. And he did. He came here, and I followed. But it didn't matter." Cristina used a fork to capture one strand of linguini, which she blew air at until it grew cool. She bit it, nodded, and removed the pasta from the fire for draining.

"Didn't you wonder what Uncle Pietro and I did?"

"He told me you were receiving instruction in Catholic mysticism. That was good enough for me." Cristina removed the bubbling oil from its burner before the garlic could brown.

Salvatore toyed with his knife, then said, "I think, for him, that was true. Mama, there are things I'm not supposed to tell you—"

"Then don't."

"No, this family has had more secrets than anything else. That stops now."

Cristina shook the last drops of water from the colander full of linguini and emptied its contents into the warm oil. She added the tomatoes and some grated Parmesan. She tossed the mixture with pepper, then she divided it onto plates. She placed one before her son and sat behind the other.

"Pietro was one of the Benandanti, Mama. So was your father. So am I."

Cristina listened while they ate.

### IV. Readyng

"So the metal rod your uncle used to beat the man...."

"Aldo. Ennio's father."

"It was a Benandante sword?"

"It was Aldo's *irreplaceable* fennel sword. That's why Pietro got so upset. But that name is misleading. In the living world, they're like huge wands. In the Underworld, though, they're swords."

"You have one?"

"I lost my way among the dead before I could forge one. Now, I don't need one."

"But this ghost storm... you make it sound so dangerous."

"It is. It's the beginning of the end of the world."

"You keep saying that."

"Because it's true. It's also true that Andreas Giovanni won't be around to see it unfold. His world will end before ours does. Did I tell you a Giovanni killed Aldo?"

Cristina stared across the simple casket between her and Salvatore. "You believe a man like your uncle deserves to be avenged?"

"Not at all," Salvatore said. "He conspired with other evil men to evil ends. But that doesn't mean a thing like Andreas deserves to exist."

The mortician joined them. He said, "Have you decided, ma'am?"

Without looking at the man, Cristina said, "This one, please."

### V. Endings

Throughout the ceremony, Salvatore wore a pair of tinted glasses that Cristina had not seen previously. Afterward, in between fending off invitations from decrepit mobsters, she asked how long he had needed reading lenses. He smiled but said nothing.

Once the two-dozen people who had attended the funeral were gone, Cristina asked the attendants to gather the floral arrangements. Several had been sent from overseas, and all bore the simple message, in Italian or English, "Farewell, friend."

"Burn these, please," Cristina said. She and Salvatore then turned to walk among the gravestones.

"Did you see," she said, "that your uncle's prostitutes all looked just like me when I was young?"

"What? No, I was busy noticing all the ghosts," Salvatore said. "How do *mafiosi* sleep at night with so many dead people in tow?"

Cristina stopped walking and gripped Salvatore by the wrist.

"So why can't you let go this vendetta against the Giovannis? How will you *live* with other men's blood on your hands?"

"The ones like Andreas already stopped breathing. They just won't lie still. There are worse things in the world than the Mafia, Mama."

Cristina stared across the marbled acres as wind hissed amid the trees.

"I know, son. I know."





# MAFLA

**Concept:**  
**Family:**

## Mental

Perception\_\_\_\_\_●○○○○  
Intelligence\_\_\_\_\_●○○○○  
Wits\_\_\_\_\_●○○○○

## Knowledges

Academics_____	00000
Computer_____	00000
Finance_____	00000
Investigation_____	00000
Law_____	00000
Linguistics_____	00000
Medicine_____	00000
Occult_____	00000
Politics_____	00000
Science_____	00000

## Virtues

Conscience\_\_\_\_\_●○○○○

Self-Control\_\_\_\_\_●○○○○

Courage\_\_\_\_\_●○○○○

## Health

Bruised		<input type="checkbox"/>
Hurt	-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Injured	-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wounded	-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mauled	-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crippled	-5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incapacitated		<input type="checkbox"/>

## Blood Pool

WORLD OF DARKNESS:

# MAFIA

## This Thing of Ours

Like the supernatural denizens of the World of Darkness, the “men of respect” are damned in their own unique way. Beholden to tradition, threatened by ethics and forced by their nature to remain outside the society that sustains him, the modern mobster is every bit as compelling a character as the most monstrous creature of the night.

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