

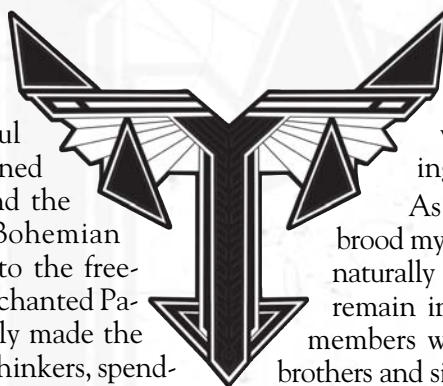
Barjot

"Hey, you can keep your territory and your obligations. I'm not interested in any of that garbage. All I need are my brothers and sisters, and they're always with me no matter what else I got."

One of the smallest and most unusual bloodlines in Kindred history, the Barjot have their origin in late 1860s France, spawned by the fateful meeting of an impressionable unaligned Gangrel named Amaury Jelinek and the early proponents of the mortal Bohemian movement. Immediately attracted to the freedom and defiant wonder of the disenchanted Parisian art community, Jelinek quickly made the acquaintance of several progressive thinkers, spending nearly all of his time in their company. Although he lacked the education and intellectual rigor to hold his own in debate with these mortals, he was endlessly fascinated by their meandering conversations on philosophy, politics and the undeniable truths of human emotion. One night, overwhelmed by the excitement one night's discussion sparked in him, Jelinek struck both of his heroes down and immediately Embraced them in defiance of local law.

Jelinek and his new childer were brought before the Prince of the domain, forced to stand in judgment for his impetuosity. Unwilling to issue a personal order for the destruction of Jelinek (whom he considered little better than a rogue) and noticing that the three Kindred bore a strange, nearly painful aversion to separation, the Prince declared all three exiled, announcing that they could live together in eternal codependence, so long as they didn't do it within the boundaries of his territory. "Jobard," he called them. "Insane."

Dejected and banished, the three began a stint of relatively aimless wandering, moving from place to place with little more in mind than the application of their hopeful musings. They would own nothing, they decided, and they would never put down roots that could not be pulled up at any moment. They had been given the opportunity to exist as they always imagined: free of obligation, free of material concern and the bounds of polite society. As they wandered, they slowly picked up more members, an impassioned Embrace here, a carefully considered selection there. At their peak, the brood numbered more than 20 Kindred. At first identifying themselves as Jobard, they soon adopted a *verlan* slang version of the name: Barjot. The insult eventually became an inside joke,



co-opted by the bloodline and reversed into a proud name. What began as a sad exile turned, within years, into a strangely empowered roving party of outlaw vampires.

As decades passed, the close ties of the brood mystically tightened and solidified, supernaturally forcing the members of the Barjot to remain in one another's company. Individual members who separated themselves from their brothers and sisters became insurmountably anxious, eventually struggling to return to the fold. Some of the original members began to sour on the group, claiming that the proximity of their fellow members soon became a trap more insidious and more frustrating than any of the rules of society. One of Jelinek's original two childer actually committed suicide in the early years of the 20th century, forever traumatizing the rest of the line.

When the line passed through Amsterdam on a journey across northern Europe, they found immediate welcome and purpose in the Carthian Movement there. Realizing that they were nothing less than an experimental society of their own, Jelinek declared himself and his line to be ardent Carthians, formulizing and carrying out an ongoing experiment in anti-materialist communal existence. Received as a charismatic ally, he was made most welcome in the domain and allowed to move freely through the territory. But before long, the reckless tendencies of the Barjot began to annoy their hosts and damage the reputation of the line. Avoiding a potential clash, Jelinek gathered his brood and left the domain.

For decades, they traveled. Brussels, Geneva, Budapest, Prague, Rome — all played host to the Barjot at one time or another, and all rapidly ushered them out soon after. It never helped that the brood spread the word of their own revolutionary brand of Carthianism wherever they went, embellishing the tales in an attempt to convince younger, more impressionable Kindred to join up and throw off the traditions of their elders. Many times, the Barjot were forced to flee a domain before facing charges of corrupting neonates and fomenting rebellion — a thoroughly legitimate claim.

The Barjot were caught in Copenhagen during the Nazi occupation of World War II, and a disastrous at-

tempt to cross the border led to the destruction of three members of the line at once. Never having suffered such a degree of bloodshed before, they were devastated. Jelinek's remaining childe went into voluntary torpor, declaring his intent to sleep "one century for each sad loss." The rest of the line chose to carry his inert body with them in their travels, and have done so ever since.

As soon as they were able, the entire line picked up and left for the Americas, eager to leave the painful memories of Europe behind. First landing at New York harbor, they were quickly turned out by the Kindred of the city and set to wandering again.

In the decades that followed, the Barjot have been up and down the Americas, traveling as far south as Rio de Janeiro and as far north as Anchorage, Alaska. Every so often, they are made welcome in a domain and they stay for as long as they can. Rarely tolerated for long, they eventually move on, looking for a city that can accept their strange ways.

Parent Clan: Gangrel. The founder, Amaury Jelinek, is a vampire of approximately 250 years of age. He still wanders the night with his strange, close-knit line, and is rumored to have spent no more than 10 or 11 years in torpor throughout his existence, a surprising circumstance for a vampire of his age. Jelinek attributes his staying power to the close ties he shares with his blood relations.

Nickname: Jelinenes. The Barjot dislike this term because it suggests a worship of Jelinek that they all deny. While it's true that they tend to dote on him, no one of them is central to the bloodline, they say, and no one of them deserves to be exalted above the rest. On any given night, they are likely to indulge and idolize one of their neonates just as much as their founder.

Covenant: The Barjot identify themselves as Carthians, without exception. The Barjot are a small state unto themselves, and they believe that they should be allowed to determine the parameters of their own government, complete with its laws and customs. Because of their extremely insular behavior and their tendency to wander away, en masse, from any situation that upsets them, the members of the bloodline are sometimes referred to as "Carthian by default." That is to say, they are too organized to be spoken of as unaligned, but they are too unusual and unmannerly to be considered members of any covenant except the Carthian Movement.



The Barjot have flirted with membership in both the Lancea Sanctum and the Circle of the Crone in the past, participating happily in religious or mystic rituals and readings. The Barjot never stay for long, though, and they rarely bother to learn much from the teachings of either group. It's not that the Barjot are incompatible with them, but rather that the Barjot just don't care enough to take the trouble.

The free-spirited Barjot are simply not compatible with the staid etiquette of the Invictus or the guarded secrecy and long study of the Ordo Dracul. Any members of the bloodline who have made any attempt whatsoever to join those covenants in the past have done so half-heartedly, and have been rejected on every occasion. Even those single members who might be considered for membership are unable to spend enough time away from their compatriots to learn the lessons of these covenants.

Appearance: Considering that wild experimentation and creative expression are the norm for Jelinene Kindred, the mainstream boundaries of gender, modesty and good taste are of no concern. Loose, flowing garments seem fashionable, as are colorful, comfortable fabrics and revealing cuts.

Most of the Barjot refuse to style their hair, often allowing dreadlocks to form (if they have enough length) or taking a *laissez-faire* attitude to their coils. Many are not quite as anxious about hygiene as one might hope, and are dusted with a layer of soot and grime that grows thicker as the years pass.

If the bloodline has a single rule about one's appearance, it is this: nothing should be bought. If a vampire of the bloodline is seen to wear matching suits or manufactured dresses, she's likely to face the jeers of her brethren as a "sell out" or a "bourgeois wannabe." Instead, the Barjot either hand-sew their garments from scratch or patch them together from a collection of found fabrics and otherwise cannibalized clothing.

The Barjot often accessorize with items that are beautiful, but assertively worthless. Cheap plastic baubles, telephone wire necklaces, iridescent Saran-Wrap bracelets — anything that's both eye-catching and easy to find works as Barjot adornment. They may look like crazy people, but they tend to claim that it's a statement on the arbitrary nature of value assignment, and will gleefully defend their choices. The useless is elevated to magnificence in their eyes, and commonly accepted precious items are no better than trash.

Haven: The Jelinenes will dwell anywhere that's free, light-tight and large enough to house all of them. Squats in ruined hotels, waterfront warehouses and abandoned factories are favorites for the bloodline, providing the shelter they require without walling the members off

from one another. Not all of them know how to invoke the haven of Soil, and those who do don't like to isolate themselves from their brothers and sisters.

Wherever they make a home, the Barjot inevitably "decorate": painting the walls with unusual imagery, scrawling poetry and messages on every available surface and scattering toys, swatches of fabric and anything else they choose to entertain themselves with all around. Their havens are often jokingly referred to as "nests" because of this behavior, but many a visiting vampire has been struck by the awful resemblance to an animal's den.

On rare occasion, the Barjot are invited to share the haven of an outsider. Without fail, they leave it as ruined as their own homes, testing the limits of their host's patience with their combined ignorance of common courtesy and absolute disregard for another's privacy. To those who know the Barjot, hosting the bloodline is considered a great (or insanely foolish) act of tolerance and charity. A few French Kindred regularly welcome them into their homes, viewing the inevitable destruction of their property as a kind of penance. Most Kindred, however, are nowhere near as broadminded in their approach.

Background: Those mortals who can both draw the attention of the Barjot and then survive the first few years as Kindred without going completely insane are a singular type: charismatic outsiders and frustrated eccentrics, assured of their own intellectual worth and vaguely (or completely) dissatisfied with mainstream life. They are artists and talkers, rebels and freaks, attracted to the unusual existence of the vampires and willing participants in their commune.

Social and Physical Attributes are considered more favorable for Barjot candidates than Mental ones, and such "friendly skills" as Expression, Socialize, Drive and Athletics are much more appealing to the line than such "unfriendly" ones as Brawl, Weaponry or Subterfuge.

Character Creation: Almost all of the Jelinenes are peaceful intellectuals, many of whom have given themselves over to a free-spirited, hedonistic Requiem. As a result, Mental Attributes are commonly primary (despite the Gangrel weakness), but Social Skills are usually prominent. Material Merits are discouraged, as every member of the bloodline must be prepared to abandon all possessions — either in sharing with one another, or in ridding oneself of material ties to a particular domain. A good number of the bloodline bear the Striking Looks merit, even if it may be hidden under a layer of grime.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Celerity, Protean, Resilience

Weakness: Every member of the bloodline suffers the weakness of the Gangrel clan. In addition, none of the Jelinekes can stand to be removed from the company of his brood. If any one member of the group loses contact (visual, aural or tactile) with any member of the line, he must immediately make a Resolve + Composure roll. Each success he accumulates allows him to remain in place (or moving in his chosen direction) for one turn. As soon as these turns of free action are used up, he must immediately seek out his line-mates, seeking them to the best of his ability. While he seeks the rest of the Barjot, he will lose interest in all other activities, and any rolls to perform actions unrelated to locating and rejoining his family suffer a -3 penalty.

This roll applies only to single members of the bloodline, isolated from the rest. While the other members of the line are likely to become agitated when a member goes missing, they do not suffer the penalty that applies to their lost line-mate. A pair of Barjot apart from their brood likewise will not suffer the penalty, though they certainly feel a pull to rejoin their bloodline as quickly as possible.

Organization: The Barjot move in familial troupes, splitting only rarely into smaller sub-groups. Each member relates (and refers) to the others as brothers and sisters, even when dealing with her sire or childer. There are no distinctions of age or class within the Barjot, and there is no intrinsic value to inheritance. Many Barjot are actually Jelinek's childer or grandchilder, with a few exceptions, and all share the close ties of Blood Sympathy.

Amorous affairs are both common and mercurial among the Barjot. Partnerships are formed, traded and dissolved with remarkable frequency, more as a pleasure game than any serious expression of emotion. Reprehensible as it is to more traditional Kindred, the ready exchange of physical love among the members of the bloodline is arguably one of the factors that help maintain each member's Humanity. Those who seem to be slipping are often subjected to increased attention from their brood-mates, benefiting from their gentle touch and intimate understanding.

The Barjot engage in their own version of the Carthian Chain at least once a week, if not more often, exchanging gifts and items of clothing (often wearing them to the ceremony and removing them just before handing them over) back and forth, occasionally receiving presents that they themselves had given away years previous. The gifts exchanged are appreciated, but there isn't much relevance attached to the relative value. Outsiders often question the Barjot's practice of the Chain, considering that they

define all of their possessions as the shared property of the line. Members of the bloodline invariably respond that the practice of the Chain is about the act of giving and receiving, not about the ownership of the gifts themselves. It is a practice that encourages friendly contact and a union of intent and interest. Outsiders are frequently and happily invited to practice the Chain with the Barjot, demonstrating that the line is willing to surrender items in exchange for the gifts of foreigners as well.

Spending as much time in one another's company as they do, the Kindred of the Barjot often engage in cooperative feeding practice. The joint hunt is surely a joy for the brothers and sisters of the line, but must be horrifying for their targets. The entire line often descends on a small group of mortals, picking a small neighborhood clean in their passing. A definite threat to the Masquerade, the Barjot group hunt often defies the logic and necessity of stealth in Kindred affairs, and the permanent residents of several domains have been forced to clean up the bloodline's mess on more than one occasion.

In a ritual exercise that is extremely unusual for vampires, the Barjot all recall and celebrate their mortal birthdays, throwing wild parties and taking the whole line into the streets for a roving bash. As the night of revelry draws to a close, the honoree is often drawn into the telling of tales, recalling the highlights of his mortal days. Once again, this practice seems bizarre or unnecessary to many Kindred, but it has a definite positive effect on the Humanity of the bloodline's members.

Another common ritual for the Barjot is the "crash," a planned outing to a public event (or Elysium gathering). In preparation, the members of the bloodline dress up in "disguise," snagging cheap or free suits and dresses and doing their best to emulate the "normal" crowd. At some predetermined point, they suddenly shred or strip off their outfits, reveling in the relative freedom of their usual garb. This moment of shedding is considered by many a reinforcing of the values of the Barjot, allowing them to exult in a moment of liberation after the hours-long tension of trying to fit in with the crowd around them. It certainly seems enjoyable to those on the outside: the release is accompanied by laughter and song, often drawing the curious attention of the crowd.

Concepts: Atavistic philosopher-poet, easygoing hitchhiker, enlightened communist punk, free-spirited wild child, gentle warrior-gone-soft, manic codependent brat, sleepy-eyed jokester, soothing big sister, talentless avant-garde scribbler, trapped-in-hell introvert

Deucalion

"It's OK. You can't help what you are."

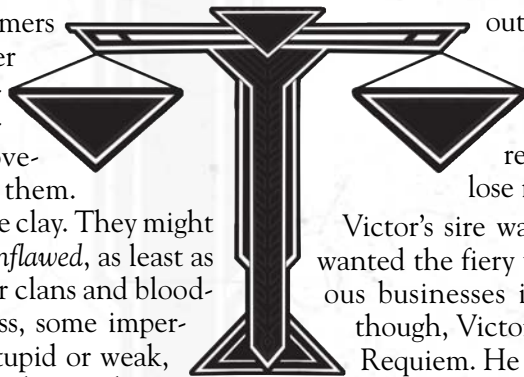
The Deucalion bloodline simmers with rage. Interacting with other Kindred, necessary for night-to-night existence and especially important among the Carthian Movement, frustrates and infuriates them.

They are stone while all others are clay. They might not all be perfect, but they are *unflawed*, as least as far as Kindred go. While all other clans and bloodlines carry some sort of weakness, some imperfection that makes them ugly, stupid or weak, the Deucaliones have only themselves and not their Blood to blame when they fail.

Of course, they usually have to keep these attitudes to themselves. It might be true that the horrific Nosferatu acting as Prince of a domain is worthless, because she cannot even hunt without revealing herself to any mortal who might be watching, but if her Embrace antedates that of the Deucalion's by a half-century then insults are unwise. The Deucalion bloodline isn't good at being patient, but it must be. So the Deucaliones save their vitriol for the targets they can afford to attack — younger Kindred, ghouls and mortal pawns. Just as Americans once felt that one black relative was enough to consider a person "black," the Deucaliones feel that the touch of tainted blood is enough to pass on the weakness.

HISTORY OF THE DEUCALIONES

The Deucaliones are a young bloodline, formed sometime within the last 50 years. The founder, a Ventrue named Victor Spanos, was Embraced during a period of high immigration in New York. Greek by ancestry but American by birth, he watched as Italians, Irish, Greeks and others tried to mix into the "melting pot" of the city. He decided, though, that the "melting pot" was more a bowl of marbles than anything else. The people didn't melt, didn't change and didn't allow themselves to be changed. They clung to their ways, their foibles and their weaknesses. Victor decided that America, despite her flaws, was superior because she had left behind the weaknesses of the Old Country. Victor, in the years leading up to his Embrace, was a constant force against immigrants' rights unless they learned American English (with-



out accent), could work in America and didn't ask for silly things like Catholic or Greek Orthodox holidays. "They have freedom of religion," he said, "but I shouldn't lose money because of it."

Victor's sire was a member of the Invictus who wanted the fiery young man's connections to various businesses in the city. After the Embrace, though, Victor threw himself headlong into the Requiem. He severed ties with the mortals who knew him (killing them, in some cases), liquidated his accounts, arranged circumstances so that he was declared dead and began learning all he could about the clans and the covenants. His sire, disgusted, declared Victor's Embrace a mistake that he would correct, but Victor had already made arrangements. Just under a year after his Embrace, he was on a train heading west.

WHERE?

Victor began his unlife in New York and from there headed west — and that's about as specific as it's going to get. The Deucalion bloodline is prevalent in several American cities, but it's not really necessary to nail down which ones here. (In your chronicle, of course, one of those cities can be the one your coterie resides in and the surrounding ones, if you wish to incorporate the bloodline.)

Nothing says that Victor necessarily needed to start in New York, of course. London has its own issues with immigration, and Victor could easily have fled to mainland Europe. Use whatever locales work for your chronicle, and tweak the bloodline's particulars as necessary.

IMPURITY

Victor had been an avid student of vampirism since the first night of his Embrace. Although not particularly interested in mythology or esoteric lore in life, the notion that vampires had hunted humanity for centuries intrigued him, and he dug into the history of his former people with vigor, trying to find the "cracks" in the Masquerade. History, he found, wasn't

a good source, because so much of it had been sanitized and rewritten to match expectations, one of which was that vampires didn't exist. Victor turned instead to mythology, focusing on the rich lore of ancient Greece.

At the same time, he was trying to find his feet among the Kindred. He had no real interest in joining the Invictus, and the two religious covenants conflicted with his secular view of the world. The Ordo Dracul seemed like a natural fit, and when he arrived in his new home he immediately petitioned to join these scholars. He never gained much status, however, because, whereas most Dragons were interested in studying the occult to further their own understanding of the Coils of the Dragon, Victor was interested in knowledge for his own sake and had no particular desire to "transcend" anything. What's more, as he researched mythology and observed the Kindred around him, he came to a very familiar (for him) conclusion: certain types of vampires were weaker by nature, whereas he and vampires like him were without this inherent weakness.

The Ventrue, he decided, were without intrinsic flaws. The Nosferatu were obvious monsters — fine if one wished to terrorize fairy-tale children, but not conducive to a modern Requiem. The Gangrel could not think rationally, at least not predictably, and this kind of chaotic thought process made them dangerous to rely upon. The Daeva were slaves to their base impulses, and Victor saw that this led to the Daeva either degenerating into madness or becoming mentally exhausted in short order. The Mekhet, of course, had even less tolerance for light than most Kindred. (Victor considered the Mekhet the least of the Kindred, but his disdain was tempered with fear and jealousy over their ability to read minds.)

Above all the clans, though, stood the Ventrue. Victor perceived talk of the Lords being predisposed toward madness as motivated by jealousy and speculation — any vampire might go mad with the weight of years and sin, after all. In his mythological studies, Victor came across the story of Deucalion, the descendant of Prometheus who was one of the last survivors after Zeus flooded the world. Deucalion consulted the Oracle of Themis for advice on how to repopulate the Earth, and was told to throw stones over his shoulder. A race of people sprang up behind him, made from stone (rather than the original inhabitants of the world, who had been made from clay and were thus not strong enough to withstand the sins released from Pandora's box).

This fable sparked something in Victor. He believed that he had found a representation of the Ventrue in the myth. The other clans were made from clay, but his clan was of stone, strong enough to resist sunlight, fire and sin and rise above all other Kindred. Other vampires were impure, by no one's fault but the blood they bore. Victor wrote up a long, accusatory treatise "proving" that the Ventrue should hold



power in every city, though other, “impure” clans would be allowed to hold offices at the Ventrue’s sufferance. He presented this treatise to his superiors in the Order, sure that it would finally be his ticket out of the lower ranks. He wasn’t entirely prepared for the result.

THE CARTHIAN MOVEMENT

The Dragons in Victor’s new city read his proposal and immediately expelled him. “What you should, but probably won’t, understand, Slave Victor,” one of them wrote to him, “is that we are not expelling you from the Order because you are wrong, though you most assuredly are. We are expelling you because you are a failure as a scientist, because you see only what confirms what you have always believed. There are other covenants for Kindred like you, Kindred who refuse to let the world change them.”

Victor read the comments to his treatise and came to the conclusion that he had been wrong to show it to them. Not because he was mistaken, of course, but simply because he couldn’t expect them to accept it. Would old and powerful Kindred acknowledge the truths that he had realized? Of course not, for Victor was not far from his Embrace. He was fighting a battle that would not only prove unpopular with four-fifths of the Kindred in existence, but that also required elders to take the word of a neonate. He therefore decided that his former superior’s suggestion of seeking a covenant better suited to his temperament was a good idea, but he needed a covenant that would listen to the words of a young vampire. In the Carthian Movement, he found a home.

MISSION AND POSITION: DEUCALIONES

Victor evangelized his “Deucalion” mission immediately upon joining the Carthian Movement. Of course, most of the Carthians in the city promptly refused to speak to him again. Some, though (mostly, though not entirely, Ventrue), found his notions intriguing.

Victor’s position, simply put, was that clan Ventrue was inherently unflawed, but that individual members of the clan still made mistakes and possessed character and moral failings. (Victor himself magnanimously admitted to being somewhat conceited, in perhaps the greatest understatement the city’s Kindred had ever heard.) Other clans were inherently flawed, but could aspire to great accomplishments and virtue. They merely had more to overcome.

Most of the city’s Kindred recognized this position as the condescending pap that it was, but enough of the Carthians in the area responded favorably the Victor was able to build up a small power base. He made it his

mission to help the Ventrue remain pure and make the most of their special status, and to help the members of the other clans rise above the impurities of their blood. Over time, strangely enough, he started to do just that. He developed strategies for Gangrel to cope with the lack of cognitive faculty that their particular weakness brought. He helped the Succubi find ways to avoid being put in positions where they had to either abstain or indulge, and he encouraged the Nosferatu to hone their abilities in stealth rather than in engendering fear. (“It’s a useful trick,” he’d say, “but it’s a holdover from centuries past. You want to scare someone nowadays, pull a gun.”) He had nothing to offer the Mekhet, however, claiming that they were a “mud clan” among the Kindred that had somehow managed to survive despite their obvious inferiority. Again, though, he didn’t blame individual Mekhet for being Mekhet, since no Kindred chooses her clan. He simply stated that he couldn’t help them, and advised them to move as far north as possible where the nights lasted longer. When he found that Mekhet in the city had Embraced, however, he became incensed and railed at them whenever he saw them. Being Cursed was something no vampire could help. Passing on that Curse was unforgivable.

This state of affairs continued for several decades, and Victor gained a kind of cult of personality in his city and those nearby. Many Kindred hated him, but those who had actually met him found him agreeable, if a little patronizing. A number of vampires admitted that he had some good ideas for avoiding the bloodborne curses, though they chortled that he had also come across the best way to cope with his own: deny it.

Then, one winter night, a visitor arrived in the city who would send the Deucalion mission in a new direction, and ultimately lead to its status as a bloodline.

A NEW WRINKLE

Like many vampires, Victor had operated under the assumption that only five clans existed. He had heard rumors that “other clans” existed in other countries, but he didn’t spare them much of a thought.

But one night in February, Victor was taking a meeting with a particularly volatile Gangrel, trying to teach her to keep her mind uncluttered even in the face of myriad distractions. He was making progress, he thought, when he heard a knock at the door. When he answered it, standing there was a truly pathetic-looking vampire. She was so thin that her ribs were plainly visible under her shirt. Her hair had fallen out in patches, and although she had not masked her Beast, the Predator’s Taint barely flickered in Victor’s soul. His own Beast saw her as a worm, a parasite not worth the trouble of killing. Victor at first thought

she was a Nosferatu, and invited her in, but after some discussion she claimed to be a member of a minor line consisting only of herself and her sire. Intrigued, Victor listened as she spoke at length of changing her blood, watching in horror as her body changed, losing her facility for strengthening her flesh but gaining the power to flawlessly track other Kindred, even if she knew only a name.

Eventually, Victor asked her what clan she had been Embraced into, assuming it to be Gangrel. He was not prepared for her answer: "Ventrue." Victor flew into frenzy and attacked her, draining her dry and consuming her soul.

Horried at what he had done (in part because he was afraid he had absorbed her weakness), he contacted every Kindred who would speak to him and asked about these strange "sub-clans." Few knew anything, but a small number confirmed what the unfortunate waif had told him: it was possible for bloodlines to form from the clans.

Victor was sickened at this news. He had held up the Ventrue as the pinnacle of vampiric achievement for so long, but now it was clear that their position wasn't by any means secure. He entered torpor for over a year, and emerged with a renewed determination and a slightly altered mission. It was possible, he conceded, for Ventrue to lose their purity, but he was convinced that a vampire could not alter his blood by accident. Therefore, the choice to join a bloodline was still a choice, and any fallibility among the Lords came from a particular vampire's foibles, not from the Blood. His mission, then, was to determine whether it was possible for other clans to become pure, losing their weaknesses and joining the Ventrue as unflawed Kindred. To that end, he informed his few fellow Deucaliones to begin research, interviews and legwork to find and catalog as many deviations from the five clans as they could.

SO HOW MANY ARE THERE?

What did the Deucaliones find? How many bloodlines have they unearthed? That's really a matter for the Storyteller and the players to decide. If you want to keep the number of bloodlines low, maybe the Deucaliones have only discovered one or two (and maybe they're just a faction of Kindred rather than a bloodline themselves). If you like the notion of Kindred blood being mutable, then the Deucaliones might have discovered any or all of the bloodlines mentioned in **Vampire: The Requiem** and any of the other books that include new lineages (including **Bloodlines: The Hidden** and **Bloodlines: The Legendary**).

What Victor wasn't telling his followers, of course, was that he had plans beyond simple categorization. He wanted to begin his own bloodline. He just needed to know how to do it.

THE BLOODLINE OF THE UNFLAWED

Over the course of next few decades, Victor established a network of information about the various bloodlines. He managed to find members of several who were willing to aid him in his research, and he discovered the arcane process of altering his blood. Reportedly, he even entertained offers from more than one would-be Avus, but he declined these in favor of refining his blood to the point that he could begin his own line. How he managed such potent blood in a short span of time, he has never said, but he undoubtedly committed diablerie more than once during his studies. As the 20th century drew to a close, Victor decided he was ready.

He once again entered torpor, with the intention of emerging with new strength and purity. This time, he remained in slumber much longer — a side effect of his murderous habits over the preceding years. He emerged from his state nearly a decade later, claiming to have seen how to alter his blood in the fevered dreams of the torpid state. "Like clay," he whispered, trembling. "My blood was clay, and when I touched it, it became stone. I am Deucalion, and any who choose to follow me are my children."

Victor immediately set to work on honing his skills, and discovered, to his delight, that he had been given dominion over all Kindred weakness. With a glance or a gentle touch, he could inflict the weaknesses of the lesser clans upon other Kindred. And, he noted with some satisfaction, only the weaknesses of the four flawed clans were within his power. This proved (to him) what he had believed all along — the Ventrue were without blemish.

He invited any Ventrue who had followed him to join his bloodline, and soon thereafter opened that invitation to any Lord who wished to "wash away the stains of the world, and face the Requiem with the fortitude of stone." He received few takers, but those who did join him agreed with his assessment: by becoming Deucaliones, they absolved themselves of whatever foolishness they had committed before that point.

Victor, however, had made enemies, and they did not wish to see him or his bloodline come to power. Within a year of rising from torpor and declaring the Deucaliones a bloodline as well as an ideological faction, Victor Spanos found that someone had put a price on his head. In order to minimize the risk to his bloodline's members, he disappeared, staying in contact only by letters and online transmissions.

DEUCALIONES TONIGHT

The Deucalion bloodline thrives only in a few proximate cities, and its members know and aid each other (the bloodline numbers only a score or so). Despite their exclusionary propaganda, they actively court new members, and are rumored to provide interested Ventrue with the means to quickly strengthen their blood to the point that they can join the bloodline (that is, diablerie). Deucaliones hold positions of moderate power in several cities, but rarely gain enough support to take a title such as Prince or Prefect.

Deucaliones normally have one of three main positions, all inherited from their founder. The first is superiority: the Deucalion works toward the acknowledged superiority of clan Ventrue and the Deucalion philosophy.

The second position is knowledge: the Deucalion searches for knowledge of bloodlines. Interviews with bloodline members are especially prized, as are confirmed reports of strange Disciplines and weaknesses. Some Deucaliones hope to find Kindred who have transcended their parent clan's weakness; other Deucaliones desperately hope that no such bloodline exists, because it would challenge the notion of Ventrue superiority.

The third position is instruction: the Deucalion endeavors to help non-Ventrue Kindred cope with their inborn failings. If potential students can learn to ignore the blinding condescension inherent in this attitude, they can actually learn some useful tricks from the Deucaliones. As mentioned, many Kindred find it ironic that the Deucaliones are so expert in helping other clans manage their problems while never even acknowledging their own.

As his bloodline expands, Victor waits. Rumor has it he somehow changed his face and took the position of Hound or Sheriff in a nearby domain, lurking until he can find out who put the price on his unlife and slay him. Other rumors state that he has already died, and that all of the letters and communications from his bloodline don't go to him but to another interested party, probably the same one who called in the hit. The Ordo Dracul is the most commonly named conspirator, but Victor's sire is another contender.

COPING WITH WEAKNESSES

No, there are no game systems specifically geared toward dodging the clan weaknesses of the Gangrel, Nosferatu, Mekhet and Daeva. The coping mechanisms that the Deucaliones teach are

entirely story-based, and any game effects that they have are up to the Storyteller. Here are some examples, though of the sorts of things that the Skinheads might recommend.

- **Daeva:** The Deucaliones teach the Succubi avoidance. Since indulging in Vice is dangerous on a spiritual level and ignoring Vice is dangerous on a psychological level, the lesson is to avoid being in a position in which indulging is too morally shaky. Deucaliones teach Succubi to enjoy their lascivious (or gluttonous or slothful) habits outside of unlife-or-death situations, and to feed slowly so that accidentally killing a vessel isn't as easy.

- **Gangrel:** The Gangrel suffer from something resembling senile dementia. Since this problem seems inborn and insurmountable, Deucaliones teach the Gangrel how to cope. Note-taking, patience, anger-avoidance techniques and mnemonics are all possibilities.

- **Nosferatu:** What advice a Deucalion can give a Haunt depends greatly on that Haunt's particular problem. Some Nosferatu are simply hideous, and for that there is no immediate solution; all the Deucalion can do is advise honing one's skills at remaining hidden and hope for the best. If the Nosferatu has a more subtle manifestation of her curse, the Deucalion often teaches the same techniques taught to method actors — inventing a persona that can cope with other people and adopting that persona's mindset.

- **Mekhet:** Many Deucaliones are contemptuous of the Mekhet, and the Deucaliones' advice often ends at "stay out of the sun." Some Skinheads attempt to teach the Shadows methods of telling time without clocks (lengths of shadows, position of the moon and so on), but, for the most part, Victor's biases creep through.

Parent Clan: Ventrue

Nickname: Skinheads, though they call themselves the "Unflawed"

Covenant: The Deucaliones are largely a Carthian bloodline, but are sometimes accepted by other covenants, normally the Invictus or the Ordo Dracul. Some Deucaliones act as spies or double agents for the Carthian Movement, but such Deucaliones don't tend to remain secret for very long, as their natural temperament betrays them. Deucaliones who don't belong to any of these covenants tend to be unaligned or founders of their own proto-covenants that they feel sure will one night overthrow the existing Kindred power structure. The Lancea Sanctum and the Circle of the Crone don't appeal to the Skinheads as a rule; those covenants' dogma repels the Deucaliones.

Appearance: Despite the nickname, not all Deucaliones were Skinheads or even racial supremacists in life. Many were normal members of whatever society they descended from, and retain that normalcy

as vampires. Most Deucaliones look healthy and fit, but in terms of clothing run the gamut from the height of fashion to last decade's work clothes.

Haven: Deucaliones stick close to their sires or Avuses initially. After Deucaliones are "turned loose," they often try to build up a small, tight-knit group of like-minded Kindred, and often establish a communal haven. Failing that, they usually choose one haven and fortify it beyond all reason. Many Deucalion havens have a "kill switch" that sets the place ablaze or blows it up should escape ever prove impossible.

Background: Not all Deucaliones are recruited from supremacist groups, but most have some sort of exclusionary background in life. Fundamentalist churches, old boy's clubs, neighborhood associations and, of course, racist groups all provide the right kind of mindset, namely, "We are the strong, others are weak by nature." The trick, of course, is making a neonate understand that because a person is black does not make him weak (for instance), because among Kindred, clan is the sole trait that matters. This deprogramming is one reason that young Skinheads remain close to their sires for a time after the Embrace. Letting a neonate Deucalion who was, for instance, a member of the Aryan Brotherhood until his Embrace run wild in Kindred society is a good way to lose a perfectly good child, if he goes mouthing off to the wrong vampires.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Dominate, Impurity, Resilience

Weakness: Deucaliones suffer the Ventrue clan weakness, not that they'd admit it (-2 penalty to Humanity rolls to avoid acquiring derangements after fail-

ing a degeneration roll). In addition, Skinheads are arrogant in the extreme. To their mind, they don't make mistakes, but are simply subject to occasional runs of bad luck or conspiracy; they can do no wrong. In game terms, while they can still gain Willpower for accomplishing their goals, they *lose* Willpower for failing. The Storyteller needs to adjudicate what constitutes failure. An Intelligence + Occult roll to know an obscure fact that doesn't produce any successes might not be a failure to the Deucalion — he simply doesn't know, and that's no fault of his. Attempting to jump between two buildings and failing, though, should certainly cost a Willpower point (in addition, probably, to some Health points).

Organization: Deucaliones like to keep to their own, especially since they are taught from their Embraces that the only Kindred to be trusted are Ventrue and other Deucaliones. After having been released from their sires' care for a while, though, Deucaliones function much as other Kindred, but Deucaliones always give the Lords the benefit of the doubt. Deucaliones are expected to check in with their sires or (more often) Avuses once a month or so (phone or email is acceptable if they dwell in different cities) and keep them abreast of the news of the area and any discoveries they have made. The sires, in turn, pass this information along to their sires, and so on. In theory, Victor Spanos, wherever he is, receives information from every Deucalion in the world each month.

Concepts: Biased peacekeeper, Kindred genealogist, occult archivist, Ordo Dracul reject, psychologist, rabble-rouser, racist slime, radical leader, rich patron, vampire assassin, vampire-behaviorist

Zelani

"It's time."

No bloodline is exactly prolific. Some consist of only one member, but most bloodlines of note contain at least a dozen constituents. The enigmatic Zelani bloodline only has enough members to form a single coterie — at present. The founder of the bloodline has great, noble plans for its destiny, and, now that the time is right, she encourages the Zelani to rise to their rightful place as the leaders of the Carthian Movement.

HISTORY

No one knows exactly when Lorna Zelan was Embraced. She tells the story often, and most of the details don't change. One night, she says, she was at home nursing her youngest child when a band of Kindred crashed through the door and slaughtered her family, one by one. She went into shock as she watched them pull her husband's head from his body, and doesn't remember exactly what happened to her eight children, but when her vision cleared, they were all dead. The only reason she had been spared was that the leader of this murderous coterie (which she now believes to have been Belial's Brood) had chosen her as his consort and eventual victim. A ghoul servant watched over her while the Kindred took refuge from the sun in her root cellar. The ghoul, however, did more than simply watch her. While Lorna has never gone into detail, she claims that the ghoul lived out every depraved fantasy possible with her that morning. Lorna was so numb by that point, though, that she scarcely noticed.

As afternoon wore on, a neighbor woman came over to check on Lorna, since she knew that the Zelan family had a new baby and many mouths to feed already. She found Lorna pinned under the ghoul on the living room floor, and screamed for help. No one was within earshot, however, and the ghoul leapt up and made short work of the woman. By that time, Lorna had retrieved her late husband's shotgun from its perch over the mantle. She claims it took four shots to kill the ghoul.

Lorna knew the Kindred were in the basement, but she had never heard the word "vampire" before and knew nothing of them. (Lorna also admits to being

illiterate at that point.) Dazed and still in shock, she set about trying to bury her family, and opened the wide cellar doors to retrieve a shovel. The sunlight streamed in and destroyed four of the five Kindred in moments, and Lorna watched, unable to believe her eyes, as the monsters turned to dust before her. When the chaos was over, she found her spade and went to work.

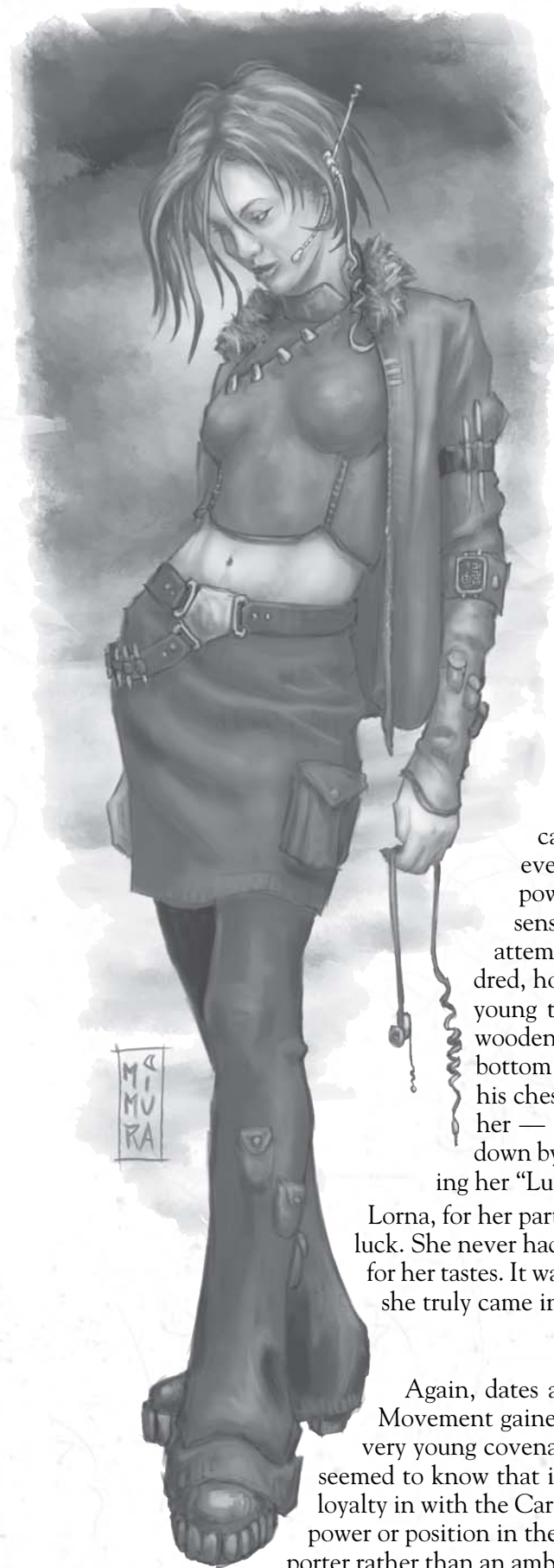
She claims that she was in the midst of burying one of her family when the full horror of what had happened hit her, and she dropped to her knees and wept. She was still crying when the sun set, and the last of the Kindred emerged from the cellar. As fate would have it, the only survivor was the same vampire who had chosen her to be his plaything. He found his intended victim crying over the half-buried corpses of her family, and something — perhaps her face, perhaps the blood-soaked ground — awakened in him the last shred of humanity he possessed. He knelt next to her and waited for her to regain her composure, and then asked what she would have him do, if any forgiveness was possible.

Here Lorna's story varies a bit. She has, at times, claimed that she asked him for the Embrace (which begs the question of what exactly she asked, since by her own admission she had no knowledge of vampires), and, at others, asserted that he cursed her with unlife in a twisted attempt at absolution. In any case, she is very clear on one point — only by forfeiting his life could he gain her forgiveness. So, the depraved vampire Embraced her, and then she tied him to a post and set him on fire.

Knowing that she couldn't keep her new existence secret in her hometown, Lorna finished burying her family and left, soon arriving in "the big city." (She refuses to say which city was her first domain.)

HOW OLD IS LORNA?

Lorna loves telling the story of her Embrace, especially to neonates who think they had a bad time of it. She doesn't vary the story on many points, either, but she never says in what year or even in what century it took place. Given that her blood has enough power for her to form her own



bloodline, though, and that she has never committed diablerie (she says), she must be fairly old. The content of her story also speaks of an agrarian society, but that in itself doesn't give the listener a good sense of zeitgeist.

Add to this the fact that Lorna has, by her own admission, spent a great deal of time in torpor, and it becomes clear that she is either lying or far older than her comfort with modern technology and practices would imply.

PATIENCE AND TIMING

While Lorna is quick to tell the tale of her Embrace to anyone who asks, she doesn't like to talk about her early years among the Kindred. This might be because she doesn't like to date herself, but another reason is probably that she is somewhat ashamed of some of the things that she did. After leaving her home behind, Lorna posed as a prostitute, the better to allow her victims to come to her. She met other Kindred and learned of their society, but became involved only peripherally. One thing she refused to do was enter a mortal's (or even a vampire's) home without permission. People who walked the streets at night were fair game for predation, as far as she was concerned, but the home should be sacrosanct. That this sort of thing had been a staple of vampire legends in some parts of the world for years came as a surprise to Lorna, but she simply took it as evidence that she was in the right.

Although Lorna never joined a coterie and never became involved in the Danse Macabre, she kept abreast of events in her city and gained something of a reputation as a power waiting to happen. The other Kindred in the city could sense a growing prescience in the young Daeva, and one even attempted to slay her in order to be on the safe side. That Kindred, however, timed his attack wrong and ran afoul of a gang of young toughs who felt that attempting to stab a whore with a wooden stake was ignoble. To Lorna's knowledge, he's still at the bottom of a nearby river, the stake intended for her jutting from his chest. That attack was the beginning of a new reputation for her — after word got around that her assailant had been taken down by sheer happenstance, the vampires of the city started calling her "Lucky Lorna."

Lorna, for her part, felt that what guided her was a much greater force than luck. She never had a name for it, and "fate" and "destiny" were too mystical for her tastes. It wasn't until the Carthian Movement arrived in the city that she truly came into her own.

LUCKY LORNA AND THE CARTHIAN

Again, dates are fuzzy, but Lorna admits that when the Carthian Movement gained a presence in her home city, the Movement was still a very young covenant, only recently recognized as any kind of power. Lorna seemed to know that it was going to snowball, however, because she threw her loyalty in with the Carthians immediately. She never attempted to seize any real power or position in the covenant, though, preferring to be known as a solid supporter rather than an ambitious up-and-comer. Once again, many of the Kindred in

the city sensed that she was simply biding her time, and they considered her opinion very carefully when deciding what to do about this new faction.

Could Lorna read the future, or did the fact that other Kindred respected her opinion help her realize her eventual goal? The question is intriguing, but largely irrelevant. The covenant in command of the city lost power, slowly but surely, and the Carthians' ideas took hold. Their style of government was initially a meritocracy, and Lorna, having no wish to compete, sank into torpor. Seeing this, several other influential Kindred either did likewise or removed themselves from Kindred politics in other ways, waiting for "Lucky Lorna" to recover. Her awakening gained a kind of mythical status in the city. "When Lorna wakes" became a general phrase among the city's Kindred, applied to any event that was favorable but wouldn't happen in the foreseeable future.

THE BRAVE NEW WORLD

Lorna rose from torpor just under a decade ago, and discovered that though the Carthians still held power in the city, their methods had changed. Now, the system was democratic — all the city's Kindred voted on a leader known as a Prime Minister, and that leader was responsible for making policy and adjudicating breaches of the law. Lorna woke four nights before the elections and threw her hat into the ring, participated in several debates and was elected by a landslide. She seemed to know the recent history of the city as though she had been watching it closely, she was comfortable with the new technology and strangest of all, she had two childer with her who seemed as savvy as she was.

After she took power, she immediately split her attention between doing her job as Prime Minister and propagating her own bloodline, the Zelani. Already her childer have sired other childer and the Zelani have spread throughout the city, acting as Regents of tenurial domains. Some of the city's Kindred accuse Lorna of nepotism, but she keeps an open relationship with all of the city's Kindred inhabitants and welcomes suggestions and criticisms, so such accusations tend to be met with shrugs and statements of "It ain't broke, so let's not fix it." Lorna's reputation and support comes largely from her perceived disdain of keeping secrets, her fair and impartial judgments on Kindred affairs and her uncanny ability to say and do the right thing at the right time.

THE UGLY TRUTH

The fact is, though, that Lorna Zelan *does* keep secrets. She has allies and contacts in other cities that

she never mentions. Carthians all over the country know her name and owe her favors, because they rely on her insights to make important decisions. In fact, her list of correspondents includes members of the Invictus, the Ordo Dracul and even the Lancea Sanctum. Lorna is unique in Kindred society because she is considered a power but not a threat.

Is Lorna a threat? No one knows, but she does have a plan for her city, and perhaps for the covenant as a whole. She is actively courting Daeva of other covenants to join her bloodline, and since her knack for fortuitous timing seems to pass to these Kindred, she will likely have some takers soon. What happens when she has enough followers in the right places? Only time will tell.

SO WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING?

It's up to you. If a player wishes to take on the role of a Zelani Kindred, the player should work with the Storyteller to decide what Lorna has asked of the player's character and what the ultimate goal of the bloodline is. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Power:** Lorna wishes to take over the Carthian Movement in her country, perhaps the entire world, and remake it in her image. Alternately, perhaps she wishes to take over clan Daeva and change it into clan Zelani, phasing out the Succubi and all of their bloodlines over time. This motivation is significantly outside the local scope of most **Vampire** chronicles, but that's not to say it can't happen.

- **Revenge:** Lorna has been waiting decades, maybe even centuries, to strike at the Kindred who murdered her family. Although those Kindred are dead, Lorna has discovered a way to call their souls back and infuse them into the bodies of Kindred who bear her blood. She can do this as many times as she likes, as long as members of her bloodline remain, meaning she can kill them again, and again and again

- **Armageddon:** Lorna doesn't really care about power among the Kindred, she just wants members of her bloodline in as many cities as possible. Lorna is in possession of a lost fragment of the *Testament of Longinus*, one that gives instructions for bringing about a kind of Rapture for the Kindred. Enacting it, though, means that a certain number of Kindred must perform a ritual during an eclipse. That eclipse will take place in 10 years, so Lorna needs loyal Kindred in as many cities as possible before then. Fortunately, she's ahead of schedule. She doesn't really care about the Carthian Movement per se, but figured that the other covenants would be too nosy as to her agenda.

Parent Clan: Daeva

Nickname: None. (The Zelani have not existed as a bloodline for long enough to gain a nickname,

so the Daeva sobriquet “Succubi” is still used to describe them.)

Covenant: All currently existing Zelani belong to the Carthian Movement. Lorna is eager for them to branch out to other covenants, but as only a handful of them exist at all, this hasn’t happened yet.

Appearance: Lorna does not Embrace based on looks or station in life, but rather based on her own sense of who is “right” for the bloodline. Therefore, no real commonality exists among the Zelani.

Haven: Lorna Zelan owns several pieces of property in various parts of her domain, and allows the members of her bloodline to use them at their pleasure. Because of the bloodline’s weakness, having a secure haven where they can bring potential vessels is critical.

Background: Zelani can come from any walk of life. The only requirement for the Embrace is crossing Lorna Zelan’s path on the right night.

Bloodline Disciplines: Celerity, Majesty, Serendipity, Vigor

Weakness: Just as all Daeva, the Zelani have trouble resisting their base impulses. Any time a Zelani has the chance to indulge in her Vice and chooses not to do so, she loses two points of Willpower (as opposed to gaining one by partaking in its pleasures).

In addition, Lorna Zelan bears the psychological scars of her hideous Embrace and has passed her aver-

sion to invading people’s homes on to her bloodline. Zelani are unable to enter a residence of any kind (apartment buildings, houses, even hotels) without an invitation from someone who dwells there. The invitation doesn’t have to come from the rightful owner, but must be issued by a resident rather than a visitor. Until such an invitation is issued, the Zelani cannot cross the threshold into the building. The vampire cannot directly force an invitation (with Dominate, for instance), but can use Majesty to entice one or Serendipity to arrive at the right moment to be invited. If the Zelani enters a building without an invitation or is forced to do so, roll the character’s Resolve + Strength. Each success inflicts one level of aggravated damage upon the character (so it is possible for a Zelani to crumble to dust if she violates this taboo).

Organization: All Zelani are loyal to Lorna, and this loyalty is periodically reinforced by a taste of her blood. If the bloodline’s numbers expand as she foresees, however, she will lose control over its members. She recognizes this, and thus encourages her childer to become active members in their covenants, so they have someplace to belong once the family grows too large for her to oversee.

Concepts: Artist, cab driver, Carthian lawyer, “crazy” street person, drifter, fortune teller, gambler, hotel manager, real estate agent, seductress

ANNUNAKU

(Elder): "Here I rule. Here I shall stay.
And, you, dear guest, here you too shall stay, for a very long time."
(Neonate): "My turf. My rules."

The Annunaku bloodline's origin vanishes into the mists of ancient history. The Annunaku have no legend about their founder — they say they always existed as rulers of the land. The bloodline takes its name from Mesopotamian gods of the Underworld — or maybe it's the other way around. The Annunaku point to ancient legends about the patron gods of cities, tomb-guardians and sacred caves inhabited by oracular spirits. "That's us," they say.

When the Roman Empire invaded Greece, Anatolia and Mesopotamia, the Annunaku followed the legions home. By the empire's fall, the Annunaku had spread throughout Europe. Instead of inhabiting caves and tombs, they moved into manor houses to rule over remote villages. Generation after generation, the peasants lived in fear of the undead lord who drank their blood, but they dared not leave. He would know if they tried, and become angry.

As civilization and the Renaissance spread throughout Europe, the Annunaku moved into the growing cities. Some Annunaku found their villages burgeoning into towns. Other Annunaku sent childer to seek their fortunes and restore the bloodline's ancient traditions as lords of the cities. A few took the wrenching step of abandoning their rural Demesnes, when their supernatural powers could not defend them from cannon fire. More Annunaku chose to finally die as their ancient manes toppled and burned. Others sank into the ground to sleep away the centuries until they could start anew on kingdoms of animal blood.

Modern cities gave the Annunaku new forms of territory, with new tenants to rule. The Annunaku learned about business and universities, churches and the civil service. They encountered other vampires, and taught them to respect the borders the Annunaku set. Where the Annunaku ruled, they ruled supreme. The land itself bent to their will, revealing intruders and defending its lord, through a Discipline called Tenure.

Territory obsesses these Kindred. A "Landlord" dislikes leaving his Demesne, though friendly company can mitigate the instinctive terror the Landlords feel on unfamiliar ground. These Kindred regard every mortal who lives in their Demesnes as their property. On the

other hand, the Annunaku take great care of their fiefdoms. Annunaku may rule their mortal tenants with utter cruelty, but the Landlords also protect them from any outside threat.

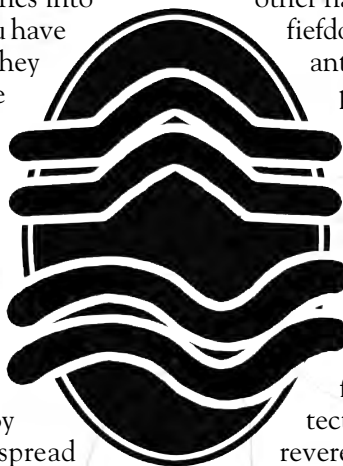
The bloodline's pride in ownership also expresses itself in a code of hospitality. Although Annunaku hate trespassers, many Annunaku adore guests. A guest gives a Landlord a chance to display aristocratic virtues of generosity and etiquette and to show off his Demesne. An honor-besotted Landlord might treat a guest to blood feasts every night and risk his unlife to protect her. A fine line, however, separates the revered guest from the boorish intruder. Any insult might switch a visitor from one category to the other — and each Annunaku can have his own arcane standards of acceptable behavior.

Some Annunaku still dwell in isolated rural fiefdoms, lording over terrified mortal tenants. Other Annunaku dwell apart from mortals, losing themselves in their roles as spirits of the land. Most Annunaku, however, now dwell in cities like other Kindred. These Annunaku, many of them comparatively young, necessarily abandon the roles of feudal lords. Younger Annunaku feel the same drive to possess and master a territory, however, even if their Demesne is just a block of apartments or small businesses that they own.

OTHER ANNUNAKU?

Some legends suggest that in ancient Mesopotamia, the Annunaku were a covenant rather than a bloodline. The members of this early covenant supposedly all acted as minor gods of their cities and learned Tenure to enforce their rule.

The legend is not entirely implausible. Not only have Invictus of other clans apparently learned Tenure in ages past, some Invictus members teach it to their childer as well. A few Ventrue lineages have taught Tenure for generations, and also call themselves "Annunaku." Perhaps they have become a parallel bloodline. Without mystical tests, it may be hard to tell the difference between a member of one bloodline and a member of a similar — possibly sibling — bloodline.



Parent Clan: Annunaku emerge from the Gangrel clan. Unlike some in their parent clan, Annunaku feel perfectly comfortable in cities, without any special longings for personal mobility or freedom. Some Annunaku view their medieval rustication as an unfortunate hiccup in their millennial history as Masters of the City.

Nickname: Landlords

Covenant: Most Landlords join the Invictus, considering it the covenant that most fully appreciates the bond between master, territory and tenant. A few Annunaku — mostly recent scions of the old village Landlords — join the Circle of the Crone, seeing connections between its pagan mysticism and their own mystical connection to the land. Even fewer join the Carthians or Lancea Sanctum, though an occasional Landlord feels the utopian lure of planned communities or sees the church and parish as the contemporary version of the city and its patron god. Quite a number of Annunaku are unaligned, however, because they see joining a covenant as compromising their claims of absolute authority over their Demesnes.

Appearance: Annunaku take childer from both genders and any race, so the physical appearance of the Annunaku is quite diverse. Clothing also varies widely, and often depends on the way a Landlord establishes himself as master of a neighborhood. A merchant who owns several businesses in a neighborhood might dress in a sober three-piece suit, while a gang leader who holds a slum in terrified subjection might choose a black leather jacket, T-shirt, ripped jeans and brightly hued bandanna. When conducting the bloodline's archaic rituals, however, any Landlord might dress in a Babylonian kilt, the sleeveless robe of an Egyptian priest, a medieval noble's garb or nothing at all. Some Annunaku believe that when they act as spirits of the land, they should discard all signs of their mortal origin, including clothing.

Haven: Landlords are similarly diverse in their choice of havens. Most prefer large, handsomely

furnished and comfortable havens, though the details vary with the particulars of a Landlord's chosen role. Whenever possible, though, a Landlord chooses a haven with a plot of earth: a lawn or garden, or at least a cellar with a dirt floor. Even those Annunaku who lack the power to merge with the soil feel uncomfortable sleeping too far removed from the land they rule. Many of them actually like to sleep on the soil they claim as theirs.

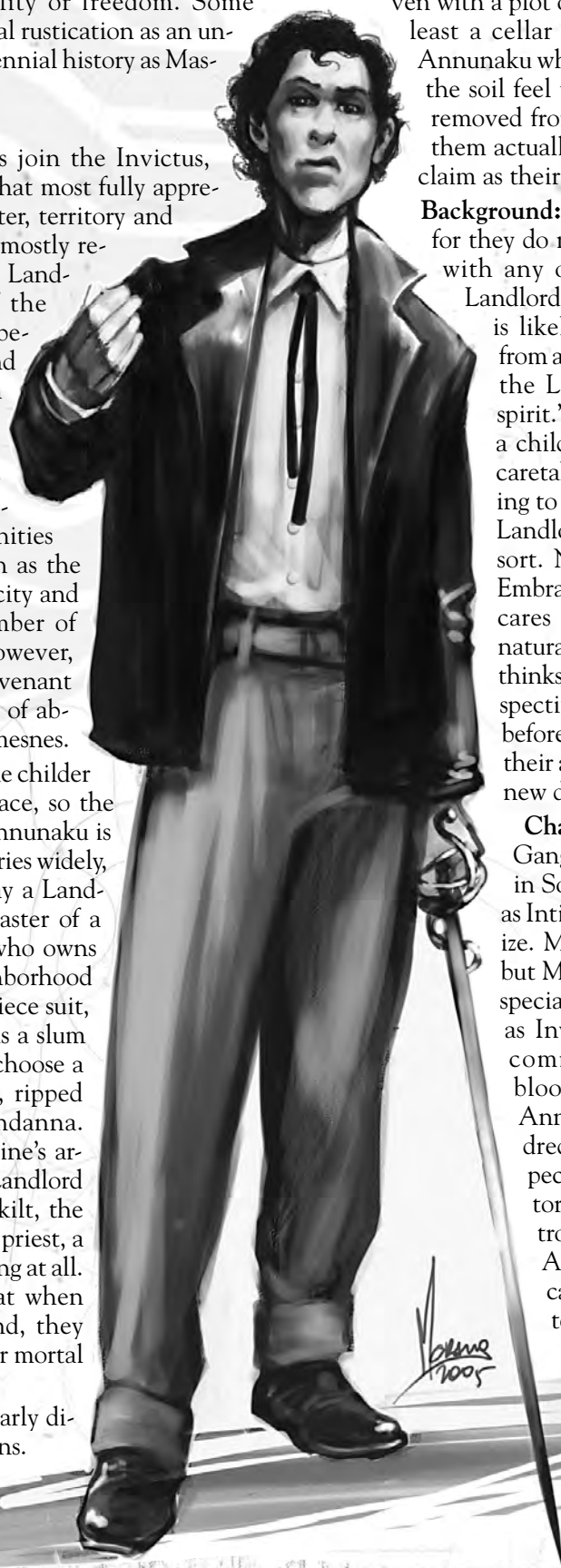
Background: Annunaku rarely sire childer, for they do not like to share their domains with any other Kindred for long. Any Landlord's choice for a childe, therefore, is likely to be idiosyncratic: anyone from a mortal descendant to a stranger the Landlord fancies has a "noble spirit." Sometimes a Landlord wants a childe to serve as his assistant and caretaker during torpor, perhaps leading to a cyclical dynasty; sometimes a Landlord might seek an eternal consort. Now and then, an Annunaku Embraces someone who lives near, or cares for, some great monument or natural wonder because the Landlord thinks the place needs a guardian. Prospective childer often serve as ghouls before their Embrace, as the sires test their abilities and train them for their new duties.

Character Creation: Unlike many Gangrel, most Annunaku are strong in Social Attributes and Skills such as Intimidation, Persuasion or Socialize. Mental Attributes may be high, but Mental Skills tend to be few and specialized. Practical knowledge such as Investigation or Politics is most common, with Occult for the bloodline's mystical heritage, but Annunaku can surprise other Kindred with their mastery of unexpected fields such as ancient history (Academics) or hobby electronics (Crafts and Science). Few Annunaku skimp on their Physical Skills, though; the Annunaku tend to be well-rounded Kindred — perhaps with odd specialties.

Bloodline

Disciplines:

Animalism,
Protean, Resilience, Tenure



Weakness: Annunaku retain the animalistic minds of other Gangrel. The 10-again rule does not apply to dice pools involving Intelligence or Wits, and any 1's rolled are subtracted from the number of successes. This weakness does not apply to dice pools involving perception or reaction to surprise, and subtracted successes do not turn a normal failure into a dramatic failure.

The Landlords' powerful connection to their Demesnes also renders them uncomfortable when they leave. Outside of her chosen Demesne, a Landlord suffers a -2 penalty to all dice pools (including reflexive rolls to resist Disciplines and the rolls of the special Annunaku Discipline, Tenure) because of her anxious yearning for her home turf or her uneasy awareness of being out of her element. This penalty drops to -1 on familiar ground where the character is accepted, such as Elysium. The company of familiar and allied vampires — such as the character's coterie — also reduces the penalty to -1. For another Kindred to qualify as a “familiar vampire,” the Annunaku must drink from her at least once and spend one Willpower point. An Annunaku can only “familiarize” herself with a number of other Kindred equal to her Composure. Attempts to exceed that number result in strained relationships as the Annunaku subtly sabotages her own trusts, growing suspicious and doubtful over several weeks until, finally, she no longer feels the blood-settling comfort of camaraderie with one of her allies.

Kindred who share Status with an Annunaku — such as other Invictus vampires — do not grant the vampire any special comfort. The bonus to Social dice pools afforded by Status does counterbalance the penalties for the Annunaku's unease, but the unease itself is not alleviated by such delicate allegiances.

Organization: Within the bloodline, Annunaku acknowledge no organization beyond the sire and childe. Landlords routinely subject their childe to Vincula, and a childe may remain with his sire for centuries. By tradition, only after tending his sire's domain through a torpor may a childe depart to seek a domain of his own. Concubines remain bound to their sires forever, or at least until they can muster the will to defy the Vincula and escape. Cyclical dynasties are common among this

bloodline, but many Annunaku do not want to be part-time Landlords.

The Annunaku retain many rituals and titles of great antiquity. Forging the mystical bond to the land that's so important to Tenure requires rituals to honor the spirits of the land or gods of the city, so that they accept the vampire as one of their own. The climactic ritual involves a sacrifice of Vitae to bare earth and running water. Annunaku oaths often involve rituals to invoke earth or water, such as participants mixing soil from their territories and then sprinkling it in a ceremonial pool called an *Abzu*. “By the earth of my haven!” is a common pledge or exclamation for older Annunaku.

The most exalted title within the bloodline is *Lugal-Irra*, or “Great Lord.” It is reserved for Annunaku who become Prince or Regent of an extended domain. Landlords do not scorn other Kindred offices, but they don't assign special names to them.

Annunaku who guard tombs, temples or other sacred places are called *Galla-Ki*, “Daemon of the Earth,” or *Abgal-Ki*, “Priest of the Earth.” Modern cities don't have many temples to Marduk or sacred groves, but modern Landlords extend the concept to monuments of civic and national pride such as war memorials and historic landmarks. Even in the New World, some Annunaku dare to dwell outside cities as the guardians of a grotto, patch of forest, mountain or other natural location that seems especially sublime or historic. Of course, rural Landlords need sufficient Protean they can merge with the land they protect. The bloodline's legends say the Old World has *Galla-Ki* millennia old, who transcended undeath to become true spirits of the land.

Landlords also award titles based on mastering particular Disciplines. For instance, a vampire who fully masters Animalism is addressed as *Shakkan* or *Sumaqan*, from Mesopotamian gods who protected wild animals.

Concepts: Feudal relic, tenured professor, odd-shoppe proprietor, community activist, feared gang leader, real-estate tycoon, flophouse night manager, apartment superintendent, phantom of the [fill in the blank], guardian of the graveyard, historic site's caretaker, oracle of the cave

Kallisti

"Don't feel guilty for wanting it. Urges don't lie. Do what you want."

The Kallisti are an old, scattered bloodline. Though their exact origin has long been lost to time and torpor, those Kindred who specialize in such things have assembled documents kept by elders that suggest that these Kindred split from the main clan well over a thousand years ago somewhere along the northernmost edge of Europe or Eastern Europe — Scandinavia, Finland or perhaps northern Russia. They're still strongest in the north of Europe, but a number of Ravagers have also made it to the New World, where Québec appears to be the center of their population.

Icy manipulators of Kindred and kine alike, the so-called Ravagers are destroyers of the social fabric — cultivating isolation, mistrust and paranoia among those who have seen them in action. They take great delight in watching others slowly form bonds of trust and interdependence — and then cutting those bonds and watching the ensuing drama unfold. It is, to the Kallisti, the most fascinating game around, and they are uniquely adept at it.

Cold elegance and frigid beauty all but radiate from these striking Kindred. Others fall all over themselves to serve them, to appease them, to nourish them. The Kallisti may create small cults of personality around themselves. They may direct a business venture of some sort (if such a thing satisfies their narcissistic impulses). They may surround themselves with servants, groupies, worshippers and slaves, but Ravagers pass their Requiems without true intimacy or allies, and they would never dream of compromising themselves by trusting anyone else. They know all too well the consequences of *that* kind of folly, because they are well versed in pitting ally against ally — though mostly as a strategy against boredom.

Parent Clan: Daeva

Nickname: Ravagers

Covenant: Invictus

Appearance: Most Ravagers are strikingly beautiful. Many dress in such a way as to flawlessly emphasize that beauty. They are, to a one, narcissists, intent on being the most beautiful, most desired and best dressed in any room they're in, and, on those rare occasions when they Embrace mortals, it's because they've found ones sufficiently beautiful to carry on the bloodline.

Haven: The Kallisti have stunningly tasteful and well-appointed havens. Ravagers are generally fans of beautiful,

elegant and minimalist decors. Their havens are typically architecturally impressive and clean to the point of sterility, which is just one more factor that enforces their isolation (they would never bring mortals here to feed lest their food sully their chillingly tidy spaces). On those exceedingly rare occasions when the Kallisti *do* allow other Kindred into their havens, it's almost always Daeva or an offshoot of that clan, as Kallisti tend to think of every other clan as unwashed rabble. Only Daeva (and their offshoots) have sufficiently cultivated taste to appreciate the subtle aesthetic nuances of a Kallisti haven.

Kallisti are more likely to emphasize security than convenience in their havens. They're fully aware of their own reputation, and they don't care to have those they've socially damaged show up unexpectedly.

Where a Ravager of important sleeps and where she holds court are two entirely different spaces. These Kindred are likely to hold court in private clubs or in the back rooms of certain exclusive nightclubs where kine discretely compete to be the evening's meal. Some Ravagers keep multiple havens for peace of mind and practicality. If a Kallisti shows off her haven, even to her coterie-mates, it probably isn't the one where she really sleeps.

Background: Kallisti Embrace cold, beautiful people who are socially adept but emotionally distant — only mortals at the peak of physical beauty, and only those with a manipulative bent. When Ravagers get it in their heads to Embrace, they actively look for the most heartless bitches (or bastards) they can find and then gift them with immortality. Some Ravagers cull primarily from the aristocracy (where there is one) or from the wealthiest and most isolated classes where there is no aristocracy per se. Ice queens, workaholics, con artists, heartless aristocrats, sociopaths and others who tend to go through life without establishing close bonds with others are among the favored stock from which Ravagers Embrace. Likewise, actors, models, personal trainers, dancers and other physically perfect specimens are common choices for new Kallisti. They are suave and elegant, cool and slick, and they have no feeling for others whatsoever. In the eyes of the Kallisti, the Requiem is a game — a dance that can be won — and little else. A few have even proved blasé about their own Final Deaths, laughing even as they were destroyed, as though they

felt they'd already beaten life by preserving their beauty for so long.

Character Creation: Social Attributes (and Skills) are always Primary, with Presence being foremost among these. Most Kallisti are gorgeous, but even those who aren't physically perfect are mesmerizing and possess pronounced animal magnetism. Mental Attributes may get emphasized over time as Ravagers come to understand the need to be mentally sharp if they're going to have any chance of surviving in the wake of the kind of the social mayhem

they tend to cause. For all the threat they pose socially, the Kallisti are rarely very physically robust. Physical Attributes are almost always Tertiary.

The most common Merit among Ravagers, by far, is Striking Looks (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 117). Kallisti rarely give the Embrace to those who do not have this Merit. Ravagers rarely trust others enough to have the Allies or Mentor Merits, although Retainer is common enough. Meanwhile, Herd is a common Merit for the terribly beautiful Kindred of this bloodline. Likewise, many Kallisti are modestly rich at the moment of their Embrace — or become so in short order, once they learn to use their Disciplines and their looks to the greatest effect.

Bloodline Disciplines: Celerity, Dominate, Majesty, Perfidy

Weakness: In addition to the weakness of the Daeva, their parent clan, Kallisti have the additional burden of not being able to form the Vinculum in others. Another vampire may taste the blood of one of these Kindred 20 times, and it won't result in so much as a kind thought. It's an appropriate curse for this bloodline, but the ramifications of their curse go far beyond the inability to secure loyalty from other Kindred. It also means that they absolutely *must* not allow themselves to be identified as Kallisti, because there are many hungry elders out there who would love nothing more than to ram a tap into one of these Kindred and feed at will without emotional repercussions. This is one of the reasons, incidentally, that Kallisti are allowed in Invictus domains (despite being antithetical to the social order that the First Estate so aggressively enforces): they represent a safe source of Vitae for elders.

In addition, all Kallisti suffer from the Narcissism derangement automatically and permanently. When a Kallisti's Humanity drops below 5, she automatically develops the Megalomania derangement in



2005

its place. Should her Humanity rise to 5 or higher, however, this derangement settles down to Narcissism again. These derangements are in addition to any gained through the normal consequences for Humanity loss.

Organization: Next to none. Kallisti may watch one another from the shadows, but they rarely form connections or alliances outside of personal compacts. The Kallisti don't trust one another, and they aren't fond of each other's company. It's not that they hate one another, and they're certainly not going to attack one another on sight (unless extraordinary circumstances warrant it), but Ravagers simply don't trust one another enough to have a default organization or familial society to fall back on. Moreover, the power of blood ties makes Perfidy, the bloodline's proprietary Discipline, more powerful when used against Kindred who are "related" to one another and, having seen its effects on others, they don't care to submit themselves to that possibility.

Additionally, they are keenly aware of how destructive they can be to the social fabric of a place, and

they feel that it's better for their numbers to be as spread out as possible. That said, these Kindred *do* have a sense of themselves as part of a bloodline — a rare and beautiful bloodline at that — and even though they may not like each other, they generally dislike other Kindred more. As far as Ravagers are concerned, every one of their number is a precious work of art, and any vampire who develops a reputation for preying on Kallisti will likely find himself marked for vicious reprisals as only these coldest of Kindred can carry them out.

Within larger Kindred society, the Kallisti are happy to pass as Daeva or Toreador, fulfilling the same roles as those Kindred would — at least until they get bored — at which time, they would likely start entertaining themselves with increasingly more elaborate uses of Perfidy, until such time as they get themselves banished or blood-hunted.

Concepts: Agent provocateur, spy, malicious courtier, home wrecker, domain wrecker, subversive Harpy, cold gray eminence, Sheriff's Interrogator, elder's pet

LYNX

"DON'T ONLY CONNECT. DISCONNECTING MATTERS TOO."

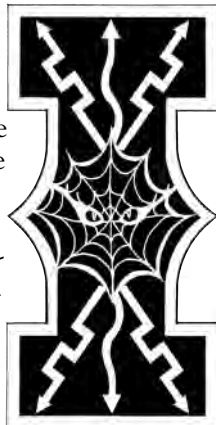
The Lynx are the youngest bloodline affiliated with the Invictus. Indeed, it is a mere matter of months since the first Kindred of this bloodline's third generation manifested the line's distinctive powers, thus confirming that the Lynx truly is a bloodline — and not merely the quirk of a bizarre vampire. As a result, not all Kindred who know of the Lynx know that they are truly a bloodline, and those Kindred who recognize the name are a select, but growing, group.

The Lynx themselves never refer to themselves as a bloodline, insisting that they are a blood *web*, instead. As the line does contain a handful of Kindred who are not direct descendants of the founder, Martin Thomas, there is even some justification for the claim, as the lines of relationship do not all flow straight down. However, that is true of many bloodlines, and most Kindred refer to the Lynx in the normal way, regarding their insistence on different terminology as merely one more manifestation of the bloodline's obsession.

That obsession is networks. Martin Thomas was fascinated by networks, particularly communications and commercial networks, even before his Embrace. He managed to map the physical connections in his local telephone network and was working on a map showing the connections between all local businesses. There were lines showing who bought from whom, who owed money to whom and which businesses banded together to lobby for changes. The shape of the network convinced Thomas that there was at least one player in the scene who had no public face at all. Thomas was careful to make no direct inquiries, concentrating instead on building up a picture from indirect evidence, because the possibility that this player was an outfit of organized crime had occurred to him.

The possibility that it was a vampire had not. Natasha Danilov, a Mekhet, realized that someone was snooping around her business connections and, suspecting an enemy, conducted her own investigations. When she found out that Thomas was independent, and apparently motivated by nothing but curiosity, she decided that he would make a valuable servant, and Embraced him.

The transition to undeath was a major shock to Thomas, and he was not the asset that Danilov had hoped for. He retreated from society, obsessing over the details of networks, trying to discover everything, but with no desire to *do* anything with the information. A few patient Kindred used him



as a source of information, but it took so long to coax anything out of him that there was almost always a faster source for what they wanted to know.

The coming of the Internet changed everything. Thomas was involved almost from the beginning, unable to resist being involved in a worldwide network. In the days before the Web, there were newsgroups, and Thomas found himself fascinated by the social networks revealed in the postings. One day, he was unable to resist experimenting, and posted to a group.

Within a week he was hooked, posting to many newsgroups and spending the whole night posting and downloading over a slow modem. Within a month, he was well known on a number of groups, and after one poster noticed that he only ever posted at night, local time, he was nicknamed "the Vampire."

As Thomas tells it, that was the critical moment. He realized that he was, indeed, a vampire, and could not hide by burying himself in networks. He emerged from his cocoon, re-entered the Danse Macabre and quickly made a name for himself as a purveyor of information. By the time he had gathered enough power to found his own bloodline, the World Wide Web had arrived, and he chose the name Lynx for his progeny. The lynx had, in legend, eyes so sharp it could see through walls, and networks are, of course, made of links. But the original motive was Lynx, an early web browser. Thomas always remained a bit of a geek.

All members of the bloodline share Thomas' fascination with networks of all sorts (particularly electronic and commercial), although social and political networks have received more attention in recent years. Thomas himself is still highly active, maintaining electronic communication with all members of the bloodline, although young and unimportant Kindred do not hear from him very often. Those who meet him in person are generally surprised: Thomas is African American and big. He isn't fat — he is tall and broad-boned, with the result that he looks like he should be a bouncer, not a networking geek.

Parent Clan: Mekhet

Nickname: By popular standards, the Lynx have no nickname (or, by the reckoning of many formal Invictus, they have only a nickname). In some domains, the bloodline is called "the Links," however, and a single vampire of its lineage is known as a Link.

Covenant: Most Lynx are members of the Invictus, primarily because that was the covenant Thomas joined after his Embrace, at his sire's instructions, and he has never left. These Kindred quickly master the networks of loyalty within the covenant, and their mastery of modern technology (or, at least, the Internet) tends to make them valuable to more senior Kindred, giving them an edge when it comes to climbing the hierarchy.

However, the bloodline's philosophy does not tie the Lynx closely to the Invictus. Indeed, the Carthian philosophy is much closer to the Lynx's interests, providing more opportunities for elaborate networks of loyalty that are not constrained by authority from above. As a result, the second-largest group in the bloodline are Carthians, a situation that is already generating some tension and will produce more if the bloodline grows.

Members of the bloodline do join other covenants, but do so for personal reasons. There are, however, very few unaligned Lynx. The Lynx are natural joiners, as that embeds them in yet another network, and, therefore, few Lynx pass up the chance to join a covenant.

Appearance: The appearance of the Lynx varies wildly, depending in large part on the sorts of networks they are interested in. A vampire fascinated by the sewage network of a large city will look, and smell, very different from a vampire mainly involved in the social networks of high society. Racially, they cover the full gamut.

However, as the most popular networks with the bloodline are electronic

and commercial, most members fall into one of two groups. Those whose interest is primarily electronic wear practical clothes and often look rather geeky. These Lynx are never without some form of wireless link to the Internet, even in an area where they cannot make a connection, and tend to get very sulky if guards try to take the link away from them. The commercial side of the bloodline dress in conservative business suits and are slightly less attached to their cell phones.

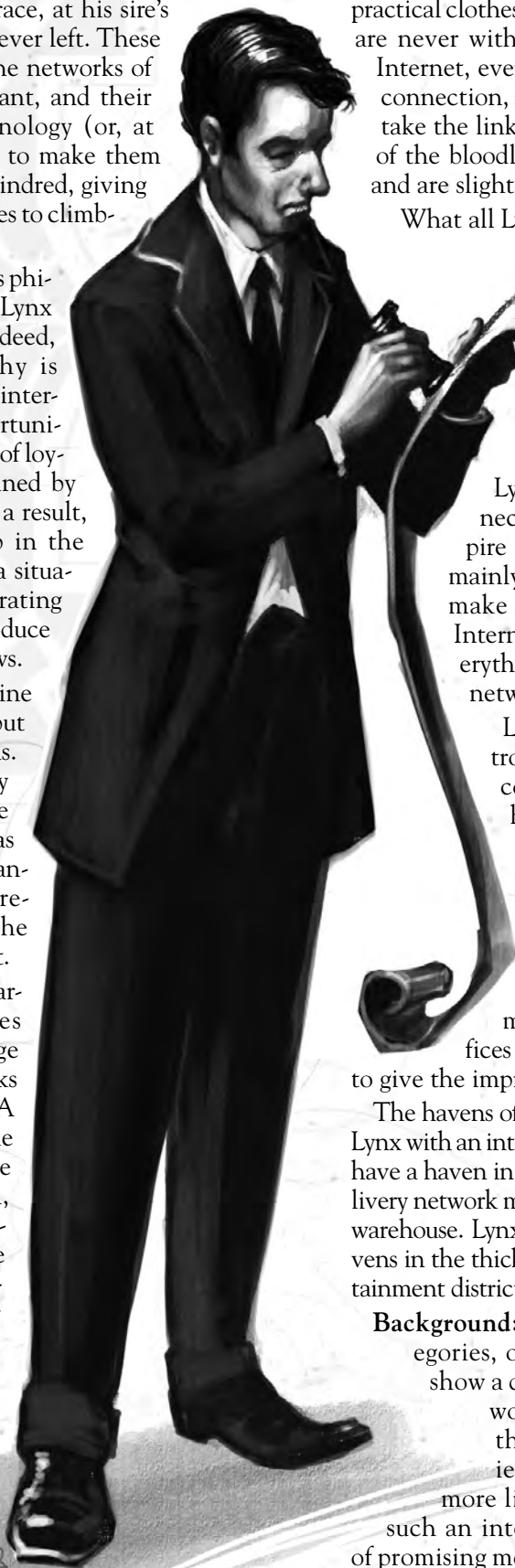
What all Lynx have in common is that each could fit perfectly into a gathering of people with an interest in the same sort of network. In another context the Lynx might stand out, but, on their own ground, they are perfectly at home.

Haven: The truly unifying feature of Lynx havens is a broadband Internet connection, generally the fastest that the vampire can support. Even those Lynx who are mainly interested in other sorts of networks make sure that they are connected to the Internet, because it's useful for just about everything. Beyond that, the haven reflects the networking interests of its owner.

Lynx who are actually most into electronic networks have havens filled with computers and cables. They normally have at least one physical network separate from the Internet, where they can play with new ideas for network geometries and such. Commercial Lynx have havens suitable for entertaining the players in the higher levels of commerce. In general, these havens look more like functional rooms, labs and offices than homes, as the vampires do not want to give the impression that they live there.

The havens of Lynx with other interests vary greatly. A Lynx with an interest in the sewage networks of a city could have a haven in the sewers, while a Lynx studying the delivery network might have a haven in a major distributor's warehouse. Lynx obsessed with social networks have havens in the thick of the city's party neighborhoods, entertainment districts and planned communities.

Background: Lynx children fall into one of two categories, on the whole. The first are those who show a deep interest in a particular sort of network. It is most common for this to be the same sort of network as the sire studies, but this is only because the Lynx are more likely to become aware of mortals with such an interest. Those Lynx who become aware of promising mortals with an interest in different sorts



of network often petition to Embrace them, to broaden their own influence. These vampires usually find that they fit fairly well into the culture of the bloodline, and most choose to awaken the potential of their blood.

The second main group is composed of mortals who have power over part of the network that a vampire is interested in. These Kindred are Embraced purely to further their sires' ambitions and reach, and the childer often find that they do not fit into Lynx society at all: you are not necessarily interested in the precise flows of money through a city just because you are a mover-and-shaker in commerce. Some Lynx, of course, do fit in, but many choose not to awaken their blood and join the bloodline proper.

The Lynx are, as noted above, willing to adopt other Mekhet with no descent from Thomas. The Lynx believe that this makes the bloodline stronger, as extending the bloodline makes it into more of a net and less of a chain. Almost any Mekhet interested enough to want to join the Lynx meets their standards for acceptance.

Character Creation: Mental or Social Attributes tend to be the most important, depending on whether the character's interest is in abstract or human networks. A few Lynx, who are interested in wholly physical networks and like climbing around in them, have Physical Attributes as primary. Social Merits, particularly Allies and Contacts, are extremely common; indeed, it's an unusual Lynx who has no dots at all in these. Computer, Investigation and Socialize are very common Skills, although a Lynx's Skill choices are, naturally, very strongly influenced by his network of interest.

The Haven Location and Haven Security Merits are of great importance to many Lynx, though Haven Size is rarely so valuable. Status is something a Lynx appreciates and studies but doesn't necessarily seek to gain. Merits like Herd, Contacts and Allies are popular with social Lynx, who are fascinated by the social circles and degrees of separation such acquaintances can lead to.

Finally, all Lynx learn Web, as that Discipline is extremely helpful to anyone trying to manipulate networks.

Bloodline Disciplines: Auspex, Celerity, Obfuscate, Web

Weakness: Like the Mekhet from whom they are derived, the Lynx take an additional point of aggravated damage whenever they suffer injuries from sunlight or fire.

In addition, the Lynx *need* to feel connected. Every Lynx must choose a particular network, and remain connected to that network at all times. The network must extend beyond the Lynx, but may be a network of friends, the Internet or a network of trading contacts. Anything that threatens to cut a Lynx off from his network might inspire a fear or anger frenzy, as described on p. 178 of

Vampire: The Requiem. The Lynx suffers a -2 penalty to dice pools to resist a network-related frenzy. In such a frenzy, the Lynx tries desperately to protect his connection to the network.

The connection need not be currently active; a Lynx reliant on the Internet does not need to be surfing all the time. However, a Lynx does need to check his network every so often, to be sure that it is working. Lynx reliant on their friends might make calls or send text messages a couple of times every night, for example, while a trader would make at least one deal. Frenzy can strike whenever the Lynx believes that he has been cut off. Of course, as with the other possible sources of fear, the visceral reaction of terror comes not from the truth but from the perception of the truth.

Storytellers and players have quite a bit of latitude when describing a Lynx's network. In general, a Lynx's core network can be defined by a Merit such as Herd, Contacts or Allies. A Lynx must possess at least four dots in one of these Merits, to represent his network. If the Lynx loses one of these dots — or is in danger of losing one of these dots — he is immediately subject to a fear or anger frenzy.

Finally, a Lynx's sensitivity to social networks renders him more vulnerable to the ties of blood. Kindred relatives attempting to affect a Lynx with powers subject to the +2 bonus for blood ties gain a +3 bonus, instead.

Organization: The Lynx are, naturally, organized into a network. Thomas studies this network, and ensures that it is always organized so that, if a number of Lynx are destroyed, no more than half that number of Lynx can be put out of contact with the rest of the bloodline. This means that every Lynx must know at least two others, and at least one is generally in a different city. The Lynx expect members to keep contacts between cities alive, but accept the reality that contacts within one city are far more important.

Within the network, there is very little in the way of hierarchy. Obviously, Thomas receives a great deal of respect as the founder of the bloodline, but he isn't the kind to issue orders. Nor, come to that, are most of the other members of the bloodline; they prefer to get things done by the subtle pulling of strings.

Concepts: Internet geek, criminal fixer, owner of a logistics business (trucks, trains, boats, or similar), obsessive sewer rat, nomad always riding the roads or rails, the socialite who is everyone's friend, official at the Prince's court keeping track of all in the city and what they want, alliance-building politician, scion of ancient nobility carefully tracking all his relatives out to the nth degree, urban ecologist studying the food webs of the metropolis (from the top)

Malocusians

"You are under my roof, now."

Many Kindred take their freedom to roam the night for granted. They prowl the Rack, vie for prestige and power in Elysium and return to their havens to feed or pass the day, never realizing that there are others who are not so free as they.

Scattered here and there, on the edges of cities, in withering neighborhoods of failing wealth or in crumbling communities with vanishing populations, there are houses — old houses — that still exude the odors of wealth, nobility and prestige. Occupied and yet not occupied, haunted and yet not haunted, these grand old mansions of brick and oak are lairs for the nigh-sessile Kindred called the Malocusians.

Malocusians are bound to their havens by bonds of blood. Outside of their havens, they are weaker than many Kindred, but, within the bounds of their territory, the Spiders are truly the masters of their domain, and woe unto any Kindred who picks a fight with the Spiders on their own ground.

Parent Clan: Ventrue

Nickname: Spiders

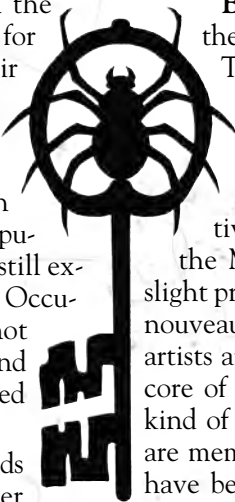
Covenant: Invictus (and, rarely, Ordo Dracul)

Appearance: On the whole, Malocusians represent the quintessential landed gentry. They manifest all the traits common to the erudite and wealthy.

Their sartorial tastes are profoundly conservative, almost to an extreme: Malocusians are known to wear clothes 50, 60 or even 70 years out of fashion. Depending on the dates involved, this might make them seem "retro" or simply crazy.

Haven: Malocusians build their entire unives around their havens. Their sires only release them from their oversight after the childer acquire suitable havens of their own and, to the Malocusians, "suitable" may as well be a synonym for "palatial." Few Malocusian sires would ever release childer who had not found themselves havens with several rooms, a den, a comprehensive library, several salons and, possibly, a ballroom.

Contrary to the assumptions of those Kindred who know the ways of Spiders, however, Malocusians have a much greater interest (and ability) in adapting to modern or decrepit spaces than they may imply. Some Spiders nest in palaces that seem, from the outside, to be bombed-out firetraps or holes in the ground. Outright grandeur is not the only tool a Malocusian has for luring flies.



Background: Wealth, isolation and intellect are the key features of those who become Malocusians.

The son of the wealthy family who didn't have the advantage of primogeniture, the reclusive widow who inherited her husband's fortune and estate after his tragic accident, the eccentric scholar whose work proved unexpectedly lucrative — any of these would be ideal candidates for the Malocusian line. (The bloodline does show a slight preference for families from "old money" over the nouveau riche, however.) Political families, eccentric artists and scions of debauched dynasties comprise the core of the Malocusian line. Ideal candidates for this kind of Requiem are, for obvious reasons, rare, but so are members of this bloodline in general. Some elders have been known to adopt optimistically if they find souls who don't have the estates or the money but who seem to have many of the other traits individual Spiders considers ideal.

Character Creation: Brilliant (if somewhat crazed) minds are a hallmark of the Malocusian bloodline. Mental Attributes (and Skills) are primary. Some of these Kindred pass decades, even centuries, without leaving their havens. As a result, their Physical Attributes are almost always tertiary; it takes a certain kind of mind (and physique) to acclimate to that existence.

Many Malocusians are at least moderately wealthy at the time of their Embrace. Most should have *at least* three dots worth of Resources, and preferably four or more. Likewise, many Spiders already have homes worthy of five dots of Haven Size when they are Embraced.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Domus, Presence, Resilience

Weakness: The Requiem of a Malocusian vampire takes place almost entirely in his haven — and necessarily so. In addition to the weakness of the Ventrue clan, Malocusians suffer from a debilitating dependence on their havens. To even cross the threshold of her haven and enter the outside night, a Spider must spend a Willpower point. Every Willpower point spent in this way enables a Malocusian to operate away from her haven for a number of hours equal to her Humanity. Once those hours are up, she must spend another Willpower point to remain out and about. If the Malocusian does not make this Willpower expenditure, she suffers a -1 penalty to all Mental and Social dice pools until she does.

Organization: Despite rarely leaving their havens, Malocusians maintain tight networks among themselves. Once upon a time, they managed this through written or oral correspondence delivered by animal messengers, although in the modern era they use telephones and the Internet. They're quite aware of the danger this network of theirs presents to the Masquerade, but they're fastidiously attentive to discretion, and a few of them are adept at cryptography. Still, tonight's most sensitive messages are delivered by animals, as the communications were centuries ago.

Due to the time Malocusians spend scouring newspapers and the media for signs of the outside world, the first news of big developments in the mortal lives of other cities often comes through a Malocusian contact, and many Princes (and rumormongers) maintain connections with the Spiders for that reason alone. Outside of that, Malocusians are often overlooked members of the Kindred population, a fact they're happy to use to their advantage.

Concepts: Noble-in-exile, housebound scholar, keeper of the Prince's library, creepy shut-in, scheming spider at the center of an influence web, crippled mob boss



Sotoha

"Blood shed at twilight pledges the heart's true service until dawn brightens."

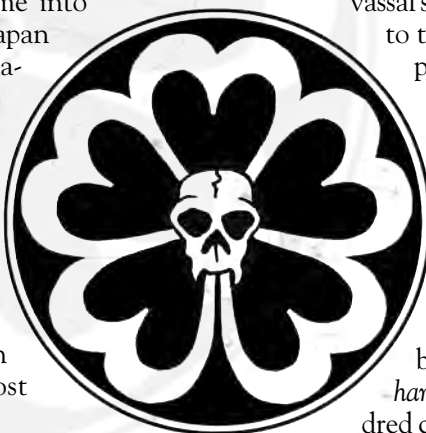
In the 16th century, Europeans came into sustained contact with the people of Japan for the first time and, in turn, the Japanese met their first Europeans. Fujita Kunimasa, the founder of the Sotoha (SO-to-ha), was Embraced some time fairly early in that century. His sire was a Ventrue, but Kunimasa spoke little of him in later years, even less than he spoke of the beginning of his Requiem in Japan. That period is the subject of considerable speculation among those of his blood, but almost nothing is known for certain.

What is known is that in the 17th century Tokugawa Iemitsu closed the country, cutting off almost all contact with foreigners. Kunimasa, who had built up a strong power base among European traders and missionaries, realized that if he remained in his homeland he would be rendered almost powerless — and so he chose to leave. As it happened, his best servants had recently established themselves in the New World, so Kunimasa chose to travel to the Americas, rather than Europe.

There, he found himself alone and in exile. He still had his mundane Retainers, so he was not isolated in that sense, but no one around him shared his culture, his commitment to *bushido* or, indeed, his language. He sired his childer and created his bloodline, the Sotoha or "group of people on the outside," to fill his need for family as much as to increase his power. Kunimasa succeeded in his aims, and while he has not been noticeably active for decades — and may be in torpor — his descendants remain mostly loyal to their founder's ideals.

The most important of those ideals is loyalty. Kindred of the Sotoha are expected to show absolute and unquestioning loyalty to their immediate superior, and this loyalty is supposed to take priority over any claim that a higher authority might have. Thus, if a Kindred's immediate superior rebels against the Prince, the inferiors should support him, even if they have sworn loyalty to the Prince themselves. In theory, this situation would never occur, as the Kindred's lord would maintain his loyalty to the Prince just as the Kindred served his lord; in practice, it is all too common.

Kindred are expected to obey any orders from their lords without question, even if the order is suicidal. A



vassal's Requiem is of no importance compared to the commands of his lord. Lords are expected not to waste the lives of their followers, and those within this bloodline do not, as long as they are in their right minds. While, in theory, even an insane lord is due absolute obedience, this is one place where theory tends to break down in the face of practice.

There are, traditionally, two ways in which a Kindred may legitimately break his link with his lord. The first is *harakiri*, or *seppuku*. In this rite, the Kindred cuts his stomach open with his sword, in front of witnesses, declaring that he is protesting against his lord's decisions. The vampire must inflict enough damage to himself to drive himself into torpor, so the witnesses need to be Kindred, or sometimes ghouls, whom he trusts completely. When the Kindred comes out of torpor, he is freed of all obligations to his former lord, and may freely seek a new lord.

The second protest is more dramatic. A vassal may choose to destroy himself, traditionally by facing the morning sun. This frees all of the lord's other vassals from their loyalty to that lord, and gives the lord's lord proper grounds to renounce him. Such suicides are known as *hinomi* (hee-noh-MEE — "sun viewing"), not *harakiri* or *seppuku*, both of which mean "stomach cutting." Only two instances of *hinomi* are recorded in the bloodline's history. The most famed is that of the Kindred now known as Fujita Yuko ("child of the sun"), a vassal of Fujita Pedro. Fujita Pedro had surrendered almost entirely to the Beast and was a known diablerist, but the vassals he retained from his days of sanity made it impossible for any Kindred to move against him safely. Fujita Yuko's sacrifice stripped Fujita Pedro of all support, and he was staked out over Fujita Yuko's ashes, to face the sun as she had.

The second ideal is constant calm, showing no violent emotions. Obviously, this is extremely hard for Kindred, beset as they are by the Beast, and the bloodline's unique discipline, Kamen (the Mask), is devoted to making constant calm more possible. However, only violent emotions are disallowed. A gentle melancholy at the passing of ephemeral life is permitted and, indeed, encouraged.

In fact, such an appreciation forms the third ideal of the bloodline. All its members are supposed to appreciate the beauty of things condemned to a short life span, such as cherry blossoms (which fall within a week) or cut flowers (which soon wither and die). Fujita Kunimasa's eldest child, Taro, is renowned for a set of poems he wrote reflecting on the greatest tragedy of the Kindred: that their curse robs them of such an ending. Other Kindred suspect that most members of the bloodline do not really believe this, but they certainly claim to be sincere.

Any Kindred who enters this bloodline takes the name "Fujita" to indicate that he has become part of Kunimasa's family. While most such Kindred are Embraced by a member of the bloodline, adoption was a well-established custom in Kunimasa's Japan, and the bloodline is happy to accept suitable Kindred from outside.

Parent Clan: Ventrue

Nickname: Samurai or Outsiders (note that the Sotoha never refer to themselves as Samurai)

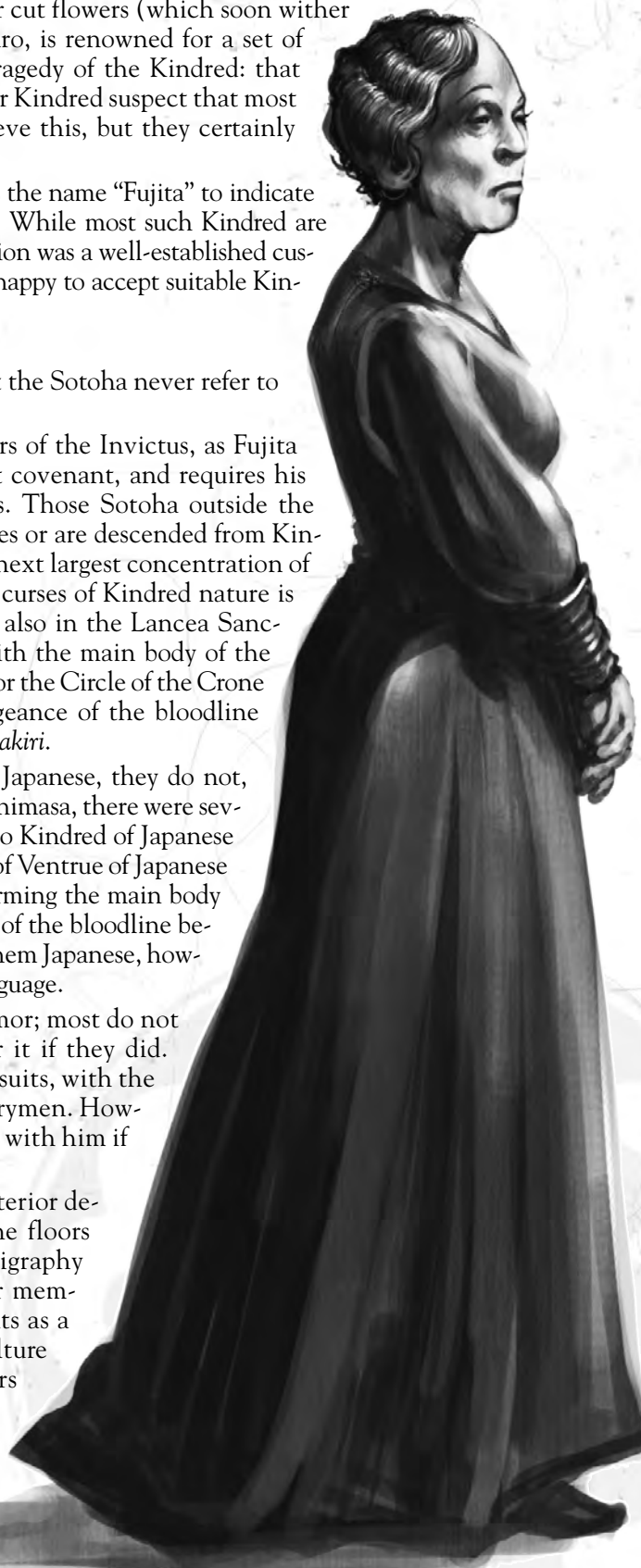
Covenants: Almost all Sotoha are members of the Invictus, as Fujita Kunimasa has always been a member of that covenant, and requires his vassals and their vassals to remain members. Those Sotoha outside the covenant either committed *harakiri* themselves or are descended from Kindred who did. The Ordo Dracul contains the next largest concentration of the bloodline, as the idea of overcoming the curses of Kindred nature is one that appeals to them. A few Sotoha are also in the Lancea Sanctum, and this group has the best relations with the main body of the bloodline. Sotoha in the Carthian Movement or the Circle of the Crone are lone renegades, protected from the vengeance of the bloodline only by the rights granted by their acts of *harakiri*.

Appearance: While the Sotoha think like Japanese, they do not, these days, look like Japanese. Indeed, after Kunimasa, there were several generations of the bloodline containing no Kindred of Japanese extraction. In the last century or so, a number of Ventrue of Japanese descent have chosen to join the bloodline, forming the main body of those adopted into the family. All members of the bloodline believe that sharing in Kunimasa's blood makes them Japanese, however, and most make an effort to learn the language.

The Sotoha almost never wear samurai armor; most do not own any and would not know how to wear it if they did. They dress in formal, subdued clothes, often suits, with the result that they look much like Japanese salarymen. However, every Sotoha has a sword, and carries it with him if at all possible.

Haven: A strong Japanese influence on interior design is very common in Sotoha havens. The floors are often covered in tatami mats, and calligraphy makes for popular wall hangings. The older members of the bloodline regard woodblock prints as a product of the degeneration of Japanese culture under the Tokugawa, but younger members collect this art form eagerly.

Larger havens almost always include a dark garden. Developed from the dry gardens of Zen temples, these gardens include rocks, raked gravel of various



kinds and flowing water and pools. Nothing lives within them. Sotoha Kindred are known to spend hours sitting in their gardens, meditating on their fate.

Background: Kindred of this bloodline prefer to Embrace mortals who have demonstrated loyalty, self-control and an aptitude for the acquisition and maintenance of power. As a result, Sotoha childer tend to be taken from the upper ranks of the civil service and large companies. Leaders are rarely Embraced, as they have not demonstrated loyalty to anyone else, and those in lower ranks are deemed not to have proved themselves.

The Sotoha have no particular preference for people of Japanese descent. Indeed, the Sotoha tend to look down on Japanese kine, believing that these kine have lost the soul of their nation, a soul that is preserved only among the Sotoha. Kindred of Japanese extraction who wish to join the bloodline are, however, welcome.

Character Creation: The Resistance Attributes (Resolve, Stamina and Composure) are the most important to the Sotoha. As the bloodline tends to recruit from the upper ranks of white-collar workers, Social and Mental Attributes are likely to be more important than Physical. Similarly, known Skills are those useful in running an organization, rather than fighting on the ground. This is one reason why the members of the bloodline never refer to themselves as samurai. That said, there is a certain amount of hankering after that element of their past, so Sotoha who have developed substantial combat abilities are not uncommon.

Almost all Sotoha develop at least the basics of Kamen, as that Discipline virtually defines the nature of the bloodline.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Dominate, Kamen, Resilience

Weakness: In addition to the clan weakness of the Ventrue, the Sotoha devote so much energy to suppressing their Beast that, when it emerges, the Beast grabs its freedom for all it is worth. Sotoha frenzies do not end naturally. When the Storyteller decides a frenzy should end, he may instead require the Sotoha's player to make an extended Resolve + Composure roll to bring his character out of frenzy, rolling once per turn or minute, as the Storyteller sees fit. A total of five successes are needed to pull out of an involuntary frenzy. If the character was riding the wave (see p. 181 of *Vampire: The Requiem*), only three successes are needed to pull out.

Finally, a Sotoha in frenzy cannot simply spend one Willpower point to take control of himself for one turn

(see p. 180 of *Vampire: The Requiem*). Instead, the character must earn the right to spend that Willpower point by succeeding on a reflexive Resolve + Composure action. If the roll succeeds, he may spend the Willpower point that turn. If not, he is helpless before the Beast during that turn.

Organization: The Sotoha are one of the most rigidly organized bloodlines. Every Kindred has a lord, and most also have vassals. A vampire's first lord is the Kindred who Embraced him, and the only way to change his lord is through the rite of *harakiri*. The Sotoha enforce this even on Kindred who do not choose to awaken their blood.

As noted above, a vassal is expected to show absolute loyalty to his lord. The lord's orders and interests should take precedence over everything, including the vassal's very survival. If the lord is harmed or killed, the vassals have a duty to hunt down and attempt to kill the offenders, even if that means certain death. The Sotoha, on the whole, take these obligations very seriously. Lords are permitted to order the deaths of their vassals. However, that vassal's vassals then have a duty to hunt down their lord's former lord. As a result, this option is rarely exercised.

Torpor does not normally interrupt the claims of loyalty; the only exception is torpor due to *harakiri*, which releases a vassal from the chain of fealty. Final Death transfers the loyalty of the vassals to the lord's lord, with the exception of death through *hinomi*, which leaves them free.

A Sotoha without a lord, a *ronin* (and the Sotoha do use that term), is accorded very little respect or status, and cannot have any dots in Clan Status as the rest of the Ventrue take this shunning seriously. However, the rite of *harakiri* is respected, and no action is taken against Sotoha who choose to remain *ronin*. The attitude of the bloodline toward a member who swears fealty to someone outside it depends entirely on the attitude to the new master.

Concepts: Fiercely loyal urban samurai, sensitive warrior-poet, power-broker just waiting for the right moment to separate from his lord, trapped vassal of a tyrannical lord, over-enthusiastic Japanophile, idealistic *ronin* Carthian, artist of deaths and endings, a Seneschal as impassive as the traditional English butler, *ronin* searching desperately for a worthy lord, Kindred determined to make his own unlife a brief and glorious thing

Spina

"I should be profoundly grateful if you would permit me the chance to defeat you."

The members of the Order of the Thorned Wreath follow the teachings of Artus Le Jumel. Spina vampires have his teachings in their very blood, for they are of his bloodline. The overwhelming majority of members of this bloodline are also members of the Thorned Wreath; joining the Order is usually a prerequisite to finding a sponsor to awaken the bloodline — and leaving the Order is normally regarded, and punished, as betrayal. Still, the Order and the bloodline are not identical.

Le Jumel explained it thus: "The Order of the Thorned Wreath is a duty, a task that we have taken on. We perform that duty because we have sworn to perform it, but had we chosen to swear a different oath, we would also have chosen a different duty. Our blood is what we are. We fight with courtesy because of our nature, not because of any oath. Had we chosen to swear to bring the Invictus down to the dust, we would yet have done so without descending to boorishness."

Members of this bloodline believe those words even tonight. If anything, the Kindred who have left the Thorned Wreath hold this belief even more strongly than those within. Spina might abandon the Invictus, or even support its enemies, but they are still courteous warriors. They maintain their courtesy and courage as highly public virtues, to prove that they are still Spina, even if they have pledged allegiance to a different organization.

Courtesy is what most Kindred think of when they think of the Spina. It is relatively easy to find a vampire who will claim that a Spina has been rude to him; rather harder to find one who can produce any reliable witnesses to the event. From the night of their Embrace, all potential Spina are taught how to maintain their calm in all situations and the correct polite responses to a wide range of insults. In time, these become second nature, allowing a Spina to belittle another vampire mercilessly without once saying anything that steps across the bounds of politesse.

It is very important to remember that the Spina are polite; they are not nice. One meaning of their name is "thorn," and they see themselves as the thorns in the Thorned Wreath. The Spina are sharp and wounding, and not merely in physical combat. Spina not infrequently become Harpies, dreaded for their satires and respected out of pure fear.



Publicly losing control to frenzy is a source of great shame within the Spina. The Beast is many things, but it is certainly not courteous. Most Spina also try to avoid losing control in private, as you never know who might be watching. The bloodline's greatest contempt, however, is reserved for those who "ride the wave," sacrificing courtesy for a little raw power. Absolutes are dangerous, so one should not say that the Spina never "ride the wave." However, no vampire known to have done so is ever accepted into the bloodline.

While courtesy is more visible, the Spina define themselves equally by their courage. This is primarily physical courage; the Spina do not back down from a fight because it is dangerous. As most Spina are highly trained warriors, this attitude results in fewer losses than might be expected. However, physical courage is not the only kind. Spina are expected to stand up for their beliefs and stand by their wards, even under severe moral pressure. Most Spina live up to this standard, and the bloodline loses more members to hunts called by Princes defied on matters of principle than it does to battles in which the Spina fought despite overwhelming odds.

The importance of courage means that, of all the types of frenzy, fear frenzy is regarded as the worst. Many Spina try to train themselves to react less badly to fire or sunlight, but that fear is deeply rooted in vampire nature, and such training typically has no effect other than to inspire a few unnecessary frenzies. Still, "spina" can also mean "spine," and the Spina like to think that they have backbone.

Indeed, more broadly, they see themselves as providing the backbone of any organization to which they belong. They do not generally seek to rule; Le Jumel was quite clear in his rejection of wide-ranging authority. The Spina do, on the other hand, believe that they have the right, and indeed the duty, to judge the rulers. Criticisms should be voiced, politely, of course, but repeatedly, until they are addressed. The Spina are also happy to enforce the standards of a group on others, and, in many cases, they have the capacity to do so.

For those Spina in the Order of the Thorned Wreath, this tendency to become an Inquisition of sorts is held in check by their oaths of loyalty, which prevent them from moving against any members of the Invictus. However,

Spina outside the Thorned Wreath have no such restriction, and frequently cause trouble for other Kindred.

One group of non-Thorn Wreath-aligned Spina are still members of the Invictus, and have a certain level of notoriety and even respect from the Thorned Wreath itself. These Kindred listen for rumors of vampires who abuse the service of the Thorned Wreath, and then punish these vampires in public, and generally spectacular, ways. It is possible to survive such a punishment, but it is not common. This group takes no name for itself, but many in the Invictus call them the Furies. Their numbers are unknown, and they may not, in fact, be organized in any way. A few Spina, such as the French vampire Martine de Perpignan, have become renowned and dreaded as Furies. Martine cuts the right arms off her victims, and then chains them to watch their own flesh burn. It takes some time to heal an arm, in the best case, but if she feels the abuse was severe she chains the arm to the vampire's chest before setting it afire.

Parent Clan: Daeva

Nickname: Barbs (as in barbed wire, barbed words)

Covenant: The Spina are overwhelmingly members of the Invictus, and fit very well into that covenant's structure. A significant number are also found within the Lancea Sanctum, and these vampires have generally changed because of the strength of their religious convictions. Most of the Spina who have left the Order of the Thorned Wreath without being declared traitors are found among the Sanctified. A handful have joined the Ordo Dracul in an attempt to overcome frenzies and the fears inherent to their natures. The Circle of the Crone boasts maybe one or two Spina.

The Carthians, however, claim the allegiance of a significant group of Spina, Kindred who found their ideals leading them in opposition to their elders, and who took the bloodline's injunction to bravely stand up for their ideals quite seriously. All Spina among the Carthians are regarded as traitors by the Order of the Thorned Wreath, but those who still walk the night are regarded as too much trouble to hunt down. If the opportunity were to arise, these Spina would be killed in a moment, but they have proved well capable of defending themselves.

Finally, a few Spina find that their ideals prevent them remaining loyal even to the Carthians, and these Spina end up among the unaligned. Most of these Kindred affect the pose of the elegant outlaw, although the outlaw part, at least, is generally real enough.

Appearance: Unsurprisingly, the basic appearance of the Spina is very similar to the basic appearance of members of the Thorned Wreath. Those members of the bloodline who are members of the Order of the Thorned Wreath uphold its standards with enthusiasm, and always display its symbol. The barbed wire version is less popular within the bloodline than with external recruits, but some younger members still affect it. The Daeva influence is clear in the strong tendency

of Spina to maintain individual styles, while still contriving to look like warriors of the Order of the Thorned Wreath.

Those Spina outside the Order of the Thorned Wreath generally try to send two signals with their styles of dress. First, they are elegant, sophisticated and utterly confident in their own style. Second, they are clearly and completely distinct from the Thorned Wreath. On the whole, these Spina try to keep their outfits practical for combat, as most Spina see themselves as warriors, but Nur of Zagreb was renowned, during his time in Bremen, for wearing nothing but hundreds of chains, of dozens of different weights.

Almost all Spina carry a "polite" weapon visibly at all times. In Kindred society, this often means a firearm, as the vampire resistance to bullets makes such weapons less of a threat. Antique dueling pistols, or modern imitations of such, are quite popular, combining as they do elegance with near-complete uselessness, which means that there are quite a few Princes who will even permit the Spina to carry such weapons in their presence.

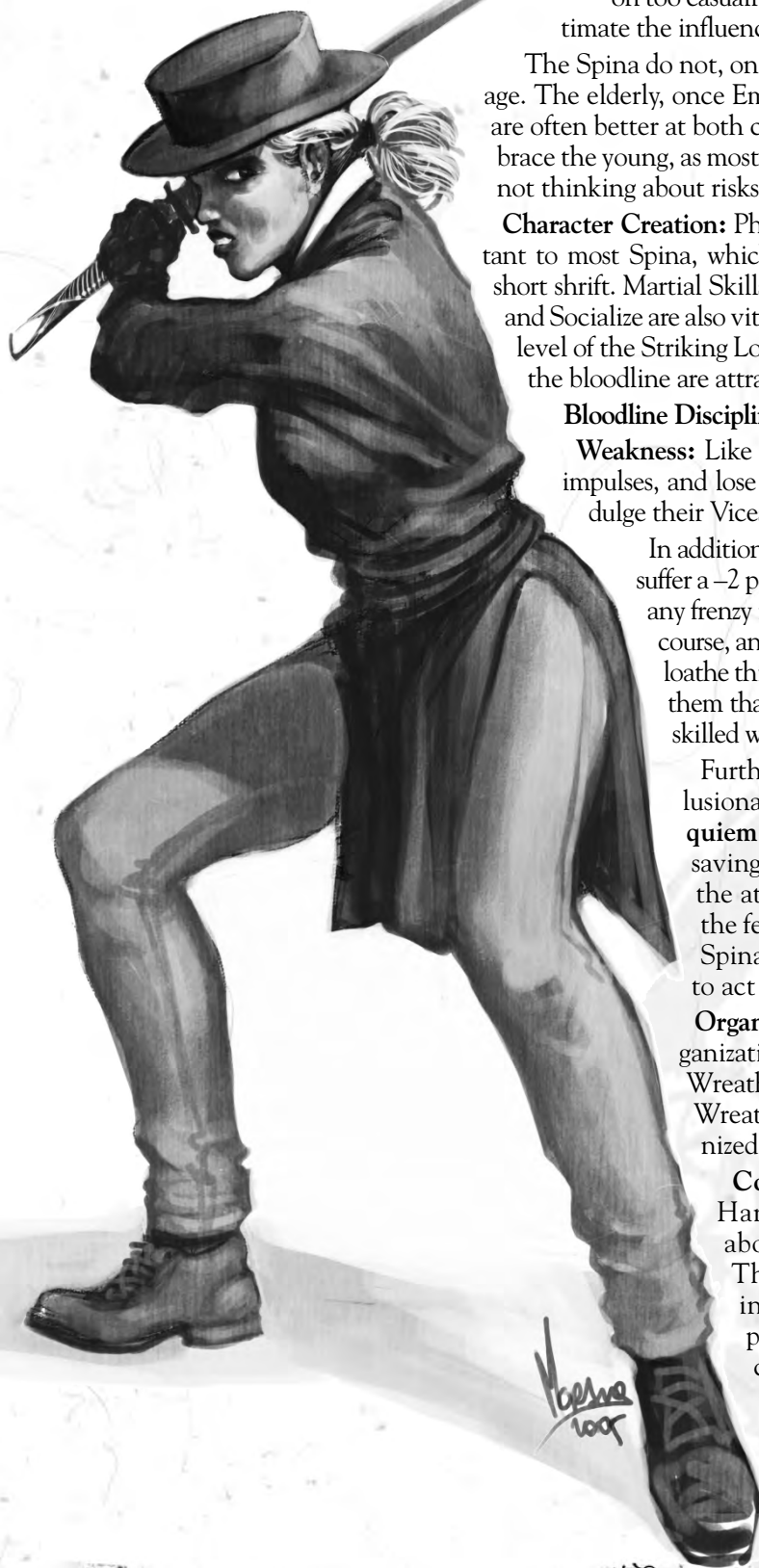
Haven: Spina havens are always elegant, usually beautiful and appointed for polite conversation and high-class soirees. It would be unpardonably rude to ambush someone you have invited to your haven, so those who are not actually enemies of the Spina might learn to accept such invitations when they are offered. The Spina issue such invitations fairly frequently, as well, as invitations allow them to display both courtesy, in treating guests well, and courage, in allowing the locations of their havens to become known.

Of course, the Spina are not stupid. Almost all have at least one secondary haven, where they can rest if their enemies decide to attack the main one.

Almost all Spina havens also include an armory and martial training area. The armory not infrequently doubles as a collection of noteworthy historical weapons, and may be shown to visitors. Almost all Spina armories include a flamethrower, prominently displayed but never mentioned to visitors. Asking whether it is loaded is extremely boorish; many are not, but there are some Spina who refuse to admit that sort of weakness even to themselves, and keep the weapon charged.

The training area may double as a dueling ground, for dealing with guests who are so rude as to require a physical lesson. Guests get quite a bit of leeway, but refusing to leave when asked to do so often provokes a duel, as does attacking the host. Attacking another guest gets you attacked on the spot, as the host defends his own hospitality.

Background: It is important not to forget that the Spina are a Daeva bloodline. They do not Embrace unalluring people, and are drawn to beauty almost as much as their parent clan. However, as the Spina do have additional criteria they are more willing to Embrace those who may fall short of stunning beauty. The primary additional criteria are a natural courtesy and a degree of courage. Spina tend to test both of these, quite deliberately, before deciding on an Embrace, but they do not expect someone to live up to



the standards of the bloodline right away. Some Spina train potential childer while they are still mortals; other Spina Embrace those who have the potential and only accept them into the bloodline if the potential is fulfilled. The first group believe that the second pass the Curse on too casually; the second group believe that the first underestimate the influence of vampirism on mortals' characters.

The Spina do not, on the whole, care about class, race, sex, money or age. The elderly, once Embraced, can be just as strong as the young, and are often better at both courage and courtesy. The Spina very rarely Embrace the young, as most children find true courage (as opposed to simply not thinking about risks) as hard as being polite.

Character Creation: Physical and Social Attributes are the most important to most Spina, which inevitably leads to Mental Attributes getting short shrift. Martial Skills are important, and Social Skills like Persuasion and Socialize are also vital to maintaining a proper level of courtesy. Some level of the Striking Looks Merit is also a good idea, as most members of the bloodline are attractive and admirable, even if not truly beautiful.

Bloodline Disciplines: Celerity, Courtoisie, Majesty, Vigor

Weakness: Like the Daeva, Spina find it difficult to resist their impulses, and lose two Willpower points when they opt not to indulge their Vices.

In addition, the Spina simply cannot tolerate rudeness. They suffer a -2 penalty to Resolve + Composure dice pools to resist any frenzy inspired by reckless, crass or insulting behavior. Of course, an anger frenzy is never polite behavior, so the Spina loathe this weakness of their souls. It is perhaps fortunate for them that most Kindred realize that deliberately goading a skilled warrior into frenzy is extremely foolish.

Further, all Spina vampires suffer from a kind of Delusional Obsession (see p. 189 of **Vampire: The Requiem**) built around the concept that courtesy is the saving grace of the Damned. With time and vigilance, the attitude of courtesy may eventually domesticate the feral nature of the Beast, or so say some Spina. A Spina Kindred must expend one point of Willpower to act in a discourteous manner to any creature.

Organization: The Spina, as a bloodline, have no organization independent of the Order of the Thorned Wreath. Those few Spina who are outside the Thorned Wreath may join other groups, but they are not organized qua Spina.

Concepts: Thorned Wreath Knight, aspiring Harpy, Thorned Wreath Knight with doubts about his calling, Fury avenging abuses of the Thorned Wreath, Sanctified vampire spreading his faith with courtesy and obstinacy, vampire struggling to overcome his Beast and become perfectly courteous, bodyguard to a powerful Kindred, puppeteer of a powerful Kindred pretending to be a mere bodyguard, revolutionary concealing his true beliefs in order to strike at the system from within, violent upholder of the social order

Icarians

*My sire has held this city for centuries. When he falls to torpor, as we all must, I will take over his position.
Think about that before you raise your voice to me again.*

It's common knowledge among the Sanctified of Europe that Icarians trace their origin back to one of the most revered leaders the covenant has ever seen: Icarus, Archbishop of Naples, pilgrim to the Black Abbey and Anointed by the hand of the Monachus. In 1388, Archbishop Icarus was attacked while he slept and diablerized by a vengeful Succubus (see p. 38). She then took control of the city. Three nights later, vampires of the Lancea Sanctum, rallied by the childer of Icarus, brought her down, and the progeny of the Archbishop declared themselves the heirs to his magnificent rule.

In the centuries that followed, the Icarians cultivated their combination of religious fervor, famed blood and validated vengeance into a belief that the scions of Icarus — who they call the Great Archbishop — are blessed by God with a divine right to rule the Damned. Icarian “divine heirs” strode throughout Mediterranean Europe from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries, displacing dozens of Princes and Archbishops and replacing them with Icarian rulers. The scions of Icarus, seen by the larger body of the Lancea Sanctum as heretical usurpers with no regard for the covenant hierarchy, lost momentum as the image of the noble-blooded Dynast, wronged and grieving faded beneath self-righteous claims of heavenly inheritance. As more and more cities faced the so-called “Icarian Heresy” with outright force, the Dynasts relented. They kept whatever cities they had claimed by right, but sought no others for many decades.

Some elders who were close to the medieval Icarians claim the death of Icarus marked the birth of the bloodline, that the blood of his childer was changed by fevered vengeance, not by God. Icarians insist, however, that their line has held its own supernatural powers since Icarus Embraced his first childe. The surge of new Icarians practicing the heritage's rare Discipline is merely the result of many dozens of childer rushing to fill the impossible void left by their departed father.

Icarians truly believe they are meant to rule the Damned as pious and noble lords, with the blood of the Great Archbishop as their license. In past nights, they saw themselves as holy political crusaders, restoring the thrones of Kindred domains to the Icarian Archbishops that God intended to govern them. That some stubborn Princes, blind to the sanguineous grace of the Dynasts, had to be burned out of their seats was a regrettable shame, but how could the Dynasts — or any of the Sanctified — tolerate a pretender on the throne?

Since the end of the Icarian Heresy, generally marked by the bloodline's failed attempt to win Avignon in 1724, Dynasts have reevaluated their philosophies and tactics. If the Sanctified regard the childer of Archbishop Icarus as self-aggrandizing heretics, how can there ever be a secure and beloved union between an Icarian Archbishop and her vassals?

The Icarian solution is calculated, well-reasoned and insidious. The Dynasts have come to understand that they must reclaim their good name through many years of pious service and demonstrations of skill. The Icarians plan to join the ranks of the Anointed, fill municipal roles in favor of the Sanctified and use their supernatural talents to benefit sitting Princes and Archbishops. They will prove that they are meant to rule. The modern mantra of the Icarians is this: “An Icarian serves to rule.” As the Dynasts see it, that sentence signifies the Icarian destiny of rulership, their commitment to scale the ladders of hierarchy and their acknowledgement that they must first support the current Princes of the Damned.

That said, every Icarian is looking for a short-cut to the control of her local domain. A new, peacefully ascended Dynast Prince or Archbishop could *truly* prove that only the Icarians are meant to speak for the Sanctified and govern the Damned. And if peaceful ascension is not possible, an Icarian is entitled to do what is necessary to climb those final few steps. When the Icarians win new power, all the other Kindred shall see the truth. When the Icarians can gain control of the city without losing the favor of the Kindred, then shall they be loved.

Parent Clan: Ventrue

Nickname: Dynasts (sometimes Holy Dynasts)

Covenant: The roots of the Icarian bloodline reach deep into the history of the Lancea Sanctum and few Dynasts have much reason to leave their holy origins. Some, however, stifled by the demands of religious strictures on one side and the demands of a Prince on the other, feel not just rooted in the covenant, but trapped beneath it. Others feel the Lancea Sanctum's long memory, and the unhappy memory of the Icarian Heresy, will forever limit Icarian power in the covenant and prevent future Dynasts from taking the reigns of other cities. Icarians find the notion of sliding slowly into impotence terrifying. That the Sanctified would let such a

thing happen when the Dynasts are so plainly intended as rulers is a sad shame.

So it is that modern nights find the Icarians seeking out other avenues of power. Most Icarians don't intend to betray the Sanctified, of course — merely secure themselves Status in the city or with other temporal powers so the bloodline can prove that it is no threat to the Lancea Sanctum. Indeed, the Icarians have always been a great boon to the covenant and as the pious heirs to the blood of the Great Archbishop, they intend to go on as pious servants of the Sanctified the only way they know how: by organizing and commanding other Kindred to the benefit of the covenant.

The Icarian bloodline as a long, amicable history of dealing with the Kindred of the Invictus, and a younger, more cautious relationship with vampires of the Carthian Movement. Both covenants have been by Icarians as well-meaning organizations with a sad lack of religious motive among some of its greatest leaders. An Icarian would be comfortable dealing with the agents of either covenant, and could conceivably even pursue membership in one or the other if he had a plan for winding his path back to a higher station among the Sanctified.

Icarians hardly regard the Circle of the Crone and the Ordo Dracul at all, traditionally. Pagan heresies are the business of Inquisitors and crusaders, and the Dynasts interact with them predominantly as distant adversaries. It is the great shame of the bloodline that the Icarians are sometimes ignorantly lumped together with such heathens as “strays from the Spear.”

Appearance: Dynasts maintain dignity in all things, including their dress. They prefer Italian suits, cut to the modern fashion, when they dress to contemporary styles. For formal covenant functions, such as Creation Rites and the Gran Ballo, Icarians have traditionally worn more archaic garb with flourishes reminiscent of a Bishop's vestments: red and white embroidery, iconic spears, signet rings, and so forth. As a rule of thumb, Icarians don't dress down for the sake of lower-class associates or informal social settings.

Beyond their dress, Icarians are known for the sense of serene confidence they exude. Icarians are resolute in the extreme, renowned for maintaining calm poise in the face of dire threats and armed enemies. The humorous Icarian stereotype, in fact, (as invented following the line's failed attempt to win control of Avignon in 1724) is the calm and collected vampire who negotiates terms while on fire. The fearsome Icarian reputation, however, whispered of tonight as it once was long ago, is that of the Spanish Icarian Fortuno who calmly ordered his enemies to douse his flaming body... and was obeyed.

Haven: Many, even most, Icarians have the wealth to maintain large, elaborate havens — often in well-appointed mansions or townhouses, typically staffed with loyal ghouls or attendant neonates, always equipped with the latest security features. Icarians richly appoint their nests with antiques, archaic furniture and fine linens. Historically, Icarians favored religious art that depicts the earliest nights of the Sanctified, such as imagery of the Centurion, etchings of the Black Abbey as drawn

from the imagination and ornamental spears. In modern nights, it has become something of a fad among Dynasts to collect mortal art depicting the era of the Old Testament.

Dynasts can't abide the thought of their kin dwelling in unsafe conditions, so Icarians unable to secure their own lavish havens may be invited into another's sanctuary. In some domains, it's even customary for the eldest Icarian to supply a haven for his younger brethren, whether they are his childer or another's. Such gifted havens are rarely lavish, but always secure.

Some wealthy Dynasts go so far as to host non-Icarian visitors in their huge havens. Modern Icarians accept that with authority and power must come visibility, and few expect to keep an elaborate haven a secret for long. What's the point of a lavish display is no one else can see it? Icarian custom demands the host see to it that his guest is safe, fed and entertained, as a symbolic effort of his high station.

Of course, Icarians still recall the origin of their line, so no Dynast sleeps in the same space as a guest. Many Icarians keep isolated, secure vaults in which to sleep, protected by loyal electronics and well-tested guards. The first rule of every Icarian haven is said to be the same: He who looks upon a sleeping scion of Icarus shall die.

Background: Most Dynasts are of European or Middle-Eastern descent, as the bloodline only selected childer from Italy, Iberia, France, Germany and Turkey for many centuries. Gradually, as the Icarians seek to find new roles for themselves, a more diverse range of Kindred are being represented amid the Icarians, but whole decades go by without a new Icarian adopting the bloodline. The standards of any Dynast are high, to say the least. The Icarians are the descendants of a vampire one step removed from the Dark Messiah himself — the prize of such gloriously noble blood can never be awarded lightly.

Dynasts may monitor a potential childe for decades before presenting her to other Icarians as a potential new family member. Icarians follow all the old Sanctified traditions surrounding the Embrace, from the Choice to the Creation Rite, but they add their own customs in the earliest stages: Once a would-be Icarian has chosen Damnation over death, three other Icarians must be consulted to support her choice. If any one of the three decides the supplicant is not up to par — is too common, or lacking in willpower or dignity — then her choice is overruled and she must be destroyed as evidence of a Masquerade breach. Few Dynasts, therefore, present a prospective childe to their kin without first securing her approval by other means — many Icarian sires are thus indebted to their kin.

Character Creation: Social Attributes rank high among the Dynasts, especially Composure. Resolve is a key Icarian Attribute, as the Dynasts prize an unwavering, resolute commitment to the bloodline and the Lancea Sanctum above all else. Willpower is essential. No Icarian should be without dots in Intimidation, Persuasion, Politics and Socialize. Academics is also valued, as leaders must be well educated. To represent an established, archetypal Dynast, Merits must be given extra attention. City and Covenant Status, Contacts, Haven, Resources and Retainer are definitive traits for the Icarians

— those who cannot be well-rounded should strive to excel in one Merit of value to the parish or the local bloodline. A great many Dynasts seek out Sanctified or Invictus Daeva to teach them the magic of Majesty. Blood Potency, beyond being necessary to join the bloodline, is also a good way to represent the might of the blood of the Great Archbishop.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Constance, Dominate, Resilience

Weakness: All Dynasts suffer from the Ventrue clan weakness. Common Icarian derangements include suspicion, paranoia, narcissism, megalomania and delusion obsession. Many Dynasts eventually suspect that other Kindred seek to diablerize them as Icarus was diablerized, to steal their noble blood. Others, already taught the truth of their divine mandate, come to accept (usually on faith) some personal delusion as the undeniable truth: that the Dynast is destined by God to rule Milan, for example, or that the current Prince of Boston is an Acolyte spy. These derangements may manifest even in response to unrelated stimuli — as if they are roused from the Icarian blood itself.

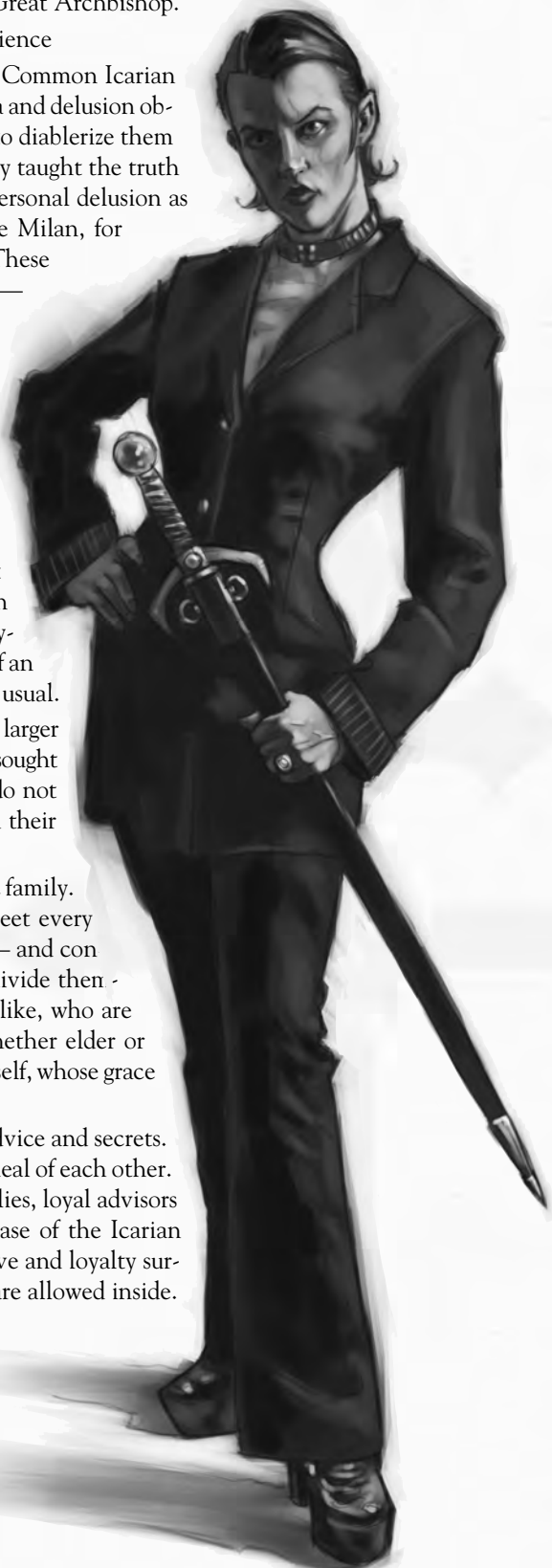
In addition to the shortcomings of the Ventrue, Icarians have their own weakness. The long-term goal of power over the Damned is of primary importance to all Dynasts. As a result, they derive less satisfaction from the smaller, intervening victories that come along the way. An Icarian regains only half as much Willpower when a scene plays out according to her Virtues. A full night's rest recovers no Willpower for an Icarian — instead of feeling recharged, she feels as though she's wasted time sleeping that could be spent fulfilling her great destiny. An Icarian *does* regain Willpower when scenes play out consistent with her Vice, and whenever the Storyteller chooses to reward the character with a Willpower point. All of an Icarian's Willpower is recovered at the conclusion of each story, as usual.

Organization: The Icarians have long slipped themselves into the larger organizations of covenant and city hierarchies. Historically, they have sought to control such social structures, but not to reform them. Dynasts do not have a single, shared philosophy of rule, only the belief they feel in their blood: that they are entitled and intended to rule other Damned.

As a bloodline, the Icarians interact like an extended, aristocratic family. They gather for family functions that vary by domain — some meet every year, others reunite in a favorite, central city every 50 years or so — and consult with each other based primarily on age. In general, Dynasts divide themselves into three generations: the youngest, neonate and ancilla alike, who are regard each other as siblings, even sire and childe; the eldest, whether elder or ancient, who are respected as beloved grandparents; and Icarus himself, whose grace and magnificence is beyond comparison.

Icarians meet to socialize and exchange news, but also to trade advice and secrets. Icarian siblings that dwell in the same domain probably see a great deal of each other. Ventrue cousins and Sanctified compatriots may be seen as vital allies, loyal advisors and confidants, but only other Icarians are family — even the case of the Icarian childe of a “plain” Ventrue sire. An invisible, inviolate circle of love and loyalty surrounds the Dynasts, and only the scions of the Great Archbishop are allowed inside.

Concepts: Boy king, dignified executive, expectant heir, handsome dignitary, host of Elysium, humble reformer, paranoid Prince, spoiled brat, well-groomed vizier, wise grandfather.



Mortifiers of the Flesh

*I have sinned. I must repent. I have sinned.
I must repent. I have sinned. I must repent.*

The Mortifiers of the Flesh are, in some domains, as much a faction within the Lancea Sanctum as they are a bloodline. Dedicated to penitence through personal pain and tribulation, as well as to the religious dogma of the covenant, the so-called Flagellants are often as feared as they are misunderstood.

The bloodline is thought to be as old, at least, as the Black Abbey. Some claim it was begun by the Monachus himself, and that the bloodline's accessibility from any clan is evidence that its founder was not too far removed from Longinus himself. The more popular history of the Mortifiers, as put forth by more mainstream factions of the covenant, claim that it was founded by enlightened and penitent members of clan Daeva, who gathered after the fall of the Black Monastery and punished themselves for the loss of the Monachus. Some scholars of the Curse — including occultists of the Ordo Dracul — have suggested that Flagellant Blood does not carry the power of any sire (and so is not strictly a bloodline) but can only be transmuted through a force of will. Whatever the truth is, the genealogy of the Mortifiers has clearly been lost to time.

Despite its bloodline's lost origins, the Mortifiers can trace their history back centuries into the medieval nights. It seems clear that the Mortifiers were inspired by heretically extreme flagellant movements of the mortal church; the eldest Mortifiers claim to have practiced flagellation prior to accepting the Curse. Though members of the line may have had power over the Blood before being subsumed by the covenant, Mortifiers have been included in the membership of the Lancea Sanctum by default since the late fourteenth century. Flagellation movements did not last long in the churches of the kine, but they have not yet died out among the Sanctified. Modern Mortifiers, like those in centuries past, are assumed to be Sanctified, though a few Flagellants must exist outside of the covenant somewhere.

Mortifiers believe that the Curse is a divine punishment in addition to a conscription into holy service, and that vampirism a sin for which the Damned must eternally repent. Taking the Sanctified dogma to the extreme, Mortifiers show penitence through scarification and painful rites that inflict horrible wounds upon themselves. Some Sanctified theologians argue that such penitence reveals a terrible lack of acceptance of the vampire's

earthly role — how can the Sanctified exalt a role he feels ashamed of? Many wise Anointed have come to conclude, however, that guilt and penitence — even when they are counted as weaknesses — can exist alongside reverence of the predatory role.

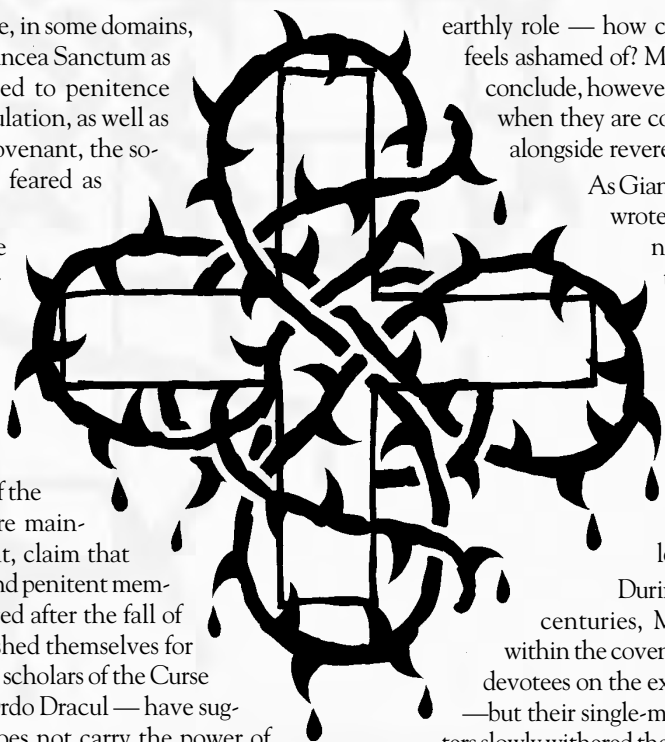
As Giancarlo of Naples, a Flagellant Priest, wrote to his Archbishop in 1611: "It is not that I believe my earthly service to be shameful, for I strive to fulfill the expectations held for me in Heaven, but how can I deny that my earthly state is sinful? As I have been Damned by the Lord, I am stretched in two ways, as if on the Rack: I must strive to serve as best I can even while I must be punished for the crimes that have led me into service."

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Mortifiers were more influential within the covenant — seen as admirably deranged devotees on the extreme border of selfless penitence — but their single-minded dedication to spiritual matters slowly withered their political relevance as the Lancea Sanctum's union with the Invictus grew more solid. Sanctified authorities have found that such gruesome extremism is often best kept "off the recruitment poster," so to speak. Flagellants are still sometimes found in political positions within the covenant, however, particularly in more conservative domains.

To Flagellants, the flesh is sinful. The flesh is the domain of the Devil and the Curse's fuel. By filling the body with pain, they can drive the Devil out, for a time. Flagellants draw out their Vitae to free themselves from it, but must always search for more. "The Blood was given to us," wrote Giancarlo, "so that we would have more to spend in penance."

But the soul is pure. The soul can never be touched by the pain inflicted upon the body. The more pain a Flagellant experiences, the more he knows about the limits of the body. In time, he may learn where the body truly ends and the soul begins. One night, he may find that his body finally gives up his soul to Heaven, even while it continues to toil for Vitae on earth.

Mortifiers do their best to keep their spirits pure and strive to keep the Devil out of their body by avoiding frenzy. They seek to avoid all violations of the Traditions, believing they were given to the Kindred as a test — just three commandments to obey, but for all eternity. ("No matter how many or how few laws are held up, sinners shall sin," wrote one Mortifier.) As a result of their strict piety and avoidance of



the Blood, Mortifiers also avoid the Vinculum and all tastes of Kindred Vitae whenever possible. Many Mortifiers undertake voluntary torpor to diminish the demands of the Blood, so they may never have to feed on vampires.

The Mortifiers have, over the centuries, developed a Discipline called Scourge, tied to their knowledge of pain and the flesh. It is this supernatural power, itself caused by a change in the Blood, that proved the Mortifiers to be a bloodline despite their unknown origins and lack of a parent clan. Still, relatively few of the Sanctified who are categorized as Flagellants are able to learn the Discipline, because so few have the will to change their Blood. So it is that many Kindred who are thought to be Mortifiers having difficulty mastering Scourge have not, in fact, even become a part of the bloodline. As a result, those Kindred who are rumored to have left (or failed out of) the Mortifier bloodline were more likely never truly a part of it.

The Flagellants do not recruit Kindred into their ranks, but neither do they keep their ways secret. Vampires who wish to become Mortifiers of the Flesh are challenged to exist as Flagellants for a year and a day before they attempt to transform their Blood through the Ritual of Initiation. During this year, the petitioner is overseen by a Mortifier Avus and guided through philosophical contemplations of penitence and sin, of the body and the soul. The Avus guides the student through the *Testament* as it appears to a Flagellant, challenges him to undergo new extremes of penance (lashes with barbed wire, swallowing razor blades to symbolize the pains of Kindred service and braving red-hot nails through the flesh) and prompts him to identify his own sins. Only when this year of trials has passed can a Kindred undergo the Ritual of Initiation (see “Organization,” below).

Parent Clan: Daeva. The Mortifiers of the Flesh, however, seem to have an origin beyond that of simple lineage. At Blood Potency 4, a vampire of *any* clan can join the Mortifiers of the Flesh if they are granted membership by an Avus.

Nickname: Flagellants

Covenant: The Mortifiers of the Flesh are considered a unique part of the Lancea Sanctum, first spawned by the monks of the Black Abbey. From time to time, Flagellants do leave the Lancea Sanctum, but most are subsequently excommunicated from the society of the bloodline and no longer considered Mortifiers, despite the retention of the bloodline’s mystical qualities. Such outcasts seldom feel welcome anywhere else and become unbound.

Appearance: Flagellants traditionally avoid wearing fancy or expensive clothing, preferring simple, muted and colorless fabrics. They avoid any kind of worldly luxury and do not wear jewelry or other mammon. Most Mortifiers remove any tattoos and piercings left over from their mortal days. Though Mortifiers may keep plainly visible scars as evidence of their piety (or reminders of their sins), such marks are not displayed as a social distinction — they’re possessions kept for the Mortifier’s benefit and no one else’s. Mortifiers often wear minimal clothing (well-worn pants or shorts, for example) when away from mortal eyes, so as not to protect their bodies from simple pains.

Some Mortifiers believe it is an essential act of will to retain scars from important bouts of flagellation. Others believe the unnatural capacity for the undead body to revert to its unscarred state is a defining facet of the Curse: a Flagellant can never be penitent enough. Each night demands new sufferings in pursuit of wisdom and piety.



Haven: In domains with at least a few Mortifiers, there may be a communal haven (often called a monastery), where Flagellants can retreat and perform their penitence. Such communal havens are generally well equipped with the tools of mortification, but are otherwise notably bare. Flagellants usually sit and sleep on hard, undecorated floors. Because they have such simple needs, Flagellants can make use of any remote and private space as a haven. Abandoned factories and industrial sites, littered with rusted and rotten hammers, hooks, wrenches, chains and other tools attract Flagellants. Stone or cement buildings and cold or dark environments are favored over more comfortable options.

Kindred who ask for hospitality within a Mortifier monastery are only turned away if the monastery's *de facto* decision-makers have reason to believe the visitor is an outright enemy. Few Kindred, however, seek hospitality at a Mortifier monastery if she has any idea of what goes on there. Mortifiers don't pressure others to behave as they do, but even many vampires lack the nerves to look on as flesh is beaten and flayed. Visiting Kindred who are susceptible to frenzy may be turned away.

Flagellants who do not stay in a monastery maintain simple havens of their own. In the rare case that a Mortifier keeps a haven more elaborate than a single, bare cell, he may set aside a room for flagellation.

Background: Mortifiers very rarely Embrace, as any existing vampire can be inducted into their ranks. Most Mortifiers don't believe it is their place to bestow the Curse on others; they hold the Traditions to be inviolate. Mortifiers who do choose to sire a child suffer a -2 penalty on degeneration and derangement rolls resulting from the Embrace. In the rare cases when Mortifiers do Embrace, they always choose deeply spiritual childer — they need not be Christians, but they must possess a degree of devotion and piety that can withstand the centuries.

Contrary to the stereotype, very few Mortifiers are masochists. Mortifiers do not endure their sufferings because they enjoy pain; quite the opposite. As penitents, they humble themselves through mortification of the flesh. While some twisted individuals among the Mortifiers do get some strange pleasure out of self-flagellation, their love of pain develops after the Blood has been changed. A vampire could not summon the strength of will to change his Blood into that of a Mortifier of the Flesh if his motives were based on anything but spiritual penitence — you cannot lie to the Blood. Mortifiers experience a sad, spiritual comfort from their penitence, but it cannot rightly be considered pleasure.

Character Creation: Mortifiers come from all walks of life and all manner of Requiem. A Mortifier's Requiem puts his Resistance Attributes to the test. Most Mortifiers are academics, however, who rarely resort to violence against others, so Mental Skills are typically favored. While their reputation might suggest a high Willpower score, many Mortifiers turned to flagellation because they consider themselves to be lacking in it. As a result, many Mortifiers begin with an average Willpower score, then build it up over time. Despite the frequent use a Mortifier gets from the Weaponry Skill, most consider proficiency with weapons to be beside the point. Subterfuge, however, is useful for hiding grotesque scars from narrow-minded Kindred and skittish prey. Remember, also, that a character must have at least a second dot in Blood Potency to be eligible for a bloodline.

Bloodline Disciplines: Mortifiers retain the Disciplines of their parent clan in addition to gaining access to the Discipline of Scourge.

Weakness: In addition to the weakness inherited from his parent clan, a Flagellant feels the weight of his sins on his flesh. Once a Mortifier feeds, he is unable to spend Willpower points until he flagellates himself. For his penitence to overcome his weakness, the Flagellant must make a Resolve + Weaponry roll against himself (ignoring his own Defense) and accept whatever damage he does. (The Mortifier can use any weapon he likes; he does not have to use a whip or scourge.) If the Mortifier feeds later on during a night when he has already flagellated himself, he must repent again with a new Resolve + Weaponry roll or be unable to spend Willpower points.

In addition, a Flagellant who fails a degeneration roll suffers a -1 penalty to all actions until he endures penance through pain. To overcome this nagging guilt, the Flagellant must cause damage (of any type) to himself, equal to his Health and delivered by a weapon in his own hand. A short and simple flagellation session isn't enough: The character must undertake his penance slowly, like a meditation. Treat this penance as an extended Resolve + Weaponry action, with each roll requiring one hour. At the Storyteller's discretion, such penance may aid in the resolution of any derangements resulting from the loss of Humanity.

Organization: Flagellants are (theoretically) all sworn to follow the Lancea Sanctum leadership and, as such, faithfully follow any Sanctified with a rank within the covenant or city hierarchy. As for the internal relations of the Mortifiers, most cities with sizeable Flagellant populations have a formal or informal leader, called an Abbot. This leader, usually the eldest of the domain's Mortifiers, is expected to guide the spiritual growth of (and command absolute loyalty from) her fellow Flagellants. The Abbot is also in charge of the monastery, overseeing those decisions that affect the haven as a whole. A Flagellant who disobeys her Abbot or a member of the Anointed is expected to perform an act of atonement (such as the Ritual of Piercing, see below) and can be excommunicated if she refuses.

The Ritual of Piercing is performed as penance for transgressions against earthly authorities, such as a failure to respectfully follow the Bishop's orders or an insult against the Prince. It uses a nail with a length of barbed wire affixed on to one end. The nail is pushed through the flesh of the penitent Mortifier's hand or arm, and then the barbed wire is pulled through the wound. A successful Resolve roll is required to begin the ritual, followed by three or more Strength rolls (depending on the length of the barbed wire) to complete the ritual. Each success on each of these rolls causes one point of bashing damage to the penitent Mortifier.

The Ritual of Initiation, held by the Mortifiers of the Flesh to be the most sacred rite a Kindred can attempt, is not actually a ritual at all. After a year and a day spent preparing for the Ritual of Initiation, a petitioner is released to police his own behaviors and administer his own punishments to himself. As a blessing, the Avus bestows a single Vitae (and a dot of Willpower) to the petitioner so that he may join the Mortifiers of the Flesh. Normally, such blood-sharing would be taboo among the Flagellants, so this act is kept secret — hidden behind the fictitious Rite of Initiation.

Concepts: Fallen priest, Father Confessor, prison warden, reclusive monk, religious advisor, religious prisoner, spiritual guide, torturer, visionary.

OSITES

THERE IT WAS! DID YOU SEE IT? THAT WAS IT... HER LAST MOMENT. AMAZING.

This small, enigmatic and almost extinct bloodline claims, like many faithful bloodlines, to be descended from one of the first Sanctified — a former mortuary priest and scholar of the dead. The name of this progenitor is lost, but the bloodline's name comes from the lineage's ancient nickname: Bone Monks. Osites (from *os*, meaning "bone") seek to derive spiritual understanding of the Requiem by studying that which God has withheld from the Damned: death. Osites traditionally regard funerary rites as fascinating cultural and occult events; they examine corpses, cemeteries, morgues and churchyards for some evidence of what lies beyond the mortal coil. By understanding both life (which the Osites have already experienced) and death, the Bone Monks believe they can better master the state of undeath and celebrate the Curse.

Some say the Osites used to be the keepers of catacombs beneath Rome; that they are the remnants of a Roman ancestor cult. Others claim they were a secret society of necromancers prior to the Embrace of their leader by the Monachus. Most often believed, however, is the tale told by elder Osites: that they were simple scriveners and morticians for the Sanctified in the early nights of the Black Abbey. It fell to the forbears of the Bone Monks to dispose of human corpses following Sanctified rites and ceremonies. Eventually, it fell to them to deal with the bodies of humans accidentally slain by sloppy predators. Within a few decades, the so-called Bone Monks were surrounded by death perpetrated by the Lancea Sanctum. Then, one night, the forgotten founder of the Osite bloodline saw that he was not alone in the crypts beneath the Black Abbey — he was surrounded by ghosts.

Since that night, the descendants of the first Osite have been pursuing the study of death. What, exactly, they seek varies with each Bone Monk — the sensation of dying, insight into the spiritual architecture of the world, the ability to return a soul to its body — but most agree that they'll recognize the secret when they find it.

Osites occultism speculates that the living and the dead each have their own spiritual energies, and that those energies are intermingled in the bodies of the Damned. According to Osites, when a creature dies, its living, physical essence (perhaps the mystic energy that separates blood from Vitae) is transmuted into a spiritual essence, and the moment of that transmutation (that is, the moment of death) is an instant of

sublime and miraculous power. In that moment, everything about a person may be revealed. It is the only instant of true, naked honesty in the existence of any creature.

When something dies, a residue of its living essence might remain in the body, like a fragment of the self left behind when the soul broke free of the form. The Osite Discipline of Memento Mori is an attempt to make use of that residue. With it, and centuries of occult study, Osites hope to one day see the mechanisms of the universe and understand the mystical system God created.

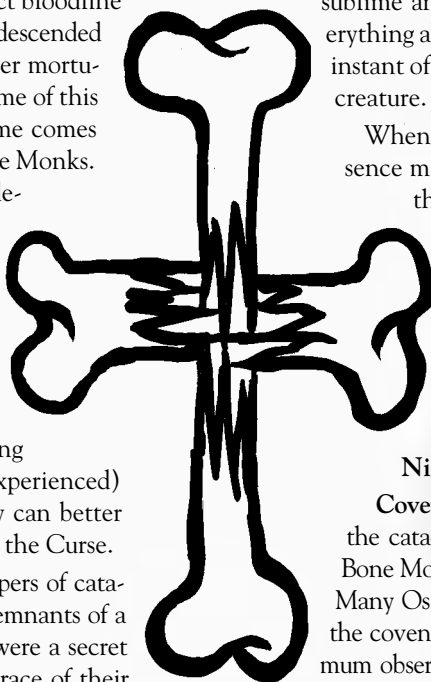
Parent Clan: Mekhet

Nickname: Bone Monks

Covenant: The Osites claim their lineage began in the catacombs beneath the Black Abbey, and most Bone Monks have been Sanctified since the Embrace. Many Osites can hardly be called devout members of the covenant, however, as they tend to visit the minimum observances necessary to maintain good standing in the parish and provide little of value to Anointed who have nothing to gain from their macabre studies. Individual Osites are often privately pious — most are deeply spiritual — but few Osites have an interest in the quality of faith held by other Sanctified. The parish, and the Invictus or Carthian authorities, may demand that a local Osite earn his keep by using his supernatural insight to investigate even mildly suspicious deaths in the domain. Perhaps a Priest's Herd has been thinned or a Primogen's Retainer has been found dead and it is the Osite's responsibility to label the death a crime or an accident — or prove it to be what the Prince has already labeled it.

Osites tend to have fewer qualms than other Sanctified about dealing with pagan Kindred. They follow investigations and research wherever it leads, and are as fascinated by pagan perceptions of death as they are by Sanctified scripture. Over the centuries, a few Osites have chosen their occult studies over their dedication to Longinus and left the Sanctified for the ranks of the Acolytes or, more often, the Dragons. It's more common for Osites to maintain secret ties with other covenants, however, rather than risk losing the protection of the Lancea Sanctum.

Appearance: Most Osites care little for their appearance, appearing dirty and unkempt, whether in monks' robes or modern dress. Some dress like gravediggers or sewer workers,



others wear plastic aprons like a coroner or the tweed jacket of a college professor. Most Osites have given up on matters of fashion and style, though many are sociable and even pleasant. They appear as they are: fastidious scholars distracted from the Requiem by their obsession.

All Osites are pale and discolored like a corpse, with dark stains in the fingers and feet, where their blood pools and settles. Many develop bluish lips and red, stiff eyes. They are clearly no longer living creatures. They do not rot, however, but remain forever in a state like that of the recently deceased.

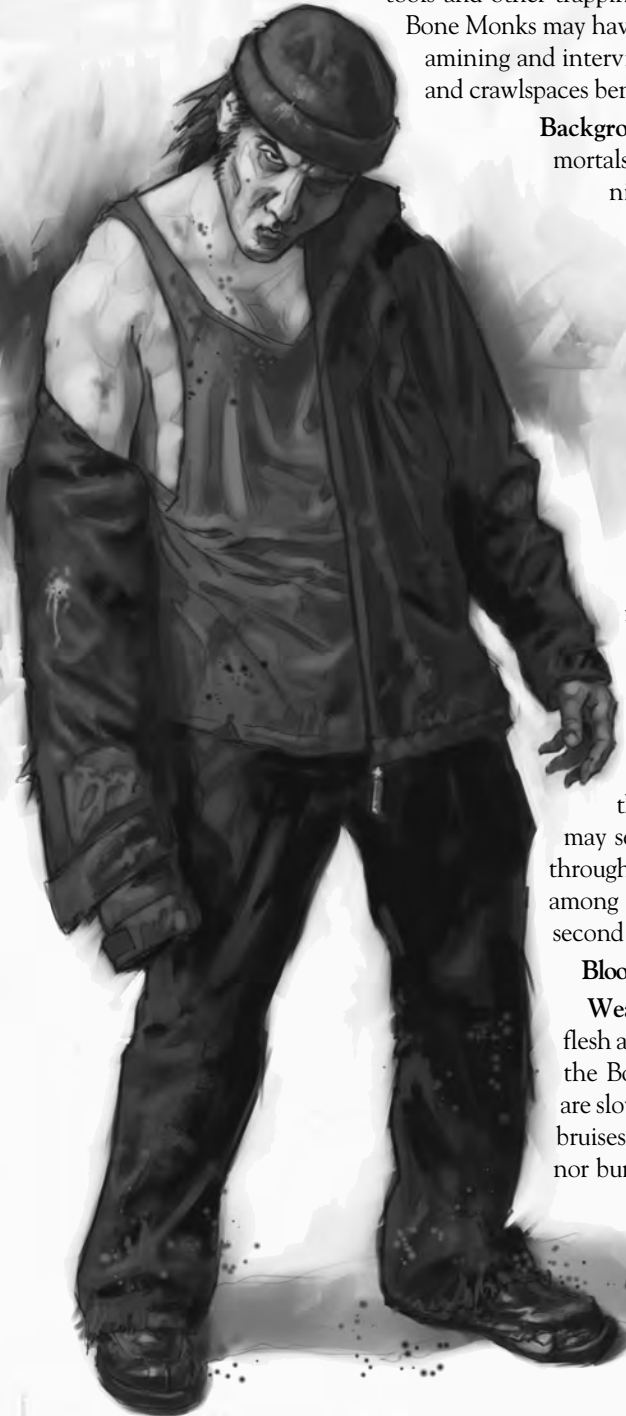
Haven: Most Osites make their havens near cemeteries, mortuaries, or historic catacombs and ossuaries. Osites don't concern themselves with creature comforts, but do collect texts, bones, memento mori images and all manner of funerary artworks, from Mexican sugar skulls to Egyptian scarab pendants. An Osite's haven is likely to be cluttered with photographs seemingly snapped at an autopsy, books on anthropology and medicine, morticians' trade publications, medical examiner's tools and other trappings of the macabre hobbyist. Wealthy or well-connected Bone Monks may have basement rooms with plenty of drainage for storing, examining and interviewing the dead. The poorest Osites sleep in secret nooks and crawlspaces beneath funeral parlors or mausoleums.

Background: It is a rare night when an Osite sires a vampire. Few mortals with a passion for death are willing to avoid it for eternity. Rather, most new Osites are drawn from the ranks of Mekhet Kindred who develop a fascination with death over the course of their own Requiems. Still, not many Osites have an interest in becoming the Avus for another vampire. The Bone Monks have little interest in, and less need to, expand their membership or increase the number of Kindred who can practice the bloodline's unique supernatural arts. The secrets an Osite uncovers are meant to satisfy his own spiritual pursuits and intellectual curiosities, not to grant the Lancea Sanctum some power over the dead.

Character Creation: Osites favor Mental Attributes, almost without exception. Wits is paramount, for an Osite must be perceptive, but Intelligence is also vital if he is to understand what he sees. Mental Skills such as Investigation, Medicine and Occult are essential to an Osite's studies. Physical Skills get overlooked by most Osites, though some dots in Larceny and Stealth can aid a Bone Monk that plans on trespassing in morgues and graveyards. Osites may seek Contacts in funeral homes, cemeteries and hospitals throughout the city, or keep a Retainer to run errands for him among mortals. Remember that a character must have at least a second dot of Blood Potency to even be eligible for the bloodline.

Bloodline Disciplines: Auspex, Celerity, Memento Mori, Obfuscate

Weakness: Osites are touched by death, and it shows in their flesh and Vitae. Beyond the clan weakness of the Mekhet, which the Bone Monks have inherited, the corpses of these Kindred are slow to heal and quick to stagnate. The livid body of an Osite bruises like a corpse, even in undeath, darkening from even minor bumps and scrapes. Blood pools in an Osite's fingertips and feet when he stands upright and in his back when he lays sleeping, turning the flesh a sickly purple-black and making it difficult for the character to stir his languid Vitae.



An Osite who wishes to spend Vitae in the current scene must first use one Vitae to excite and circulate his blood. This first Vitae cannot power any Disciplines or other powers of the blood — it only makes it possible for the character to spend Vitae as usual for the rest of the scene. An Osite also requires two Vitae to wake each night.

An Osite character finds his body is sluggish to respond to the healing powers of Vitae. Unlike normal Kindred, an Osite heals only one point of bashing damage per Vitae spent; two Vitae are needed to heal a single point of lethal damage. Osites heal aggravated damage as other vampires do.

Organization: Modern Osites don't often organize outside whatever social structure is imposed on them by the covenant. The Bone Monks are so few and far between that little or no communication takes place between them anymore. Domains with more than one Osite are very rare. Those with more than two Osites have, in almost every case, been the home of a "chapter" (some say "cult") of Bone Monks for hundreds of

years; such domains are thought to exist only in Europe. The Bone Monks of such a relatively crowded parish have probably been organized by the resident Bishop to serve some purpose for the covenant, perhaps searching catacombs for relics or researching some deathly rite of Theban Sorcery.

Outside of the covenant hierarchy, Osites sometimes work together as mentor-and-student or researcher-and-assistant pairs. Historically, such relationships are intended to repay an Osite Avus for admitting a new Bone Monk into the line. In practice that's certainly the case sometimes, but other Bone Monks work together for a short while (say, 10 or 15 years) to master the supernatural powers of Osite blood or investigate some larger mystery, such as a mass grave, a rash of hauntings or the motives of a serial killer.

Concepts: Cynical EMT, deranged ER doctor, eager mortician, gravedigger, hospice nurse, medical examiner, obituary writer, occult archaeologist.

AZERKATIL

THIS IS THE LAST NIGHT FOR ONE OF US, I PROMISE YOU.

Among certain circles of Kindred — especially among the Ordo Dracul of eastern Europe — the Nosferatu bloodline known as the Azerkatil are infamous and legendary: it is the bloodline bred to destroy Dracula.

According to the *Rites of the Dragon*, when the Impaler returned to Castle Dracula around the year 1475, he found Turkish vampires — which he called *ghuls* — residing there in the darkness. Those Kindred were Invictus from Adrianople, the Ottoman capitol of the Impaler's time. They defeated Dracula in battle that night, but in so doing stirred him to seek out more of their kind in Adrianople.

Between 1475 and 1480 A.D., Dracula tracked, observed and studied the Turkish *ghuls* of Adrianople's bazaars and palaces. Tonight, little is known of what precisely Dracula learned of the Turkish Damned, but it seems clear that, from the end of the 15th century onward, some Kindred of the Ottoman Empire knew about him and, later, the Ordo Dracul. Tales of the vampire-dragon, Embraced by God, circulated throughout the Kindred courts of the Empire. Like dragons themselves, these stories grew longer and more fearsome over the years. They coiled together and slithered into tangled tales of venomous hate and bloody wrath.

To protect the Kindred of the Ottoman Empire and confront the old enemy of the mortal Sultan, a handful of dedicated warriors and assassins gave their Requiem to the service of their undead caliph and succumbed to the mystic experiments of Turkish blood sorcerers. They became the first "Dragonslayers" — *ghuls* dedicated to the pursuit and elimination of the Wallachian demon known as Dracula.

THE COURT OF THE RED SULTAN

In the nights of the 16th century, a powerful society of *ghuls* concerned with protecting Ottoman Kindred from outside threats, from occult menaces and from the hungry jaws of other vampires was operating in Constantinople. Not much remains of that society tonight — not much that is easy to find, at any rate. Modern knowledge of that *ghul* faction exists primarily in the form of confused legends, badly weathered rumors and the hazy memories of the most ancient Azerkatil. In its

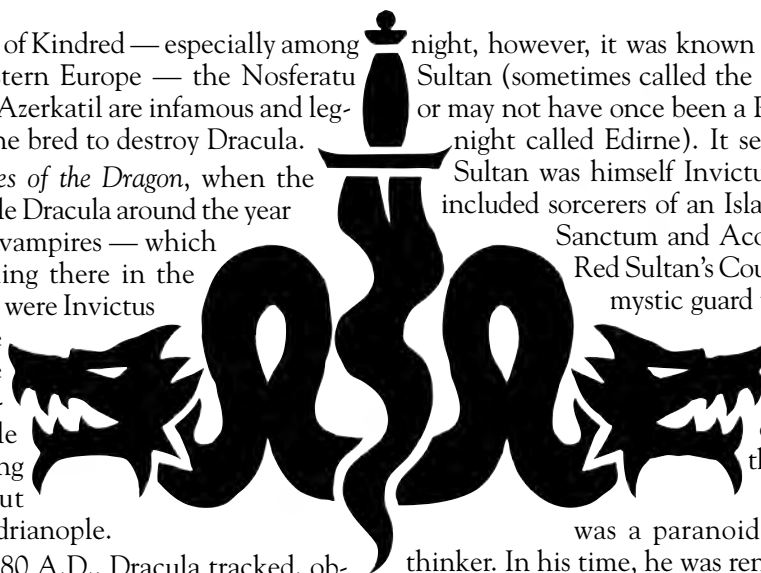
night, however, it was known as the Court of the Red Sultan (sometimes called the Blood Sultan), who may or may not have once been a Prince of Adrianople (tonight called Edirne). It seems likely that the Red Sultan was himself Invictus, but that his followers included sorcerers of an Islamic creed of the Lancea Sanctum and Acolytes of the Crone. The Red Sultan's Court, it seems, was a kind of mystic guard for the Princes of Turkey — they practiced blood rituals and created ghoulish soldiers for the defense of the Damned of the Ottoman Empire.

The Red Sultan himself was a paranoid occultist and brilliant thinker. In his time, he was renowned by his Court as a master of mathematics and science. He may even have been a sorcerer in his own right, and might have been the equivalent of the Bishop of Constantinople into the 17th century. The Sultan vanishes from Kindred lore in the late 1600s, possibly falling into torpor as a result of his presumably considerable age. Without his leadership, his Court seems to have dissolved into smaller, competing coterie of self-serving mystics.

LEGENDS OF THE DRAGON

It's unclear tonight exactly when the Red Sultan first became aware of Dracula the Damned, but is easy to see that the Court had little first-hand contact with the Impaler. Rather, they were reacting to overblown tales of "the damned dragon, the Impaler returned from beyond death." It seems the Court believed Dracula to be a bloodthirsty monster more fearsome than common Kindred. One account written a Turkish Kindred of the 16th century and discovered by the Ordo Dracul in Istanbul in 1924 describes Dracula as "a demon escaped from the Pit to drink the souls of the Damned in death as he did the blood of the living in life... he is as much vampire as devil." They called him, simply, "the Dragon."

Some tales of the time claimed the Dragon could consume blood through his fingers, transform himself into a great serpent and breathe fire. Other stories depicted him as a skinless figure with two mouths that flew screaming through the night. His fingers, it was said, were like knives and his tongue was a venomous snake. His scream was thought to drive mortals and Kindred insane.



The Red Sultan and his sorcerers believed Dracula was creating an undead army in preparation for a bloody return to Turkey and a conquest of the Ottoman Empire. They were terrified that the Impaler, who was mad in life, would be uncontrollable in undeath. They feared that Dracula — who might not be a vampire at all, but the recipient of some other unholy curse — would destroy the secrecy that kept the Kindred safe and plunge the Empire into a supernatural war.

To save the Empire, and all Kindred, they created the Azerkatil.

FATHERS OF THE DRAGONSLAYERS

The Red Sultan, unwilling to wait for the Dragon to come and threaten the Empire, demanded his sorcerers conceive a force of assassins to locate and destroy Dracula. In response, the Court experimented with many changes of the Blood, mystically altering the Vitae of newly Embraced *ghuls* to create a breed of the Damned capable of facing off against the Dragon's considerable powers. It's impossible to know how many Kindred gave themselves up to the Court's experiments and changed their blood at the order of the Sultan's sorcerers.

No Azerkatil knows the whole truth of the bloodline's creation. It's said that Kindred of every clan were subjected to arcane rituals to influence the properties of their blood. As desirable mystic traits emerged, the subjects were consumed — diablerized — by other vampires of the court. In time, the Sultan thought, the right collection of mystic qualities could be absorbed into the Vitae of a single vampire, and that vampire would become the progenitor of a new lineage of deathless assassins. In time, it seems, the Sultan was proved right.

The blood of the Azerkatil contains mystic power drawn from the Vitae of an untold number of clans and short-lived bloodlines populated by lone vampires. The Azerkatil's unique Discipline contains grains of power sifted from the diablerized souls of countless extinct bloodlines. The weakness of its blood comes, in part, from the last of the Court's subjects, from the vampire that first manifested the change of Vitae that pleased the Sultan.

The true founder of the Azerkatil bloodline is lost to history, however. All that is known of that mysterious *ghul* is that he or she was a Nosferatu, as the Red Sultan is believed to have been. Some Dragon historians speculate that the Red Sultan himself was the Kindred who consumed the earlier subjects and became the father of the Dragonslayers.

The secret sect of the first Dragonslayers was made up of mortal mercenaries, soldiers and assassins chosen by the Red Sultan and Embraced into the bloodline by two or three followers of the first Azerkatil Avus. Those first sires were not dispatched to Europe by the Sultan, and all the vampires who once knew the first Azerkatil are

either asleep, destroyed or keeping quiet. The so-called First Dragonslayers are therefore not actually the first of the line at all. Rather, they are the original force of assassins assembled and dispatched by the Sultan in the 16th century.

THE NAME

The name "Azerkatil" is something of a mystery itself. Half of the name seems to be the Turkish word *katil*, meaning "killer" or "murderer," but the other half is unclear. The word *azer* meaning "fire" might be drawn from the Greek spoken throughout portions of western Turkey, but it's just as likely that the name is some abstruse invention of the Red Sultan. Historically, most Azerkatil refer to themselves simply as Dragonslayers in whatever language they like.



THE RED SULTAN

If the Red Sultan vanished in the late 1600s and reappeared tonight, in 2005, it might mean he'd laid torpid for almost 300 years. That suggests a Nosferatu of about Blood Potency 6 and with a Humanity of 2. If he really was the first Azerkatil, he probably has considerable control over the bloodline's unique Discipline, Suikast. If he never became a Dragonslayer himself, perhaps he was a part of some other bloodline, and knew firsthand of the possibilities of willing changes into the Blood. If your chronicle is making use of the **Vampire** sourcebook **Bloodlines: The Hidden**, the Sultan might even be a member of the Rakshasa bloodline detailed in that book.



MISSION AGAINST THE DRAGON

The facts of the Dragonslayers' mission are clouded by dreams of torpor. Every one of the Azerkatil that survived the initial mission against the Dragon had gone into torpor by the 19th century as a result of mystic rituals and efforts of will to increase the potency of their blood. Most of the First Dragonslayers are still thought to be torpid tonight, though the exact number that survived to the modern night is uncertain.

The First Dragonslayers were dispatched from Constantinople to Europe over a period of roughly twenty years in the middle of the 16th century. None of the First Dragonslayers, therefore, knew exactly how many of their brethren had undertaken the mission against the Dragon with them. Six Dragonslayers, it's rumored, set out on the first night, however, bound for Castle Dracula.

The Dragonslayers' mission was not simply to eliminate the Dragon, however. The Red Sultan needed to

know what terrible forces the Dragon was amassing and what other vampires might be conspiring with him. Thus the Azerkatil were meant to scour the land for all information available about Dracula and the rumored "Order of the Dragon." If possible, the Azerkatil were to infiltrate the ranks of the Order and get close to its leaders. "Let the Dragon's pulse dictate your hour to strike," the Red Sultan was rumored to say. "Be patient, but do not hesitate."

It's difficult to track the history of the Azerkatil during those early nights. Some modern Dragonslayers speculate that their forebears worked in small groups in the beginning, ambushing Dracula's early followers and following blood trails back to the Order's first chapter houses. Other Azerkatil enjoy the rumor that the great fire of Bucharest in 1595 was the result of a successful "dragon hunt." At least one Dragonslayer was revealed in 1663 when she eliminated three masters of the Coils in Prague after studying with them for nearly twenty years. Most Dragonslayers, however, did not infiltrate the Order in such ways — most singled out and ambushed victims they hoped would draw out more valuable targets.

CHASING A MYTH

Inevitably, the Dragonslayers discovered the truth about the Ordo Dracul and came to see the hollowness of the Sultan's fears. Some Dragonslayers realized the truth early on and abandoned their mission. Most kept their doubts to themselves and continued to stalk the Ordo Dracul for decades, looking for the true threats behind their philosophizing and mystic experiments.

By the end of the 16th century, however, with the Red Sultan gone and his Court splintering back in Constantinople, the mission against the Dragon had all but unraveled. The Dragonslayers, scattered

throughout Europe and the Mediterranean, drifted away from their directive like boats cut loose from a pier.

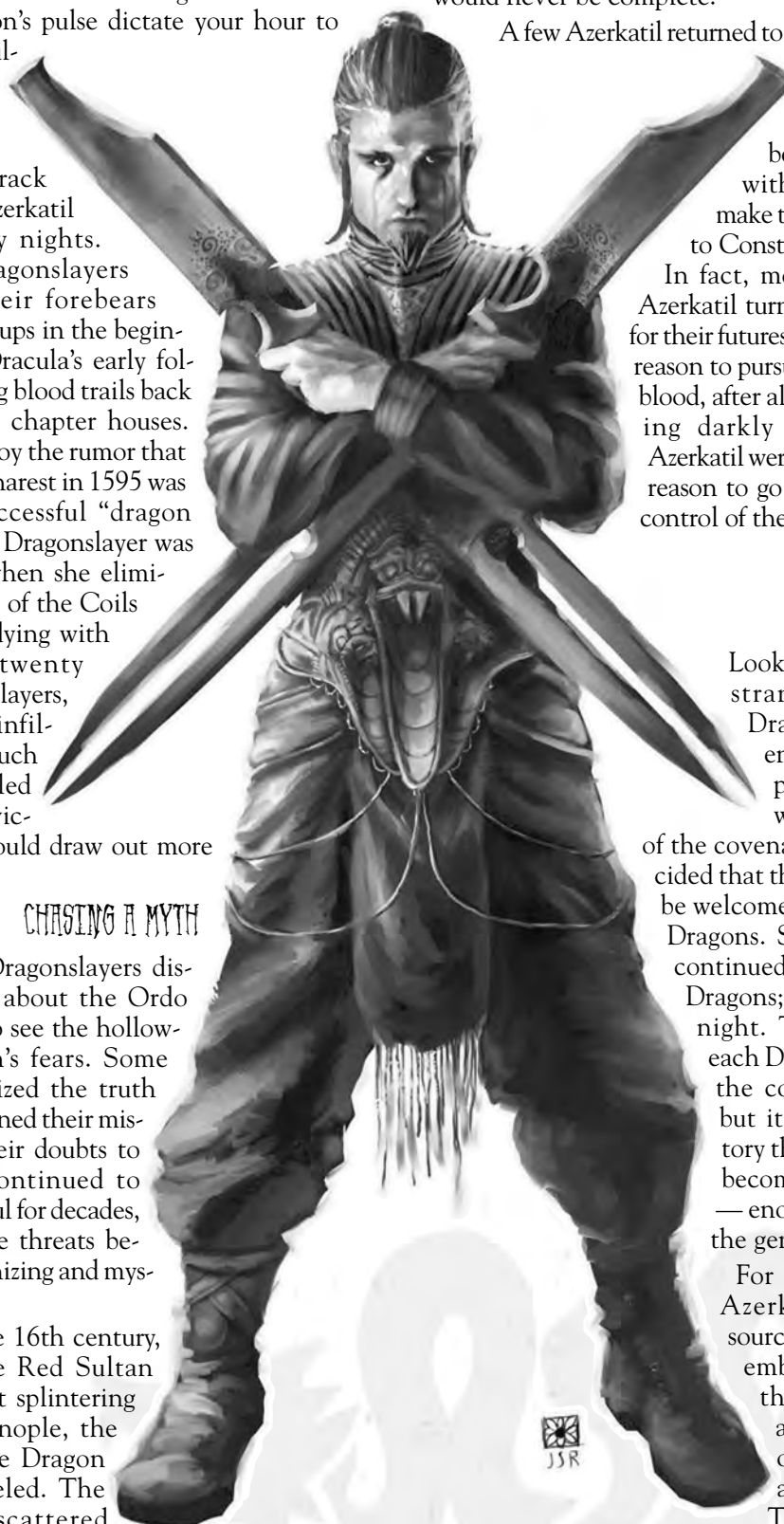
Eventually, most every Azerkatil had to accept the truth: Dracula was no demon. The Dragonslayers had given their Blood in pursuit of a myth. Their mission would never be complete.

A few Azerkatil returned to Turkey in search of vengeance against the paranoid fools of the Court, but most had become too disillusioned with their old masters to make the perilous journey back to Constantinople from Europe. In fact, more than a few of the Azerkatil turned to the Ordo Dracul for their futures. The assassins had good reason to pursue new changes in their blood, after all. With eternity sprawling darkly before them, many Azerkatil were desperate to find a new reason to go on, a new way to take control of their destinies.

DRAGONSLAYERS AND THE ORDO DRACUL

Looking back, it can seem strange that the Ordo Dracul would accept its enemies into its ranks. In practice, of course, there was never any meeting of the covenant in which it was decided that the Dragonslayers would be welcomed into the ranks of the Dragons. Surely a few Azerkatil continued to be enemies of the Dragons; certainly a few are tonight. The circumstances of each Dragonslayer's entry into the covenant were unique, but it is an odd fact of history that more than a few did become Dragons themselves — enough, at least, to inspire the generalization.

For the Ordo Dracul, the Azerkatil are an obvious source of fascination. They embody, by chance, both the central philosophy and the central methods of the Order: change and experimentation. The Azerkatil exist as a



result of Dracula's journey to Adrianople — they are an effect of his Damnation, manifested miles away and years after the change made to his own existence. What's more, their unique blood is the result of mystic experimentation. In a way, the Dragonslayers are model Dragons.

In the centuries since the First Dragonslayers disappeared, the Azerkatil have come close to vanishing altogether. The First Dragonslayers were never intended to sire progeny, and indeed it seems the Red Sultan bred them to be a single generation of assassins, to prevent their prized blood from falling into the service of the Dragon. Still, enough Kindred have taken on the mantle of the Azerkatil to keep the bloodline in existence. The Order itself has facilitated this in some domains, to keep the line from dying out. Thus the Ordo Dracul can be seen to have adopted the Azerkatil, even though several of the world's Dragonslayers continue to distrust and revile Dracula's followers to this night.

Parent Clan: Nosferatu

Nickname: Dragonslayers. Some Slavic Kindred call them Traitors, however, for turning on their Turkish fathers. Some Turkish vampires call them the same.

Covenant: Though the Azerkatil bloodline is most often associated with the Ordo Dracul tonight, Kindred of this lineage cannot truly be said to hold any one loyalty in common. In truth, the Order was little more than the bloodline's portal for passage into Western history. It's through a quirk of fate that Dragonslayers are often thought of as members of the covenant they were created to destroy. It's an oddity of the Dragons' ancestral fascination that the Dragonslayers were accepted into the Order as products of Dracula's time on Earth.

The first Dragonslayers were agents, indirectly, of the Invictus of Turkey. Tonight, Azerkatil are still likely to pledge their Requiems to the service of some undead ruler, though their master is as likely to be Sanctified as Invictus. Indeed, it seems Dragonslayers have an innate hunger for servitude, for a master to protect or an enemy to plot against. In this regard, an Azerkatil might become involved with any covenant by serving one of its leaders or figureheads.

Appearance: The vast majority of Azerkatil come from Near Eastern blood, even tonight. As predators of predators, Dragonslayers project an unnaturally dangerous image to mortals and Kindred alike — they stare like hungry tigers through the bars of a cage. This terrible dread is only exaggerated by the Azerkatils' Nosferatu blood. Like the Nosferatu, no two Dragonslayers are exactly alike, but in this line a few features are common: inhumanly green eyes, widely spaced fangs, and spiny black hair.

Haven: The earliest Dragonslayers were nomads, roaming eastern Europe in search of Dracula and his offspring. In the nights since the first Azerkatil failed in

their hunt, Dragonslayers have taken to nesting like any other Nosferatu. As a group, Azerkatil tend to place very little importance on personal comfort — many are effectively homeless, finding new sunless holes to sleep in every few nights. Instinctually, Azerkatil prefer havens that are remote and difficult to locate over havens that are close to food or even difficult to outright penetrate; a Dragonslayer would rather not be found at all than be well defended.

Background: If a stereotypical image of the Azerkatil exists, it is that of the first few encountered by the Ordo Dracul: adult Turkish men with several days' worth of facial hair, powerful limbs and elaborate outfits befitting a courtly Ottoman assassin. Even tonight, the majority of Azerkatil are thought to be males of Turkish, Greek, Israeli or Syrian descent. Most Azerkatil, from the 16th century to the 21st, come from the ranks of mortal soldiers and mercenaries. Some have formal military training, some have experience as guerilla troops, but few are thugs.

Despite the stereotype, a large number of Azerkatil are (and were) women. Though very few Kindred become Dragonslayers anymore, it's thought that more female vampires than male joined the Azerkatil line in the 20th century. This new generation of Azerkatil reflects the larger role female soldiers are playing throughout the world, and has brought new purpose to the line. They may change the perception of the bloodline from a directionless family of failed assassins to a tradition of devoted and deadly Archons in service of local Princes, like swords of Damocles.

Character Creation: Physical Attributes are vital to a Dragonslayer, who must be able to outclass even the most formidable opponents in hand-to-hand combat if they're unique Discipline is to come into play. Skills such as Weaponry and Brawl are obvious choices. Combative Merits, such as Weaponry Dodge and the Two Weapons Fighting Style suit their purposes, as well. But in the modern night, when experience with bladed weapons is rare, Azerkatil are just as likely to focus on the other iconic abilities of the bloodline: Skills like Stealth and Intimidation. The First Dragonslayers relied on well-crafted ambushes and surprise as much as martial prowess.

Cunning, also, is vital to a Dragonslayer — dots in Wits describe an assassin that is alert and quick. Resolve and Composure give the character the Willpower necessary to face fearsome elders and put the Beast to use.

Many Dragonslayers have little use for high levels of City or Covenant Status, as recognition is seldom in their best interest. An Azerkatil is no less likely to learn a covenant's unique Disciplines, however.

Bloodline Disciplines: Nightmare, Obfuscate, Suikast, Vigor

Weakness: Azerkatil exude a similar disturbing, inhuman presence as the Nosferatu, though the demeanor of the Dragonslayers is almost always one of menace and peril, like a calculating killer. Like other Nosferatu, the 10-again rule does not apply to an Azerkatil's dice pools based on Presence or Manipulation in social situations. Additionally, any 1's that come up on a roll are subtracted from successes. (This latter part of the weakness does not affect dramatic failure rules.) This weakness does not apply to dice pools that involve the Intimidation Skill or the Composure Attribute.

In addition to that inherited weakness, an Azerkatil character is hindered by the cold way he instinctually regards other vampires, like a killer waiting to strike. A Dragonslayer's Humanity dots affect Empathy, Persuasion and Socialize dice pools for interactions with other Kindred just as they affect interactions with mortals (see p. 185 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

Furthermore, the Dragonslayers were never intended to reproduce. Though modern Azerkatil can't be sure how the Red Sultan instilled this weakness into the bloodline, its effects are undeniable. A Dragonslayer must expend *two* dots of Willpower, instead of just one, to Embrace a childe.

Organization: Though many older Dragonslayers quietly wonder how things would have been if they'd slain their Dragon — imagining a proud domain of Azerkatil Sultans and triumphant Regents in the dark mountains of Romania — tonight there is virtually no larger organization of Azerkatil. The majority of modern Dragonslayers dwell in domains with just one or two others of their kind, typically a sire, childer or Avus. Of those, a large number sulk in the shadows of old legends, knowing little more about their Blood than the tales told by Dragon historians.

Azerkatil are typically placed in one of two categories: the First Dragonslayers, and all others. Those first fearless Dragon-hunters are seen by many modern Azerkatil as heroic father-figures, despite their failure to slay the Dragon. If any of them remain tonight, they may lay torpid beneath the earth somewhere, intending to resume the hunt for Dracula when he returns to prowl the land again. They, no doubt, will have little love for the Azerkatil that spawned in their absence, against the intent of the Red Sultan.

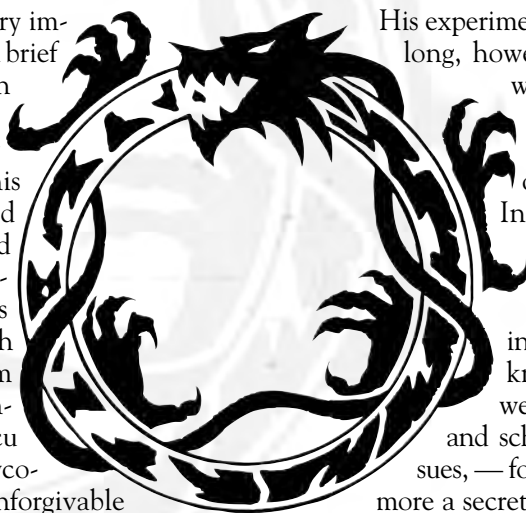
Concepts: Assassin who has outlasted all his foes, assassin-for-hire, bodyguard, deserter from an undead army, Kindred terrorist, martyr-in-training, monster hunter, Ottoman Empire special forces soldier, reformed killer.



Dragolescu

Don't be so judgmental. The sins you speak of were our — pardon me, my — ancestor's.

The Dragolescu bloodline was very important within the Ordo Dracul for a brief time. It emerged as a line of modern nobility, intelligent, forthright and bold. The advances of their founder into the realms of the dead and his ability to communicate with and make use of human ghosts provided the basis for much of what the covenant knows about modern haunts and Wyrms' Nests associated with death. But the bloodline fell from grace in the middle of the 20th century, and now the name Dragolescu has come to be synonymous with sycophancy, name-dropping and the unforgivable sin of self-enslavement to otherworldly spirits.



A Traveler from the East

Ioan Dragolescu, the bloodline's founder, changed his name to John T. Darlington when he arrived in London in 1884. The story of his Embrace is strange. Ioan was a Romanian doctor fleeing his native lands for reasons he has never fully explained (but given that his interest in communing with and enslaving the dead by his own admission before his Embrace, that might have had something to do with it). While on the ship, Ioan met a vampire of Clan Ventrue who had once been a member of the Ordo Dracul, and was, like Ioan, fleeing from retribution. A storm blew the ship off course and the two of them commiserated and found common ground on a number of points, not the least of which was "modern" medicine as applied to theosophical and metaphysical problems.

Ioan's sire, whom he swore never to name, decided that while he himself was a poor fit for the Ordo Dracul, this young physician would be perfect. Since the Ventrue had left his old life behind, he suggested that Ioan undergo the Embrace and begin his unlife in London. Ioan agreed, and rose the following night as one of the Kindred.

With his sire's help, Ioan Dragolescu, now John Darlington, sought out the Dragons of London and easily passed their tests of membership. He particularly excelled in the Coil of Blood, learning all three tiers within a decade. In 1895, Sigmund Freud's work inspired him to rethink the way the Ordo had been approaching their methods of teaching, and Darlington became one of the first Dragons to incorporate psychoanalysis into preparations for chrysalises.

His experiments with these methods didn't last long, however (although his psychological work did receive a number of followers, and the "Darlington Methods" of preparing for learning the Coil of the Soul is still popular tonight). In 1897, the publication of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* threw the covenant and Kindred society in general, particularly in England, into an uproar. John Darlington was known to London's Kindred as a wealthy Ventrue who chose research and scholarly pursuits over covenant issues, — for at the time, the Ordo Dracul was

more a secret society than a covenant. Following publication of Stoker's novel, however, the Ordo Dracul was revealed for what it was and any "unaligned" Kindred came under close scrutiny. Darlington decided that the direct approach was safest, and announced to the vampiric community that he was a Dragon.

The Ordo Dracul's leadership in London had mixed feelings about this admission. On the one hand, Darlington was a respected membership of the undead community and a promising student. On the other, he was cocky and bold, and worse, he was a neonate (if a talented one). Gossip in London seemed to indicate that Darlington was either going to greet a sunrise soon or was going to receive a promotion within the Ordo Dracul. His next announcement clinched the decision.

Blood of My Blood

"Over the last few years, I have carefully researched my own mortal lineage," explained Darlington in letters sent to key members of the Ordo Dracul and the Invictus in London. "As some of you know, I am not born of England, much though I have come to love her in my time here. My native land is that of Stoker's whimsical fable, and indeed, in my living veins ran the blood of Vlad Dracula himself. I am a direct descendant of his line, and I am proud to claim membership in both his family and the covenant that he founded. The name I was born to is Ioan Dragolescu, and that is the name I shall use in Kindred circles henceforth."

Darlington wisely went underground for a short period of time following this announcement, to avoid any hasty action on any other vampire's part. The Ordo Dracul and

the Invictus both researched his claim and found that he was, in fact, correct. The Dragolescu family was descended from a peasant family that Dracula had elevated to noble status in 1457 after fathering a bastard with one of their daughters. The blood claim was weak, but true, and this left the Ordo Dracul wondering again what to do about John Darlington/Ioan Dragolescu.



WHY INVICTUS?

Historians sometimes wonder why Darlington sent his letter to the Invictus as well as his own covenant. The Invictus, after all, was probably the most powerful covenant in London, and could easily have covered up the information in the letter and slain Darlington. The simple answer is that he wanted two opposing factions (the Ordo Dracul and the First Estate) to see his claims — but then why not involve the Lancea Sanctum or the Circle of the Crone?

The answer is that Darlington knew of the Invictus' penchant for placing importance on blood ties. While normally their interest rests largely with vampiric rather than mortal lineage, a claim of kinship with Dracula (who, remember, was much on the minds of Kindred at the time) was a claim the Invictus had to investigate, both as governors and as aristocrats. The remarkable thing about Darlington's decision wasn't that he chose to involve the First Estate, but that he trusted Invictus genealogists to tell the truth about their findings.



The Restless Dead

In 1901, a few nights after Queen Victoria died, Ioan Dragolescu came out of hiding and reentered vampire society. Apart from using his real name among vampires (though he kept his "John Darlington" handle for use when dealing with mortals), very little about him seemed to have changed. Upon returning to London, he immediately gathered a coterie of Kindred familiar with the spirits of the dead and began research into the mysteries of ghosts.

Why the sudden interest in spirits? In actuality, it wasn't sudden. Dragolescu had always found ghosts fascinating, but, like most Kindred, he possessed little facility for dealing with them himself. After the whirlwind of activity surrounding his lineage and the exposure of the Ordo Dracul had died down somewhat, however, he made these spirits his primary focus. During his time in hiding (which he claimed was spent in Ireland), he received a visit from a ghost of a vampire victim. Fascinated by the notion that Kindred the world over had been creating ghosts for time immemorial, he decided that these restless shades might carry information crucial to the transcendence of the undead.

The Kindred he assembled were of various ages and covenants, but all shared some experience and knowledge about ghosts. On the night of their first meeting, Dragolescu put forth his notion that the departed could act as teachers and perhaps servants to the undead, a notion that at least one of the Kindred present (a Daeva belonging to the Lancea Sanctum) found offensive. As she turned to leave, a disembodied hand, glowing a luminous shade of blue, appeared in the air and gestured for her to return to her seat. Unnerved yet inspired by this event, the Kindred took the name "the Blue Hand Coterie" thereafter.

During the years following, the Blue Hand participated in séances and exorcisms as often as it could. It was during this period that Dragolescu put forth his theories of *Essentiaphagia* or "soul eating," which would later evolve into a Discipline of the same name. The Blue Hand investigated hauntings all over the British Isles and sometimes even ventured to mainland Europe, but for the most part remained focused on London. Members left, fell into torpor or met Final Death, of course, but others joined as well, including Dragolescu's first childe, an Irish medium named Bridget Derry. The coterie reached 16 members in December of 1913, and on the winter solstice that year, Ioan Dragolescu once again shocked the Kindred world.

The Blue Hand Massacre

Sixteen Kindred and five mortals entered Dragolescu's home outside of London on the night of December 21, 1913. Included among the Kindred were the two remaining original members of the Blue Hand (one of whom was the Daeva who had triggered the appearance of the hand), Dragolescu himself and Bridget Derry. The other 12 Kindred were mostly neonates, some of the Ordo Dracul and some of other covenants, but all of whom had aided Dragolescu in finding and cataloging ghosts. The mortals were "sensitives" and mediums, and all were there under duress.

Over the course of the night, Dragolescu used methods of torture and execution designed and perfected by his infamous ancestor to murder the five mortals. Two of the five remained as ghosts. Dragolescu then used a heretofore-unseen Discipline to control and draw power from these shades and immobilize the non-Ventrue Kindred present (six of those present were Lords). These Ventrue then committed diablerie upon their prisoners, each one consuming the souls of two of the helpless captives. Dragolescu himself committed the foul crime three times in one night.

Not all of the Ventrue present that night came through intact, of course. Two of them went mad, and were destroyed the following dawn. The others, though, pledged themselves to Dragolescu and became part of his new bloodline. "The dead shall bow before us, nourish us, guide us and provide for us," Dragolescu reportedly said before falling into slumber that morning. "The Coils of the Dragon begin with flesh, progress to blood and end with souls."

Needless to say, there were repercussions.

The Madness of the Dragolescu

Diablerie is a violation of the Traditions and invites retribution from several quarters, but Dragolescu and his conspirators had thought ahead on that point. The Kindred whom they chose to diablerize had no childer and their sires were either dead or hadn't been heard from in decades. Dragolescu knew that he couldn't get away with his crimes forever, but hoped to forestall the consequences until he and his bloodline had the support of the Ordo Dracul. In that he was successful. The more important cost of his action was to his mind and soul.

The Ventrue are no stranger to madness. Dragolescu, by the time of the Blue Hand Massacre, was already suffering from delusions of grandeur and mild paranoia. His triple diablerie made his blood powerful and granted him facility in Disciplines he had previously never known, but it also worsened his already wavering sanity. Following the Massacre, Dragolescu began referring to himself in plural. At first, other Kindred thought this to be a form of royal "we," but it soon became clear that Dragolescu actually believed that he was more than one being. Members of his bloodline adopted this quirk as well, but only after they had achieved some proficiency in Dragolescu's new Discipline.

Worse still, the Dragolescu discovered that their minds were never at rest. Plagued by knowledge of the afterlife and (for those who emerged from the Blue Hand Massacre) by the remnants of the souls they had consumed, they could not take solace from a day of sleep or even a sense of achieving a goal. *Ad infinitum* became the bloodline's watchwords, and no accomplishment, no victory, no discovery would ever satisfy them again. It was this attitude that earned the bloodline the nickname of "the Restless."

The new bloodline's members spent several weeks after the Massacre consolidating their forces and continuing their research. One of them, though records are unclear as to which one, sired a childe during this time as well. The childe fled London in a panic after an "incident" at a haunt, and nothing more is known of her, including whether or not her Dragolescu heritage ever came to the fore.



The Ordo Dracul Accepts the Restless

Dragolescu met with London's Kogaion, and the two of them spent four full nights in conversation. When they emerged, that Kogaion met with members of the Sworn of all three Orders, and after much deliberation (during which Dragolescu and his followers were kept under "house arrest," probably to protect them), decided that Dragolescu's previous and ongoing contributions to the Ordo Dracul were enough to balance the crimes he and his followers had committed. The covenant provided protection to the Restless, in some cases promising the rest of Kindred society that they would handle punishment internally. The First World War, of course, probably acted to distract Kindred in England from the matter of Dragolescu, and some have even postulated that he might have somehow sensed the turmoil to come and chosen the date for the Blue Hand Massacre based upon that sense.

Had Dragolescu made public appearances after that point, he probably wouldn't have survived. By his own admission, though, he was finished with playing the political games of Kindred society, stating that they could never be resolved and their players would learn nothing. He and his bloodline had other concerns.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Dragolescu bloodline made great advances in the Ordo Dracul's understanding of ghosts and haunts. The Restless corresponded with Kogaions and Kindred scholars across Europe and in the United States. Dragolescu stayed in London, but wrote frequent letters to members of his bloodline in his native Romania. Some of those letters survive, and express a deep-seated longing to return:

"We dream again of Romania, of our home and our mortal family. Decades since we died, and yet we are still only ancilla in the eyes of the Kindred. The other Kindred can rest, but they are single beings, one body and one soul. We are many..."



"Is it possible to return? Does anything exist outside of London, outside our adopted country? Does the Thames lead anywhere, do the ships that leave port ever arrive at their destinations?"

"Is Romania, then, our home? Or have we always been here? No, Romania exists and is our home, for we are descended from Him, from Vlad the Impaler. Such ghosts he must have created. Such restlessness there in the land of our birth."

The Beginning of the End

No matter what his feelings about his homeland, Dragolescu did not leave England. In 1933, Dragolescu received a number of guests, most of them members of the Ordo Dracul, at his home in London. It was the first time since the Blue Hand Massacre that he had allowed Kindred other than those of his bloodline into his house, and certainly those present felt a great deal of trepidation. Rumors about a repeat of the Massacre flew, but Dragolescu made his plans very public, assuring the Kindred in power that he had no intention of harming any of his guests.

Whether or not that was true will never be known. Over the course of the night, Dragolescu claims, the voices of the spirits around him grew in volume until he could no longer hear those physically present. He called upon his fellow Restless to enact rituals to rid the area of spirits so that he could think straight, and then explained what he had seen. He claimed that the Dragon was rising, and that as before, he would lay waste to his country and slay a multitude. This time, however, he would use the "breath of the Dragon," rather than his claws. None of the assembled Kindred had any idea what this could mean, including Dragolescu himself. As the decade wore on, however, the meaning became horribly clear.

The Second World War was hard on England's Kindred. With so many of England's mortal sons fighting, the vampires of the Isles had trouble feeding. Many Kindred sank into torpor rather than take the chance of being bombed or starved. Dragolescu, however, was more alert than he had been in ages. He followed Germany's progress doggedly, and actually had to be discouraged from traveling east to visit the country himself. (His bloodline felt that his desire to do so wasn't entirely rational and would end in disaster.) As the war progressed, Dragolescu's dreams became filled with images of poison, starvation and death, and he quietly supposed that Hitler was the rebirth of Dracula and that all other nations would fall before the Reich.

Needless to say, this attitude wasn't popular among the Kindred of England. His own covenant warned him to keep his opinions about Hitler to himself. Expressing support for Hitler was insane enough, but any statement that could link the Nazis with the Ordo Dracul on an ideological level invited reprisals from other covenants and mystic societies, and the Dragons themselves. Dragolescu protested that he was not a Nazi and, in fact, didn't care one way or another about Hitler's racial or political pro-

paganda. He was only concerned with the effect Hitler's actions would have on the ghostly population of the world; for much as Dracula had done in the 15th century, Hitler was on the verge of wiping out a significant percentage of his country's citizens. In the end, however, Dragolescu agreed to keep quiet, stating that "the end will come to pass no matter if we are silenced, and the unquiet spirits will serve us as we strive towards infinity." By then, though, several of the influential Kindred of London, and of England as a whole, knew the name of Ioan Dragolescu, and equated it both with the Ordo Dracul and with the fascism of Nazi Germany.

The Sworn of Mysteries and the Sworn of the Axe noticed this, and began keeping a very close eye on Dragolescu.

The Dragon Falls

In April of 1945, Adolf Hitler committed suicide. A week later, Germany surrendered. Dragolescu, listening as his adopted country celebrated the demise of his hero, lost the few remaining shreds of humanity and sanity that he possessed.

A month later, Dragolescu began a ritual designed to make his undead body the conduit for every ghost murdered during Hitler's regime. He felt that with that much spiritual power at his command, he could give some new purpose to the millions of dead, salvage some new power from the ashes of Europe and, in the process, become what Hitler could not. Whether or not it would have worked is unknown. Kindred of the Ordo Dracul swooped down upon Dragolescu's home as the ritual built in power, razing the building and destroying his notes.

Dragolescu faced a trial by the Sworn of Mysteries. His crime was subjugating himself to the spirits, which carried a penalty of destruction. During the trial it became clear to Dragolescu that he had no way of successfully fighting the charge. He had made his bloodline a scapegoat, and for all he had contributed, the Ordo Dracul would never trust the Dragolescu bloodline again. Dragolescu issued a prediction to the court on August 7, 1945. He stated that a member of his bloodline would one night arise to complete the ritual he had begun, and become the unliving embodiment of all of world's unquiet dead. That day, awaiting sentencing, Dragolescu somehow immolated himself, possibly with the help of one or more ghosts.

The Dragolescu Tonight

The Dragolescu bloodline, however, was too valuable to the Ordo Dracul to exterminate. Their facility with ghosts and haunts makes them superb "bloodhounds," and members of the bloodline tend to be sent to cities with large numbers of reported hauntings. The stigma of their founder's madness and devotion to Hitler's Germany has stuck with the bloodline, however. While Kindred outside of the

Ordo Dracul have rarely even heard of the Dragolescu, those inside the covenant call them “Pretenders,” and usually claim that their Essentiaphagia Discipline is nothing more than a specialized form of Auspex that allows communication with ghosts. This misconception suits the Dragolescu just fine, as they are still trying to live down their founder’s actions.

The Dragolescu are ambitious and driven, but, like Ioan himself, most of them are overly focused on the spiritual and ignore temporal realities as much as possible. As such, the Ordo Dracul finds them useful when dealing with spirits, but almost never includes them in diplomatic coteries. Modern Dragolescu sometimes feel cheated by Ioan’s actions, and many search for a way to redeem their line in the eyes of their covenant. Despite all that has happened, the Dragolescu are extremely loyal to the Dragons, and still take extreme pride in their founder’s relationship to Dracula.

Parent Clan: Ventrue

Nickname: Formerly the Restless, now Pretenders

Covenant: Despite their travails, the Dragolescu are for the most part still loyal the Ordo Dracul. What few remain usually become spiritual bloodhounds for the covenant, seeking out haunts and ghosts — under strict supervision, of course. Occasionally, a Ventrue from another covenant, usually the Circle of the Crone, joins the bloodline. The Invictus of some domains welcomes members of this bloodline, if they can verify their lineage back to Ioan Dragolescu. Why the First Estate is willing to accept the Pretenders is unknown.

Appearance: The Dragolescu are born of nobility, and, being a Ventrue bloodline, many of them are acquainted with high society. Their attire tends to be slightly dressier than appropriate for most occasions, and is often somewhat outdated, in favor of fashions from the 1940s and 1950s. Since Dragolescu are so often in motion, they tend to favor clothing that holds up to travel and activity well — something they can wear while kneeling in soot.

Very few non-Caucasian Pretenders exist, but this is more a result of the bloodline’s European location of origin than of any racial preference. Non-Caucasian Dragolescu are still likely to be English or otherwise European.

Haven: Unlike some Ventrue, the Dragolescu don’t tend toward lavish havens. Spacious, yes, especially if the Pretender in question is in the habit of creating ghosts rather than simply using them. But since the Dragolescu don’t rest easily, they don’t spend much time actually in their havens (again, unless engaged in research). A Pretender’s haven is likely to be sparsely furnished but overflowing with books, notes and spiritualism paraphernalia, and might either be meticulously ordered or so cluttered that only the owner could possibly make sense of it.

Background: The Dragolescu Embrace almost exclusively from the ranks of mortals who have some affinity for sensing, communicating with or even controlling ghosts. The Essentiaphagia Discipline is much easier to master if the practitioner instinctively understands some of the truths about spirits, after all. The Pretenders aren’t as particular as their parent clan about Embracing from high society, but they do prefer people educated in classics, literature, folklore, history and the occult, which aren’t exactly blue-collar pursuits.

Ventrue outside of the bloodline may join, but the Ordo Dracul regulates this very carefully. Only those Ventrue who are judged to be strong enough to handle the restlessness and mental rigor of the bloodline are allowed to become Dragolescu. Ventrue who do often take “Darlington” as a middle name as a nod of respect to their new family.

Character Creation: Mental Attributes are usually primary, but Physical or Social might be secondary, depending on the approach of a given Pretender. Skills depend on the background of the Kindred in question, but every Dragolescu has some rating in Academics, Investigation and Occult (thus Mental Skills are usually primary). Mental Merits are appropriate, though Social Merits tend to dry up quickly, given the bloodline’s reputation in the Ordo Dracul. Remember that a second dot of Blood Potency is necessary to be a member of any bloodline.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Dominate, Essentiaphagia, Resilience

Weakness: Dragolescu suffer the Ventrue clan weakness (-2 penalty to Humanity rolls to avoid acquiring derangements after failing a degeneration roll). In addition, the Dragolescu know that the soul is eternal. Far from giving them hope, however, this knowledge wears on them, grinding their souls down as they face the prospect of eternity without rest or succor. Dragolescu characters cannot regain Willpower in any other way than by fulfilling their Virtue or Vice. They do not regain Willpower through rest, accomplishing goals or even at the end of a story.

Organization: The seat of Dragolescu power, such as it is, still rests in London. Despite the fact that the bloodline founder was Romanian by birth, the bloodline thinks of itself as undeniably English. Beyond that, a city with a Dragolescu presence typically also has a greater-than-average number of haunts. The Ordo Dracul keeps very close track of the Pretenders, however, never sure if or when Ioan Dragolescu’s last prediction will come to pass.

Concepts: Blue Hand apologist, detective, disgraced Ventrue scion, genealogist, ghost hunter, ghost wrangler, haunt architect, horror writer, medium, prophet, student to the Kogaion.

LIBITINARIUS

"NOW SLEEP THE SLEEP OF KINGS, MY LORD, AND BE REBORN."

The Libitinarius bloodline began as a mortal cult hidden behind the scenes of University College in the 1880s. It is a manifestation of Europe's renewed scholarly interest in classical art and culture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The so-called Morticians have successfully resurrected ancient mortuary rituals and funerary magic through the mystic properties of the Blood. Tonight, Libitinarius Kindred are the undertakers and funeral priests of the Damned, preparing the corpses and spirits of vampires for the long deathlike sleep of torpor.

In 1884, a wealthy and idle Englishman named Ivor Gardner began funding the harmless ritual ceremonies of a few overenthusiastic classics professors of University College in London. Originally, the ceremonies were little more than a colorful way of paying respects to the ancient peoples the professors were studying every day. Due to their interest in religion in the Ptolemaic era, the professors centered many of their rituals on Serapis, a composite god combining elements of Osiris, the Apis bull of Memphis and various other Hellenistic deities. The ceremonies were secret only because the professors were embarrassed to be spending their time singing in Latin and reciting Egyptian "spells."

With the addition of Gardner's interest and money, however, the monthly ceremonies became more and more elaborate. Before long, Gardner was bringing other visitors and guests with him and the ceremonies had become something more akin to costume parties. The ceremonies were kept secret if only because exclusivity is attractive.

In October of 1885, however, Ivor Gardner died at just 44 years of age. In his will, Gardner indicated his desire to be buried by his professorial friends in a suitable ancient ceremony. In exchange, he left a considerable fortune to the "secret society of Serapis." In honor of Gardner, the professors buried him according to the funeral customs of the Roman goddess of corpses, death and funerals — Libitina. Somehow, between the richly funded grandeur of the ceremony and the real pathos of

the participants, the motives of the attendees changed. By 1886, the ceremonial club that had jokingly called itself the "society of Serapis" had become a cult of Libitina.

In 1888, the cult drew the attention of a corpse. One of the original ceremonialist professors, Dr. Henry Weeks, was a ghoul in service to a vampire of the Ordo Dracul. Weeks provided his master with access to the university's library and facilities, and Weeks' master provided him with Vitae and tales from ancient Kindred. After learning of the cult, Weeks' master slowly insinuated himself into the cult as a figurehead and idol... and revealing himself as a vampire to the cultists.

Pairing the resources of the mortal professors and the Ordo Dracul, the cult became a formidable collection of minds and texts. The cult and the Dragons, through Weeks, cultivated knowledge of Ptolemaic religious practices and spells of the ancient world. Due to the unnatural needs of the Dragons and the funerary expertise of the cultists, the focus of the group's occult studies remained on Greek and Roman interpretations of Egyptian mortuary magic. The beginnings of the Mortualia Discipline were coming together in those nights, and Weeks and his master knew it.

By 1891, Kindred of other covenants were also interacting with London's cult of Libitina. Not long after, the question of the Embrace was brought up again and again among the living and the undead of the cult. In 1892, Weeks was Embraced by his master for the purposes of taking over as the "risen mouthpiece for the dead" within the cult. Shortly thereafter, Weeks oversaw the performance of an ancient Greco-Roman funeral ritual held for the benefit of his aged sire. Using artifacts and incantations gathered over the past few years, the cult of Libitina prepared the body of Weeks' sire for its long sleep — for torpor. The climax of the ceremony was the casting of an Egyptian funeral spell and the accidental destruction of the ancient urn on which it was inscribed.

Something went wrong. Weeks and the other Dragons couldn't explain precisely what might have happened, but the broken relic and the spoken spell *did*



produce a magical effect of some kind. The magic of the spell was infused into the blood of Weeks — the only non-torpid vampire at the ceremony — and transformed his love for his sleeping sire, his tangible Damnation and his intangible hope for the future into an potent new mixture of the Blood, which Weeks held onto with all his will — he refused to let the power of the spell in his blood “separate” or thin. Within a year of his Embrace, Weeks had become the founder of a new bloodline. It was a remarkable achievement for a young vampire, and suggested that Weeks had an intuitive understanding of the Blood and an incredible understanding of the mortuary magic he had studied for so many years.

Weeks named his bloodline “Libitinarium,” after the Libitina-worshipping morticians of the classical world. By 1911, he’d gathered a small circle of fellow Morticians around him, drawn from the ranks of both the Order and the university. Weeks completed his exploration of the Mortualia Discipline in 1901 and began to guide his fellow Morticians in its use soon after.

Tonight, Weeks continues to practice the art of Mortualia at the behest Princes and Regents throughout England and Europe.

CULT OF LIBITINA

Such is the story shared by the Libitinarium, at least. More than a few of Weeks’ fellow Dragons suspect it’s fiction, invented by Weeks and his absent master for the purpose of getting the artifacts and texts they wanted altogether in one place. An investigation performed by a London Dragon in 1954 turned up suspiciously little evidence of any professor named Weeks working at University College during the time of Weeks’ tale. In 1978, an Acolyte occultist and historian in Rome found evidence of Kindred “torpor burials” from the 11th century that make use of many trappings of the Libitinarium line — Roman-styled canopic jars for storing Vitae, etched incantations and “waking charms” with many similarities to those used in modern Mortualia.

How is it possible that Weeks became the sire of a bloodline so soon after his Embrace? How is it possible that he gained mastery over the powers of his Blood so quickly? Was it really the result of an “ancient incantation?” Some of the scientific minds within the Order remain skeptical. Occam’s Razor suggests a simpler alternative story is more likely: Weeks is a liar.

Except for a core group of loyal followers, Weeks’ tale was witnessed only by mortals (now dead) and the torpid body of his mysterious master (who has not yet awakened). No impartial participants remain to corroborate the account tonight. How much of it is misremembered nostalgia? How much of it is outright fiction? How much of it is true?

BURIED

It is more likely, say the skeptics, that the Libitinarium bloodline is old — even ancient — and that Weeks and his absent master (if he truly exists) were among the last of their kind. Perhaps Weeks was already a member of the bloodline when he came upon the Society of Serapis. Perhaps Weeks even orchestrated the very formation of the society and the subsequent cult of Libitina to create a flock of followers and win the bloodline some temporal power.

Kindred scholars of various covenants have speculated that the mystic aspects of the Blood may lay dormant in childer for generations, as the echoes of power from a distant sire. Though the childer may not activate the power of the Blood within themselves, it may yet be passed on to grandchilder. Thus, even centuries after a bloodline dies out, it might be resurrected when a distant descendant transforms his Vitae and his Requiem into a sanguine mixture like that of his ancestors’. Perhaps it’s possible that Weeks’ story was essentially true when it first happened centuries (or even millennia) ago in Rome or Alexandria.



THE IMAGINARY VAMPIRE

The grimmest and most dramatic of the Libitinarium conspiracy theories suggests that Weeks’ sire is a figment of his imagination, given some semblance of existence in the minds of his followers through the powers of Dominate. Some of Weeks’ tales suggest his sire was so ancient, and had so many names, that his “real name” had become meaningless. Practitioners of Dominate could see that as a way to cover for the inconsistencies of altered memories. Scholars of Egyptian theology and the occult could speculate that a being without a “true name” does not truly exist.



On the other hand, perhaps Weeks needed to create a cover story to protect himself, his sire or the bloodline itself. What if the true origin of the Libitinarium bloodline was rooted in some dark crime, such as diablerie? Perhaps the first Libitinarium was altered by the blood of a mage or other supernatural creature? Perhaps the secrets of Mortualia were dug up from some vampiric tomb that Weeks wants to keep to himself?

Whatever the truth, the Order has not yet had sufficient reason to challenge Weeks’ story. For a century, Weeks has been a loyal, if shy, member of the covenant and an aid to its allies. Though some among the Sworn continue to keep watch on the Morticians, their scrutiny has been applied with exquisite patience for 50 years and isn’t likely to change until some new

facts are unearthed. One night, if the tale is true, Week's sire will awaken...

Parent Clan: Mekhet

Nickname: Morticians

Covenant: The first Libitinarius Kindred were members of the Ordo Dracul even before Dr. Weeks founded the bloodline in 1892. When Ivor Gardner's Serapis cult expanded beyond the Masquerade, it drew the attention of numerous Acolytes. Those Acolytes then brought the Blood of Libitina to the Circle of the Crone. Tonight, the Libitinarius bloodline continues to be made up almost solely of Acolytes and Dragons. Invictus and Carthian vampires may deal with Morticians in any domain where they can be found, depending more on the interests of the individual Kindred and less on politics. Sanctified Kindred of some domains focus on the shared Greco-Egyptian influences on Theban Sorcery and Mortualia and even participate in Libitinarius ceremonies as secular performances. In other domains, the Sanctified regard Morticians as admirably learned providers of a service that has been sadly and needlessly draped in the trappings of pagan idolatry.

Appearance: Libitinarius Kindred come from all races and both genders. As academics, many favor a classical, professorial style. As ageless undead historians, many also find ways to incorporate archaic or classical art styles in their dress. Scarab brooches, old-fashioned beards or mustaches and ornate rings or necklaces are common among older Libitiniarii. Younger Morticians may sport Latin or Egyptian tattoos, elaborate body piercings and other physical decorations from their mortal lives as archaeology students. Some Libitiniarii display downright archaic fashions even outside of their Mortualia ceremonies, such as faux-Egyptian eye make-up and Roman-style dresses.

Haven: Many Morticians keep havens that suggest nothing of their unique blood — they nest very much as any other Kindred might. The

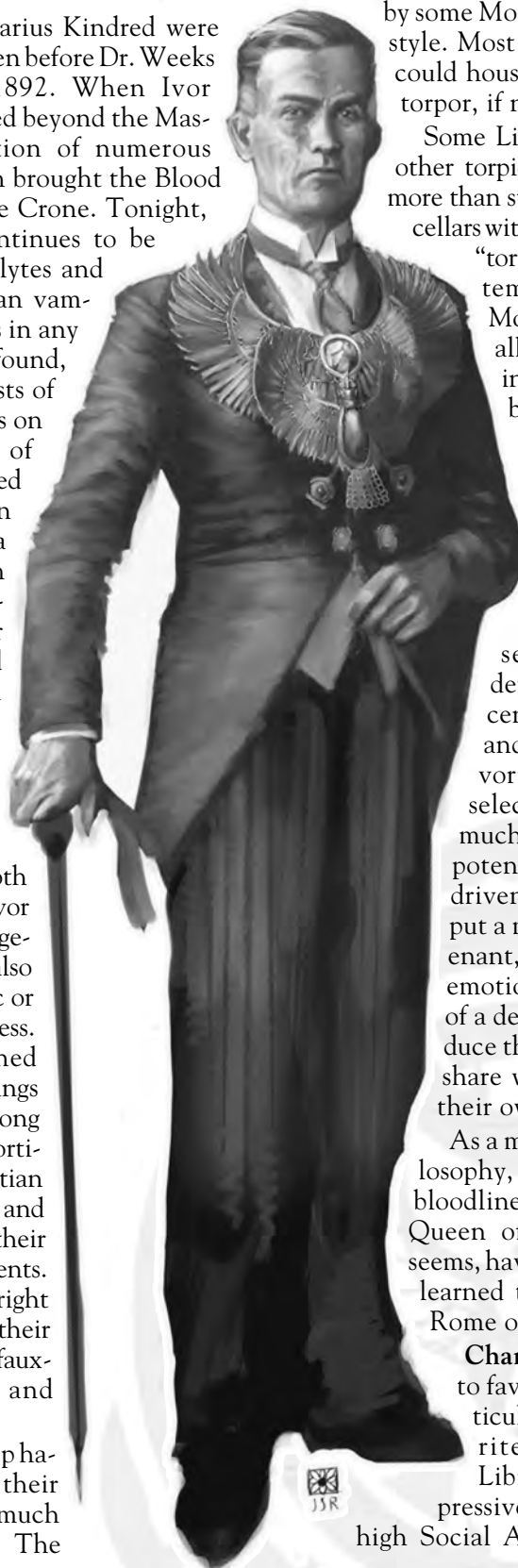
ideal haven for a Libitinarius, however, is as secret and secure as a Theban tomb. Underground chambers protected by secret doors and modern security systems are ideal. Solid stone or metal sarcophagi are used by some Morticians, for protection as much as style. Most Morticians seek out havens that could house them safely through decades of torpor, if necessary.

Some Libitiniarii also maintain havens for other torpid vampires. Often these are little more than storage containers, mausoleums and cellars with solid locks and sturdy doors. These “torpor tombs” may see any number of temporary residents throughout a Mortician's Requiem. The favors and allies a Libitinarius gains by protecting and maintaining such havens can be considerable.

Background: Libitiniarii select progeny almost exclusively from the ranks of academia. Simple scholarly types are seldom impressive enough to warrant a Mortician's Embrace, however — only leaders in their fields deserve to experience the development of their studies over centuries. Historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists are typical favorites. The Morticians are, after all, selecting students and colleagues as much as childer when they consider potential progeny. Most Morticians are driven to sire childer out of a desire to put a mortal's talents to use for the covenant, the bloodline or themselves. More emotional Libitiniarii select progeny out of a desire to show them eternity, introduce them to ancient Kindred and freely share what they know of the past from their own experience.

As a matter of practice, rather than philosophy, a large segment of the Libitinarius bloodline is made up of subjects to the Queen of England. Most Morticians, it seems, have an English accent, whether they learned the language in Calcutta, Cairo, Rome or London.

Character Creation: Libitiniarii tend to favor higher Mental Attributes, particularly Intelligence and Resolve. The rites and ceremonies of the Libitinarius bloodline are most impressively performed by characters with high Social Attributes, however. Because the



Mortualia Discipline requires the creation of certain tools and charms, the Crafts Skill is also invaluable to a Mortician.

A Libitinarius who tends to the torpor-haven of another vampire (or, indeed, any Mortician who discusses Mortualia with outsiders) would benefit from dots in Subterfuge if he values the secrets he keeps. The Academics and Occult Skills are also plainly useful to a Libitinarius; most Morticians were the sorts of humans who studied those Skills in life.

A Mortician with City or Covenant Status might have a reputation as the go-to guy for Kindred concerned with torpor. The Haven Merit is vital to many Morticians, as well. Haven Security almost always takes priority over Size and Location.

Bloodline Disciplines: Auspex, Dominate, Mortualia, Resilience

Weakness: Like all Mekhet, Libitinarii suffer the pains of fire and sunlight more severely than other Kindred. A Libitinarius suffers one additional point of aggravated damage from any source of fire or sunlight (see p. 172 of *Vampire: The Requiem*). Furthermore, Morticians find it more difficult to resist the dark sleep of the Damned than other Kindred. Libitinarius Kindred suffer a -2 penalty on all Humanity rolls to awaken or act during the daytime. This penalty also affects the character's Humanity dots for purposes of determining maximum dice pool sizes when awake. (See p. 184 of *Vampire: The Requiem* for information on daytime activity.)

The most dreadful weakness of the Libitinarius bloodline, however, is a secret kept even from many of its

members: in the 1930s, Dragon Morticians in the American Midwest discovered that the change Dr. Weeks made to the Blood was not as dramatic as it first seemed. The mystic power of the Mortualia Discipline is not so far beyond the reach of ordinary Kindred that it can be considered truly unique. In practice, any Mekhet vampire can learn Mortualia as an out-of-clan Discipline provided a Libitinarius is willing to teach him. If this secret were to be revealed, the Libitinarii bloodline would wither and die as Kindred ceased to commit their eternal Blood to the lineage to keep its unique power in practice.

Organization: Libitinarius vampires naturally fall into informal hierarchies based on education and experience with Mortualia. In general, these Kindred interact something like a university professors. Age and experience is respected, and often deferred to, by younger Morticians, but colleagues of similar ages place a greater practical importance on skill than age. An ancient, experienced Libitinarius is more likely to be loved but a brilliant and clever Libitinarius is more likely to be followed.

Because Morticians love to talk, debate and lecture, they also tend to swell their ranks in domains where they reside. Thus, in many domains, Libitinarii are seen as a social group rather than a lineage. Certainly, some domains are home to a lone Libitinarius, but eventually most seek out contact with other history buffs, antiquarians or armchair archaeologists to satisfy their minds.

Concepts: Disturbed surgeon, Egyptologist, funeral home director, hospice nurse, occult archaeologist, pagan priest, Roman religion revivalist, taxidermist, undertaker.

Moroi

You didn't say you needed him alive

The Moroi bloodline is one of the great mysteries of the Ordo Dracul. The legends surrounding the bloodline's formation are strange enough, but the (admittedly murky) history of its association with the covenant states that Dracula himself recruited them, binding the Moroi forever to the Dragons. The bloodline is rare, especially outside of Europe, and most Dragons who have heard of the Moroi know them as fearsome combatants. "When the Moroi arrive, seek shelters of stone," goes a maxim common among Kogaions. But perhaps the strangest and most persistent rumor about the Moroi is that the bloodline is descended from not one, but two clans. Both Nosferatu and Gangrel, supposedly, can become Moroi.

In Romanian legend, a *moroi* is a vampire rising from the body of a stillborn infant. Elders of the Moroi do not recall if the Romanians took their name to describe their legend, or if the bloodline took the name of the legend as its own. A story handed down from sire to childe within the bloodline, however, draws a connection.

The legend states that a female vampire, mad with grief for the life she had lost, Embraced her infant child. When she beheld the abomination that she had created, she left it in a graveyard and fled west, to meet her end as the sun rose over the mountains. The child, by sheer luck, rolled into an open grave and was there shielded from the same fate. That night, two Kindred, one Gangrel and one Nosferatu, heard the child's cries. They retrieved the infant monster from the grave, and discussed what to do with it. Letting it live would be cruel, they agreed, since even if it could develop the mind of an adult, its body would never age. They decided to destroy it, but instead of simply burning it or leaving it for the sun, they instead chose to commit diablerie on the infant.

Two Kindred committing diablerie on the same target is impossible, of course, but the legend states that this is precisely what these two vampires did. The infant, condemned to undeath with a soul unblemished by sin, gave power to both of them. For that monumental act of cruelty, however, God cursed them both

at that moment. They would henceforth be hunters and killers and nothing more, set apart by mortals by deformity and driven to kill by the howls of the Beast. Those Kindred became the first Moroi, neither Nosferatu nor Gangrel but a hideous amalgam of both.

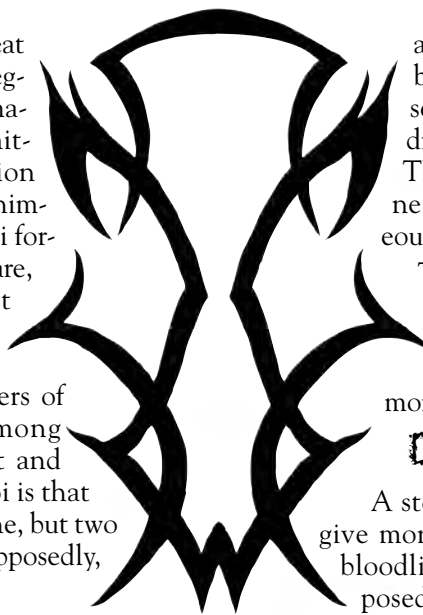
This story, of course, is unverifiable and modern Dragons consider it little more than superstition. They do agree on one point, however: the Moroi are monsters and killers first and last.

Dracula and the Moroi

A story that the Ordo Dracul is willing to give more credence is that of how the Moroi bloodline came to join the covenant. Supposedly, in the years following his transition to undeath, Vlad Tepes wandered the world, looking for information about his kind. He came into conflict with vampires of several covenants and (presumably) all clans, but early in these wanderings, he chanced through a village surrounded by a dense forest. He saw that the villagers lived in fear, and were much more superstitious than even normal Wallachian peasants. In particular, there were no cats anywhere in the village, and the villagers killed the animals if they found them. Domesticated animals were blinded when they reached maturity, and the villagers crossed themselves whenever birds flew overhead. Dracula discovered that they believed that all animals were servants of the *moroi*, and only by blinding their livestock could they prevent these monsters from possessing the animals or turning them against their masters.

At the same time, the villagers only cut wood during the day, and refused to leave their homes after dark. They would not open their doors to anyone once the sun had set, for fear of a *moroi* in the form of a trusted neighbor or friend. Intrigued, Dracula ventured into the woods to find these "*moroi*." He was not long in looking.

The vampires he found were ugly and bestial, and yet possessed qualities Dracula valued — brutality, hunger and even a strange sort of loyalty. He shared his knowledge with these Kindred, and they spoke for weeks on topics of rulership, superstition, hunting mortals and the



society of vampires (of which the Moroi knew little more than Dracula). Finally, Dracula took his leave, but before he did, those few Moroi promised that if Dracula needed soldiers, they would come.

This story is apocryphal at best, and does not address the fact that Dracula never mentions the Moroi once in the *Rites of the Dragon*. Indeed, the Moroi were not seen or heard from again (as a bloodline of Kindred, at least — their legend persisted among mortals) before Dracula vanished, and his covenant took organized form.

When they reappeared, however, their loyalty was unquestionable.

The Spider Killings

From the time of Dracula's disappearance in the 16th century to the first decades of the 19th, the Ordo Dracul might have foundered and vanished at any time. The reasons for this instability are discussed in Chapter One. The fact that the Ordo Dracul survived at all, much less gained the power that it did in the 1800s and remains tonight, amazes many Kindred historians.

Very few Kindred historians know of the Moroi, of course.

The Moroi could do little about the lack of focus and infighting that plagued the Ordo Dracul. Those problems would have to work themselves out over time. What the Hunters could do, however, was mitigate the persecution of the Dragons by other Kindred sects. In cities where the Ordo Dracul needed a foothold but the established Kindred were both powerful and intolerant, the Moroi would creep in, slay a few key individuals and leave. They never declared themselves and never spoke a word of their loyalty to the Ordo Dracul or of their origins in Dracula's homeland. Further, they never (or rarely) committed diablerie upon their targets, knowing that this unforgivable crime would invite more dogged repercussions. In most cases, the Dragons did not even know about their mysterious benefactors, and arrogantly considered the fact that many of their most stringent opponents met Final Death to be a sort of divine providence.

The fact that no one connected these deaths to the Ordo Dracul didn't stop perceptive Kindred from connecting them to each other, of course. The killings happened according to a pattern, but lack of easy communication and the nature of what that pattern meant slowed Kindred investigators considerably.

The Moroi would first kill off a target's herd, servants and any other important mortals, including surviving family. This happened in the space of one or two nights, three at most. The Moroi rarely struck singly. Instead, an entire coterie of Hunters would hunt down the appropriate mortals and slay them. Rather than trying to cloak their killings as accidents or even mundane murders, the Moroi would simply drain these people of blood,

leaving them as desiccated husks. When this was complete, the Moroi watched their vampire targets, waiting for them to flee, go to ground, enter torpor or otherwise protect themselves. At that point, the Moroi struck, attacking their foe with as much force as they could bring to bear. The battle was typically over in moments.

While the Moroi never gained the infamy of VII (because they did not mark their crimes and were never as widespread), their tactics did gain some attention. These killings came to be known as the work of "the Spiders," after the desiccated husks left behind, and having a vampire fall to these mysterious assassins was said to be an omen of bad luck for the Kindred of a city.

To this night, no one (except the Ordo Dracul itself) has connected the "Spider killings" to the Ordo Dracul. This is indeed fortunate for the Dragons, as doubtless some Kindred must survive who lost sires, childer or allies to the Hunters, and would surely want revenge.

The 19th Century

Very little is known of the bloodline's activities from roughly 1820 to 1900. The Spider Killings ceased as the Ordo Dracul experienced its boom in membership (see Chapter One for more details), and the word *moroi* existed only on the lips of those knowledgeable in Romanian folklore.

Modern Moroi haven't provided a reason for this absence, but the Dragons assume that the bloodline, knowing that the Ordo Dracul was now capable of standing on its own, decided that their methods would do more harm than good. This is true, but there is more to the story than that. The Moroi also saw that the world was growing smaller, and as they learned more of Kindred society, their views of that society and their own origins were challenged. Was it *possible* for two clans to form one bloodline? Could their own legends about Dracula be trusted? Were they merely an experiment performed in the early nights of the Ordo Dracul, "programmed," in a sense, to defend the covenant? Where was Dracula, now that the Moroi had risked all to defend his followers?

The Ordo Dracul was blissfully unaware of the turmoil in their vicious guardian bloodline. In the meantime, the bloodline retreated to rural villages, leaving behind the cities and dense population centers (and thus other vampires). Moroi who survive from that period, of course, have only hazy recollections, but all report feeling lost or useless, as though their reason for existing had been fulfilled. Indeed, an investigative coterie in France recently reported finding a disused haven, probably (judging from the bones lying about and the legendry of the local area), belonging at one point to a Moroi. A pile of ash and some charcoal smears on the floor provide the only clue as to the former occupant's fate, but more interesting was an

inscription on the wall, written in Latin. It said simply, “Nothing left to kill.”

The bloodline might well have died out completely before the modern age, having silently and ferociously shepherded the covenant through its own dark age. But the Moroi are creatures of blood and violence, and the first half of the 20th century would bring both to levels that Dracula himself could scarcely have imagined.

The Dragons’ Fangs

World War I coaxed the Moroi in Europe out of hiding. The carnage and confusion in France provided opportunities for feeding such as the bloodline had never seen, and, even farther east, the new weapons being unveiled intrigued the Moroi. The Ordo Dracul, and Kindred society in general, reeled from the slaughter of so many of their vessels, but, in the midst of that carnage, the Moroi presented themselves to the most powerful of the Sworn and the eldest Kogaions they could find. They made no offers, but simply stated that they had once served the covenant at the behest of Dracula himself, and would hold to that bargain now, if the Dragons desired.

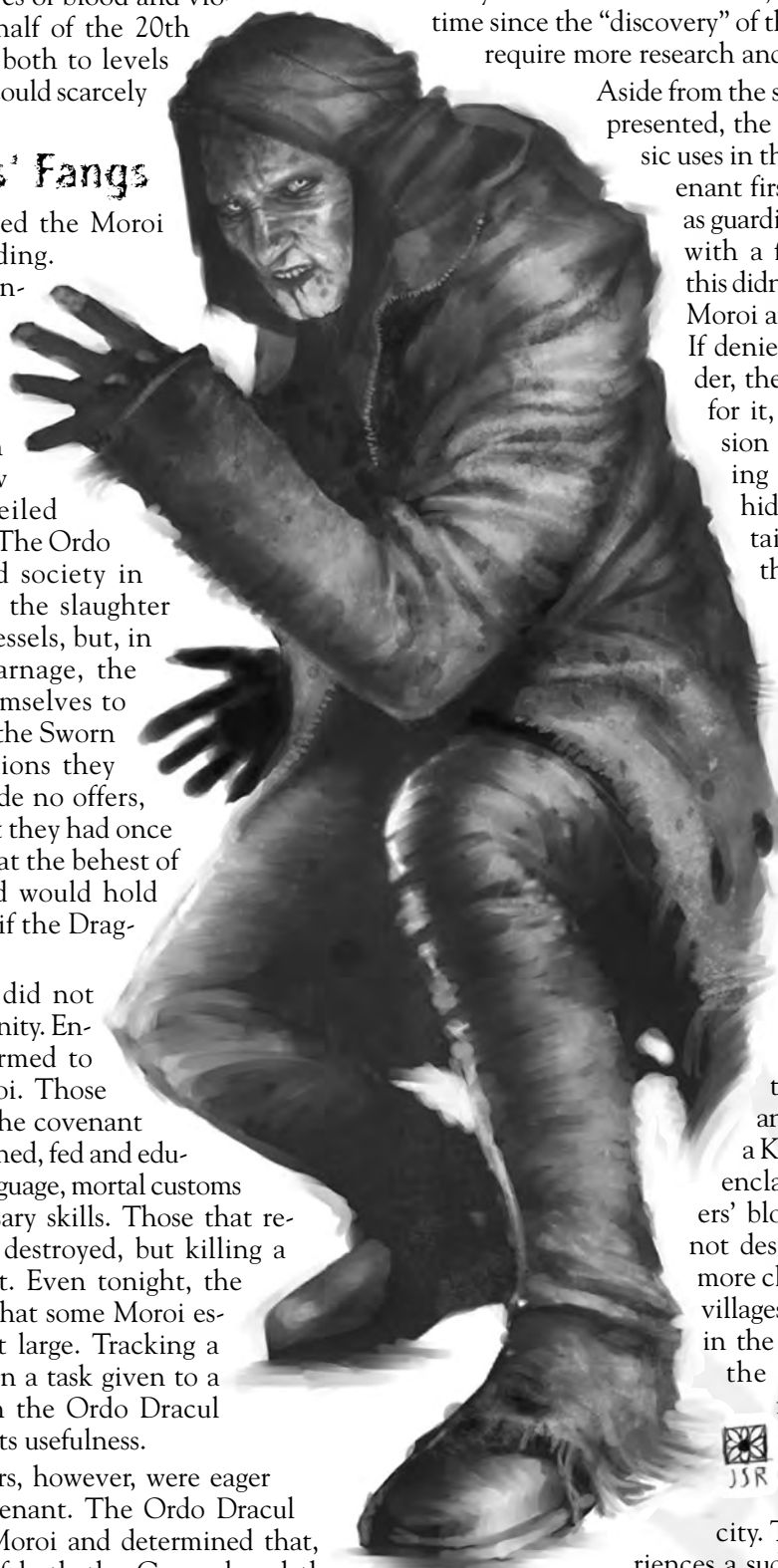
The Ordo Dracul did not waste such an opportunity. Entire coteries were formed to track down the Moroi. Those that agreed to serve the covenant were treated well, trained, fed and educated in matters of language, mortal customs and any other necessary skills. Those that refused were normally destroyed, but killing a Moroi is no easy feat. Even tonight, the Ordo Dracul admits that some Moroi escaped and are still at large. Tracking a Moroi, in fact, is often a task given to a martial coterie when the Ordo Dracul feels it has outlasted its usefulness.

Most of the Hunters, however, were eager to join with the covenant. The Ordo Dracul began studying the Moroi and determined that, somehow, Kindred of both the Gangrel and the

Nosferatu clans dwelling in isolation in the Romanian forests had somehow “merged,” creating a mutual bloodline. The theory is that Kindred of each clan had changed their Blood into a semblance of the other clan’s Blood. The Ordo Dracul has tried to replicate this feat, but has not yet succeeded. Of course, given the relatively brief time since the “discovery” of the Moroi, it might simply require more research and experimentation.

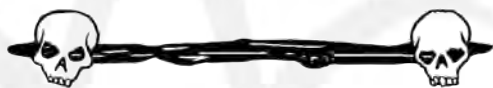
Aside from the sanguinary questions they presented, the Moroi also had more basic uses in the Ordo Dracul. The covenant first attempted to use them as guardians for Wyrms’ Nests, but with a few notable exceptions, this didn’t work out very well. The Moroi are killers, not watchdogs. If denied their appetite for murder, they tend to go out looking for it, and this kind of aggression isn’t advisable when trying to keep a Wyrms’ Nest hidden and its energies untainted. No, the best use for the Moroi was as weapons.

As the 20th century wore on, the Ordo Dracul slowly established enclaves of Moroi in various places in Europe and the Americas. These enclaves were usually located outside of major population centers, but close enough to humanity to provide food. The Ordo Dracul also sank a great deal of time and energy into teaching the Moroi to feed without killing, and, in some cases, assigned a Kindred Confessor to these enclaves to temper the Hunters’ bloodlust. Suburbs, though not desirable for most Kindred, more closely resembled the rural villages of old than anything else in the modern world. Tonight, the Ordo Dracul often arranges to purchase a house in the center of a suburb if it needs a coterie of Moroi near a given city. That suburb usually experiences a sudden spike in deaths and



disappearances, but the Moroi eventually calm down and temper their hunting habits somewhat.

Moroi are occasionally included in normal, student coteries, given the opportunity to study under a mentor and learn the Coils of the Dragon. This is rare, both because the Ordo Dracul doesn't see the Moroi as having the intelligence and wherewithal necessary to learn the Coils, and because the Order values the Moroi's martial prowess so highly. More often, a Moroi might be included in a diplomatic mission or investigate coterie as muscle (and admonished not to do anything to compromise a mission). The most common use for the Moroi, however, is assassination.



TWO CLANS, ONE BLOODLINE

Readers might well question how it is possible for two clans to "merge" into a single bloodline. The answer: it isn't. The Moroi aren't a single bloodline, but two very similar bloodlines that "evolved" together. The founders of these bloodlines, whoever they truly were, probably did not recognize the differences between their clans, thinking of themselves as vampires first and Nosferatu or Gangrel second, if at all. Isolated together (perhaps even sharing Vitae), their blood merged and mutated, becoming so similar as to be indistinguishable.

Modern Moroi don't distinguish themselves based on parent clan. Since Hunters "born" of both Gangrel and Nosferatu lose their signature Disciplines (Protean and Nightmare, respectively) and gain the remaining Disciplines common to the other clan (Gangrel gain Vigor and Obfuscate, Nosferatu gain Animalism and Resilience), they seem to have the same capabilities. They also tend to share knowledge of any other Disciplines they know with their "sisters" in the bloodline, meaning any given Moroi might well have some knowledge of Protean and/or Nightmare as well as her four bloodline Disciplines. These two Disciplines are more difficult to learn, granted. Of course, characters, not having read the rulebook, have no concept of how many "experience points" a given Discipline costs to learn.

Identifying a Moroi's parent clan by the taste of her blood is possible (see p. 163 of **Vampire: The Requiem**), but a Kindred attempting to do so must have tasted both Nosferatu and Gangrel blood before, and her player receives a -1 modifier to the roll. Also, the Masked Blood Devotion (see p. 200) is only common within the Moroi bloodline, and this also aids in the Hunter being viewed as one lineage, even to its members.



A vampire who makes too great a nuisance of herself, in the Ordo Dracul's eyes, might receive a visit from the Moroi. Sometimes these visits take the form

of the Locust and Spider killings of old, but more often the Moroi simply hunt down and slay the offending Kindred. They mask these killings as the work of Belial's Brood, accidents, mortal hunters or the normal Byzantine rivalry of Kindred society (though they never use VII as a scapegoat — it's best not to attract *their* attention). The Moroi can only be "activated" by a Kogaion or a Sworn Dragon with Covenant Status •••• or more, and indeed, few Kindred of lesser status in the covenant even know of their existence beyond rumors.

The Moroi, for their part, bear the condescension of their "masters" well. Paranoids in the covenant feel that the Hunters are merely biding their time, but the Moroi seldom seem angry or resentful of anything the Dragons do. Most, especially those whose Embrace predates the Second World War, just seem pleased to have a place again.

Parent Clan: Gangrel or Nosferatu

Nickname: Hunters

Covenant: The Moroi are a bloodline exclusive to the Ordo Dracul and the unaligned. New members are chosen from within the covenant or Embraced by Dragon Moroi. As mentioned above, some Moroi chose not to join the Ordo Dracul, but they either met Final Death or went into hiding decades ago. While it's possible that a Moroi could join one of the other covenants, claiming to be a "normal" Nosferatu (those descended from the Gangrel are too repulsive to claim membership in their parent clan), their murderous instincts would eventually betray them. It is more probable, then, that any non-Dragon Moroi are unaligned, existing on the fringes of vampiric society.

Appearance: Moroi of either lineage take on a yellowish cast to their skin, which lightens to a slightly pinkish color for approximately an hour after feeding. Their eyes lighten, becoming an unnatural ice-blue or jaundiced yellow. Even Nosferatu Moroi who previously exhibited no physical deformity develop this visage after joining the bloodline. Moroi, therefore, dress to cover their inhuman appearance.

Haven: The Moroi, as a kind of "secret weapon" to the Ordo Dracul, are generally given functional, secure havens, often in a city's Barrens or in a nearby suburb. Sometimes a young coterie is given the task of procuring vessels for a group of Moroi, in order that they be kept out of view of both mortals and a city's Kindred until such time as they are needed. Moroi with a bit more freedom of movement often choose havens near mortal residential areas, so that they can prey on people in their homes. This instinct seems to have remained with the bloodline since its inception in the far-flung past. Indeed, Moroi in less industrialized countries seem drawn to rural or farming communities.

Background: As the bloodline encompasses two clans, Moroi backgrounds vary. Membership in the Moroi is often offered to Nosferatu or Gangrel who are skilled combatants but aren't particularly puissant in learning the Coils of the Dragon. Unlike the Sworn of the Axe, membership in the Moroi bloodline isn't necessarily something to aspire to, as Moroi tend to become sheltered and hidden. When Moroi Embrace directly, they choose soldiers, policemen, gang members and other mortals with some combat experience. Criminals, however, are also common choices, as Moroi Embraced from more conventional stock tend to go mad as the murderous urges appear and their Humanity plummets.

When looking for potential Moroi, the Ordo Dracul looks not only for combat skill and brutality but obedience. The lot of the Moroi is that of a trained killer, let loose upon a target at the Ordo's behest. While cunning is prized, the Ordo looks askance at Moroi who seem *too* clever — they're not prized for their creativity.

Character Creation: Physical Attributes and Skills are primary, almost without exception. Most Moroi have some rating in Intimidation, and many have decent Wits or Presence ratings, but the bloodline's main talent is killing, and this where they receive their training and encouragement. The Ordo Dracul often provides some rating in Herd or Haven, and other Merits vary based on the background of the character in question. Trading Humanity for Experience is very appropriate for Moroi characters. Buying a second dot of Blood Potency is, of course, required to join any bloodline.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Obfuscate, Resilience, Vigor

Weakness: When a Gangrel or Nosferatu becomes a Moroi, she gains a specific form of the other clan's weakness in addition to that of her parent clan. This only contributes to the notion that both clans become the same form of Moroi.

Gangrel Moroi keep the feral urges common to their parent clan. Those urges take on a sadistic, bloodthirsty streak, however, as the Moroi blood imprints a constant desire to hunt and kill (the game mechanics remain the same). The moment Gangrel become Hunters, their bodies change as well (see Appearance, above). In game terms, this deformity is identical to the Nosferatu clan weakness. The 10-again rule does not apply to Presence or Manipulation dice pools (except for Discipline use), and any 1s on such rolls cancel successes.

Nosferatu Moroi keep their repulsiveness in whatever form it took, but usually take the physical characteristics described above as well. In addition, these Moroi grow vicious and bloodthirsty, their higher brain functions lost in the snarls of their Beasts. In game terms, this sadism is identical to the Gangrel clan weakness. The 10-again rule does not apply to Intelligence or Wits

dice pools (except for Discipline use), and any 1s on such rolls cancel successes.

Organization: The bloodline itself has no real organization. Coterie of Moroi Kindred are kept separate from each other. They are told that this is because they are too great an advantage, and thus too tempting a target, to be allowed to gather in numbers, and this is true. A better reason for not allowing the Hunters to communicate or gather, however, is that with their skills as murderers and their bloodlust, they could wreak untold damage on the covenant if they ever decided to turn against the Dragons. The Moroi have never given any indication that they are displeased with their treatment, but elders of the Ordo Dracul insist that such a rebellion is a distinct possibility if the Moroi are left unchecked. Whether the elders feel this way out of simple paranoia or because of privileged information is a mystery.

Concepts: Drill instructor for the Sworn of the Axe, former assassin, fugitive-hunter, guerilla tactician, Kogaion's bodyguard, prowler of the Barrens, Romanian lore keeper, serial killer, sleeper agent, unrepentant monster.



A COMBATANT'S DREAM

You're right, of course. The Moroi *are* designed to be good at combat. They get two of the three physical Disciplines, plus most of the Moroi have some knowledge of Protean or Nightmare and can get easy access to the other. What are we thinking?

Take another look. They're good at combat — and *very little else*. They suffer from both the Gangrel and the Nosferatu clan weaknesses, both of which are pretty debilitating if you want to do something simple, like have a normal conversation. The Ordo Dracul views them as attack dogs at best, and relics of the covenant's brutal past at worst.

This isn't to say that the Moroi are nonviable or "unbalanced" as characters. They provide interesting roleplaying challenges, to be sure. A character who joins the Moroi bloodline and tries to maintain her Humanity has quite a task ahead of her, as she is in her element *only* when hunting and killing. The primary instance in which a Moroi character "unbalances" a chronicle is if the chronicle is focused solely (or at least largely) around combat. Chronicles that focus on the larger themes of **Vampire: The Requiem**, or even on the themes of the Ordo Dracul in general, don't inordinately favor the Moroi. If anything, these Kindred must struggle to keep up with the subtle espionage and intriguing schemes of their contemporaries.



TISMANU

*YOU HAVE THE STRENGTH TO OVERCOME THE WILD EVILS
LURKING OUTSIDE THESE WALLS, UNLESS YOU SURRENDER IT TO THEM*

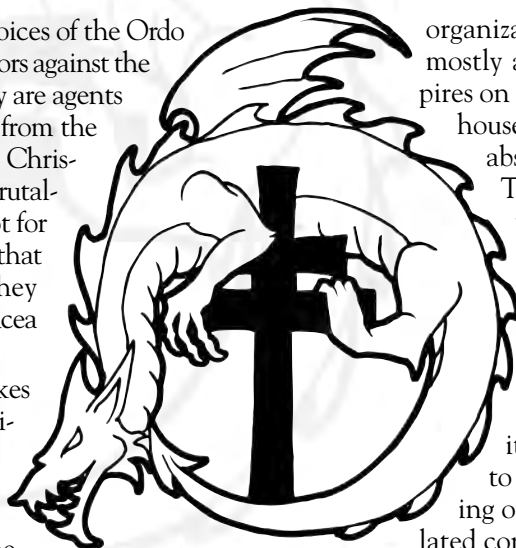
The Tismanu are the hands and voices of the Ordo Dracul's Damned faith, and holy traitors against the blessed authority of the papacy. They are agents of atonement for the Dragons, bred from the righteous philosophy of Wallachia's Christian churches and the bloodthirsty brutality of Dracula's crusaders. Were it not for the historical and supernatural ties that bind them to the Ordo Dracul, they would surely be in league with the Lancea Sanctum tonight.

Whereas the Lancea Sanctum takes its lead from Catholic Christian traditions, the pious Kindred known as "Dragon Monks" follow a variation on Eastern Orthodox beliefs. They are a niche subculture born from the unique intersection of Orthodox Christianity, the spirituality of Slavic and Dacian peasants and the faith-shaking truth of vampirism. Thus, the Tismanu are considered to be, foremost, Kindred of a particular philosophical bent, rather than a lineage or familial line — though they are that, too, in the manner that vampires measure such things. In cities where word of the Dragon Monks has arrived in stories and legends of other domains, but no Tismanu vampires are actually present, the moniker of "Dragon Monk" is sometimes misattributed to any priestly Dragon who withdraws himself from the politics and societal scheming of the larger covenant to maintain an introspective, monkish existence. Strictly speaking, however, only those Kindred who study in the remote and historic monasteries of Romania, Greece and the Czech Republic — or under the direct tutelage of a Tismanu Avus — can change their blood into that of the true Tismanu.

OLDER THAN THE DRAGON HIMSELF

The Tismanu were a bloodline back when Dracula was mortal. Kindred of this lineage had already settled into sunless, monastic cells in Wallachia when Dracula was just a child. Thus, it is said that the loyalty of the Tismanu belongs to God, first and the Ordo Dracul, second.

The earliest Tismanu were pious contemplatives struggling to civilize and soothe the Kindred of the surrounding lands — especially themselves. They had little



organization in those nights, and existed mostly as pairs of elder and younger vampires on the lookout for troubled Kindred to house, heal and enlighten. In the long absences between vampiric visits, the Tismanu quietly fed from mortal monks — some of whom even knew the true nature of the Tismanu, but kept their secrets to honor the pious efforts of hopeful monsters, like monastic blood dolls. Some Tismanu still maintain similar relationships with such mortal monks; it is a violation of the Masquerade, to be sure, but one that has been going on for centuries in one the most isolated corners of Europe without disaster.

In the decades before Dracula's damnation, the Tismanu were hardly known to most Kindred. They had little or no contact with mainstream Kindred society in those nights; the Prince of Bucharest at the time is said to have denied their existence as "a legend of peasants, undead or not." That small number of vampires who spent nights in the care of the Tismanu — often hiding from the threats and intrigue of the city — did little to publicize the efforts of their reclusive allies. The Tismanu didn't want their refugees to be spoiled by careless vampires, and the Tismanu's refugees wanted to keep their allies to themselves.

ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE TISMANU

The name "Tismanu" almost certainly comes from the name of a monastery in western Wallachia, called Tismana. Little physical evidence exists, however, to suggest that the monastery is actually a site of historical importance to the Tismanu. Although the oral history of the Tismanu suggests that the first vampire to change his Blood into that of the modern Tismanu first manifested the bloodline's unique supernatural powers in a remote monastery of eastern Europe, the eldest existing Tismanu uphold that the monastery was located in Transylvania, not Wallachia.

Even the name "Tismanu" is a fairly recent development. For decades, the so-called vampire monks of Carpathia had no name for themselves. For a time, it seemed that Kindred historians had neither recognized them as a bloodline nor even as a common philosophy.

Though one Tismanu taught another, who taught another and so on, the line of tutelage was never well-recorded or remembered, it seems. The blood of the Tismanu spread throughout Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia without much fanfare or historical impact. Those who know the Tismanu hardly find this surprising — they do not think of themselves in the same way they think of others. While the first of the undead monks that would become the Tismanu were helping to record the history of Dracula and his land, their own story was going unwritten.

While in Dracula's time it seems that the Tismanu had no name for themselves, later centuries would find them with a surplus. For a time in the 19th century, when the history of the Dragon Monks was gaining popularity with the Ordo Dracul as a tale of dedication in the dark years before the formation of the covenant, the Tismanu were known as Snagovians, after the monastery of Snagov, near Bucharest, where mortal history records that Dracula was buried. This name stuck for a few years among the Ordo Dracul due almost solely to Dracula's celebrity and Snagov's historic reputation. At least one Tismanu lurked in the tiny monastery of Snagov well into the 1900s, but the Tismanu have no other connection to that place.

By the 1920s, the Snagovian name had also fallen out of favor among the Dragons. Those who used it were considered to have fallen for a kind of popular misconception by learned and elitist Dragon academics. During this time, however, the Kindred who would become the Tismanu were spoken of much more often than they were encountered. Dragons throughout Europe talked about "Dracula's monks," but they had little real importance in the covenant. In truth, most Dragons considered them to be some sort of nobly backward, religious bumpkins — they were trivia, spoken about around the local chapter house as a means of seeming important.

Late in the 1930s, however, a few of the Tismanu were persuaded by a Parisian Dragon to transplant themselves to cities in western Europe and America. The spiritual aid and timeless insight of the Dragon Monks, it was thought, could bring special comfort to new Kindred of the Order who found themselves unable to appreciate the history and mysticism of the covenant in the face of the modern age. Within a few decades, the Tismanu had developed new ways of doing things. Quaint new monasteries, paid for by wealthy Dragons, were built in Canada, the United States, Scotland and Germany to house Tismanu coteries. The number of Kindred practicing the bloodline's unique Discipline is estimated to have doubled from 1940 to 1975 — an astonishing growth for the undead.

Yet the Tismanu are by no means commonplace. A census-taker working on behalf of the Prince of Prague concluded that six Tismanu vampires resided in his city, giving it the largest population of Tismanu vampires in the world, by the covenant's reckoning. In most cities

where the Dragon Monks reside at all, one Tismanu mentor and one Tismanu pupil is more likely. The Tismanu desire privacy, refuge and a withdrawn location suitable for contemplation. Few cities can offer locations that meet the Tismanu standards for remoteness.

DRACULA'S FAVORITES

One legend told by the Tismanu — and quite popular among the Kindred of the Ordo Dracul — claims that Dracula himself consulted with a Tismanu vampire in the Impaler's mortal years. If the supposition that Dracula struggled with his Beast even before his damnation is to be believed, the Tismanu legend does not seem so unlikely. Perhaps the Impaler took comfort in knowing that even cursed monsters such as the Kindred could find solace and wisdom despite their bloody ways.

It is far more likely, however, that the Tismanu who supposedly conversed with Dracula "over 10 nights, years apart" never revealed his true nature to the Wallachian ruler. The exact era of these meetings is uncertain, but some Tismanu believe the meetings must have occurred prior to the construction of the monastery at Tirgisor, which was a gift from Dracula to the monks he so cherished. In its night, Tirgisor was supposedly haven to four Tismanu, who slept in underground cells dug specifically to house creatures of their kind.

Again, the rumors are extremely suspect. In *Rites of the Dragon*, Dracula makes it clear that he did not consider vampires to be real until he was cursed to join their ranks. Therefore, it is doubtful that he knowingly bestowed gifts on vampires when he was mortal.

What is commonly accepted, however, is that Dracula respected the efforts and enlightenment of the Tismanu during his nights as a vampire in Romania. It seems that the Impaler's appreciation of the clergy did not die with him. Two of the eldest Tismanu in modern Romania claim to have met Dracula, and one supposedly still keeps a letter written by him. These tales, coupled with Dracula's recorded historical appreciation for monks and their ilk, makes the Tismanu prized members of the Ordo Dracul.

PHILOSOPHY

Tismanu philosophy reflects the beliefs of the Orthodox priests who ministered to the peasants of Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia during the Middle Ages. Although many folk remedies exist to combat the spells, hexes and curses of witches and mages across the land, only the holy efforts of the Church are to be trusted. It is the priest's duty to exorcize demons, break enchantments and protect common people from supernatural threats.

The Tismanu perform essentially the same services for common Kindred. In addition, they strive to create safe refuges where vampires can recover from the wounds inflicted by a harsh world and better resist the strenuous

pull of the Beast. Dragon Monks believe it is their eternal duty to make the Requiems of other Kindred easier, to guide other vampires toward an existence free of turmoil and spiritual strife. In the harsh and unwelcoming night of the World of Darkness, this goal seems unobtainable, and the Tismanu see that. Unable to save the world or their own souls, they work to save individual nights from descending into chaos and avoidable evil.

If a Tismanu can bring serenity to another vampire, he is succeeding in his philosophy. When a Tismanu has helped another Kindred attain the personal awareness and insight necessary to change himself — such as by learning the Coils of the Dragon — the Tismanu betters himself as well.

The evil of the world cannot be stopped, but it can be kept at bay. The evil acts that define Kindred existence cannot be ignored, but they can be minimized. The evil in a monster's heart cannot be denied, but it can be put to good use.

MONASTERIES OF THE TISMANU

The Tismanu maintain a number of monasteries across the World of Darkness. Some are open only to Kindred of the Ordo Dracul, others are open to all Kindred. The locations of Tismanu monasteries are not common knowledge, however, and are not meant to be. The Tismanu insist that every Kindred who knows a monastery's location is permitted to tell just one other vampire — ever.

Surely, in time, the locations of these monasteries will be common knowledge, but the Dragon Monks want that knowledge to spread through genuine need and generosity. Kindred on the run are welcome at these monasteries, but the Tismanu do not grant true sanctuary. If Hounds come looking for a refugee, the Tismanu do not stand in the way.

The following monasteries are only some examples of those kept by the Tismanu.

CARPATHIAN RUINS

This ruined, stone retreat lays piled in a crack in the green mountainside like forgotten scree. From the outside, it's hardly possible to recognize that these stacks of stone blocks were once a building. Behind the rubble and weeds, however, a series of rooms stretch deep into the black depths of mountain, and it is there that the Tismanu sleep and store their religious texts. Very few visitors come to a monastery of this sort — a mere handful every 10 or 15 years.

The Tismanu keep it primarily for themselves, to study with mentors or lay in torpor to calm their blood. Inside, the monastery is adorned with a few simple candles (evidence of their formidable calm) and a great, gold cross.

HIDDEN PRAGUE

In the heart of a nondescript brick building near the riverbank in Prague, there is a windowless, stone bunker.

The building is owned by the ghoul of a Dragon Architect, but the chamber within belongs to a Tismanu. Only a few of the local Kindred in the Ordo Dracul know of its existence, and non-Dragons are forbidden to go there. It is a refuge for Dragons in trouble and a meeting place for secret covenant ceremonies. Though, architecturally, it is little more than a concrete cube, the space inside this modern monastery has been dressed like an Orthodox church. The massive iron door that blocks the sole entrance to the retreat is featureless from the outside — only the Dragon Monk inside can open it.

PHILADELPHIAN REFUGE

Tucked between two warehouses on the edge of downtown Philadelphia is a shabby house-turned-church. By day, it is a functioning Greek Orthodox church, staffed with volunteers who know nothing about



its secret cellar. By day, a Tismanu sleeps below. At night, when the warehouses are empty and the volunteers have gone, the church opens to Kindred of all clans and all covenants. It serves as a kind of Elysium, but the resident Dragon Monk also maintains three private meditation cells (each granting a +2 equipment bonus to meditation dice pools) and a communal haven in the basement, where Kindred are welcome to sleep but forbidden to speak. For those Dragons versed in the third Coil of the Beast, these rooms can also be locked tight and used to Exhaust the Beast.

Parent Clan: Mekhet

Nickname: Traditionally, Monks, but in territories where the Lancea Sanctum holds power, or the nickname is already in use, they are sometimes called Dracula's Abbots or Dragon Monks.

Covenant: All Tismanu are born of vampires loyal to the Ordo Dracul, so far as such a generalization can be made. As much as any bloodline can be devoted to any covenant, the Monks are loyal to the Ordo Dracul. Centuries of tradition have led to the common assumption that no Tismanu in the world belongs to any covenant but the Ordo Dracul. The assumption might even be true.

Despite the strength of their link to the Order, Tismanu may fraternize with Sanctified without suffering suspicion from either covenant — they are ambassadors of sorts to the Lancea Sanctum. The Sanctified seem to stereotype Dragon Monks as simple, old-fashioned and remote religious folk whose beliefs have been molded by Eastern Orthodox theology and archaic, peasant culture into a harmless oddity. More to the point, modern Catholic Sanctified are more likely to regard Tismanu as backwards than heretical. Customarily, contact between Tismanu and Sanctified vampires is kept philosophical rather than political, concerned with theological debate rather than matters of state.

By contrast, such meetings of minds don't often occur between the "favorite monks" of the Ordo Dracul and the pagans of the Circle of the Crone. The popular worldview of the Tismanu counts Acolytes among the masses of foreign heathens to be converted or avoided — the time Dracula spent among the Acolytes is seen by the Order's Monks as an understandable but shameful exploration of heathenism. In the eyes of the Tismanu, Acolytes are unenlightened, like the pagan peasants of old. It's the business of the Lancea Sanctum to confront them, however; Dracula's Monks tend only to the souls and safety of Dragons and their allies.

This relationship with the Lancea Sanctum (and the Circle of the Crone) sometimes helps make contact between the Tismanu and the Invictus somewhat cordial. Political types among the Ordo Dracul sometimes try to

stretch the hospitality offered to the Tismanu to cover Dragons as a whole. Carthians and the Unaligned are not regarded as a whole by the Tismanu, but measured one at a time according to their sins and their piety.

Appearance: The eldest Tismanu were medieval Slavic and Greek mortals who took on the chasuble of the Orthodox church either in life or in undeath. Most lived long lives before being Embraced. To this night, the majority of Tismanu are elderly, white men with full beards and uncut hair. Most keep formal, Orthodox religious garb for covenant functions (or even for every-night wear) and favor old-fashioned clothing, from colorful, peasant sweaters to simple, black slacks and suspenders.

Haven: Dracula's Monks sleep in places rich in covenant history, places cramped with Christian iconography, and places steeped in the memorabilia of violent piety — sites with medieval battle memorials or tombs from antiquity, for example. They favor private holy sites (like historic monasteries "owned" by wealthy Dragons or protected by trusts set up by the Order), dark and remote ruins (like forgotten catacombs and collapsed abbeys), and specially constructed, modern havens built as gifts for the eldest Monks by reverent Dragons. (One Tismanu resides in a windowless penthouse retreat in Prague, where he serves as an advisor and counselor for Kogaions of central Europe.) Tismanu frequently, and sometimes foolishly, give the religious and historical significance of a site more weight than its security. Some of the eldest Tismanu, meanwhile, sleep in the soil beneath decrepit and abandoned chapels in the backwoods of eastern Europe.

Background: Though the Mekhet who become Tismanu come from all walks of mortal life, a rarer Requiem leads them to the bloodline. For centuries, all Tismanu were male vampires of the Mekhet clan born as mortals in eastern Europe and cursed to undeath by local vampires. Until the 19th century, only a handful of the few Tismanu in existence had ever dwelled farther from the Carpathians than Prague or Athens. Late in the 1930s, when leaders within the Ordo Dracul convinced a few Tismanu to transplant themselves to Paris, London and New York so that their ways could be introduced to new generations of Dragons, the ranks of the Tismanu began to change.

Tonight, a few female vampires and a scant assortment of non-Europeans have become Tismanu. Most of these exceptional Dragon Monks dwell in North America, but female Tismanu have become more common in Europe, as well (insofar as a subset of a small, niche tradition can be considered common). These modern Tismanu still study beneath the wisdom of elder Dragon Monks, however. For now, the Tismanu still observe the centuries-old tradition that only Dragon Monks who have themselves slept and

studied in the line's historic monasteries may fulfill the duties of an Avus.

Despite the expanding ethnic and gender characteristics of the bloodline, the philosophical make-up of the Tismanu population has gone largely unchanged for hundreds of years. Dragon Monks seek to find peace in their own madness, to steel themselves against the ferocity of the Beast and protect other vampires from the perils of their own damnation. Tismanu Kindred are calmly compassionate and traditionally minded, almost without exception; these Dragon Monks seek to foster relief and create refuges of peace in a world of violence and fear. Those Tismanu who do not feel this way tonight have likely changed from the supportive and settled creatures they once were.

Character Creation: Although they have a reputation as reclusive philosophers and holy men, the Tismanu often favor Social attributes rather than Mental. They are a gregarious, helpful people and, though they are no sort of missionary or evangelist, the most important benefits they offer to other Kindred are delivered with emotional insight, a generous ear or firmly encouraging words. Social Skills are also most favored by the Dragon Monks, who rely on Persuasion and Empathy when providing emotional (and supernatural) aid.

The remote, protected monasteries that have traditionally housed the Tismanu might be represented with the Haven Merit, but most monasteries that house Tismanu are not truly the property of the vampires themselves. Rather, Tismanu tend to maintain havens within a larger monastery or on its grounds — whether local mortal monks know he is a *strigoi* or not. Tismanu do not customarily take vows of poverty (though individual Tismanu might), yet they place very little value on their own wealth. Likewise, the Dragon Monks remain as neutral as possible, politically. Merits such as Resources, Retainer and City Status are uncommon among these Kindred. Allies, Contacts and Covenant Status are actually fairly common, however — the Ordo Dracul respects and protects these historic vampires.

The Tismanu practice a unique Discipline called Eupraxia. Knowledge of its mystic blessings and spiritual power is considered the real mark of a true Tismanu. A Kindred who studies with Dracula's Abbots but cannot muster the powers of Eupraxia is just another monk.

Bloodline Disciplines: Auspex, Celerity, Eupraxia, Majesty.

Weakness: Like all Kindred of Mekhet blood, Tismanu suffer the pains of light and fire more severely than other vampires. Whenever Tismanu suffer damage from sunlight or fire, they take an additional point of aggravated damage from that source (see p. 172 of **Vampire: The Requiem**).

Tismanu vampires must not only retreat from fire and the sun, but from the outside world altogether. Tismanu must seclude themselves from other creatures to meditate upon their own selves and maintain their own resolve. A Tismanu vampire must keep a haven of his own specifically for this purpose. In game terms, a Tismanu must have a number of dots in the Haven Merit equal to or greater than his Blood Potency. These dots cannot be part of a communal haven, though they may be spread across Haven Size, Location or Security in any combination, so long as the necessary number of dots applies to a private haven of the Tismanu's.

If a Tismanu sleeps anywhere but his own haven, or his haven has an insufficient number of dots in the Haven Merit, he becomes unsettled, nervous, anxious and skittish. Each day a Tismanu spends away from his private haven imposes a -2 penalty to the dice pools of all non-reflexive actions the character attempts (to a maximum penalty of -5). Once the Tismanu has spent at least one day asleep in his own haven, these penalties disappear.

Organization: Strictly speaking, the hierarchy of the Dragon Monks is virtually nonexistent. Tismanu demand their peers respect and obey the bloodline's traditional tenets, but this expectation has resulted in only a skeletal framework of internal authority. In place of their own unique hierarchy, the Tismanu operate within the social structures of the Ordo Dracul and traditional Orthodox monastic law. Because the Dragon Monks so rarely operate their own monasteries, they often hide within the societies of mortal monasteries, existing as strange nocturnal hermits or seemingly mad recluses. Within the covenant, on the other hand, the Tismanu observe rules of conduct, but never become Sworn. The mentor-student relationship is taken very seriously by Dragon Monks, however. A Tismanu without a student is considered to be wasting time.

The traditional rules the Tismanu apply to themselves are meant to interlock with those applied by the covenant and the Church. Tismanu respect the elders of the line; a Tismanu never challenges or interrupts an elder in front of non-Tismanu. Tismanu do not reveal the secrets told to them by other Kindred, except to their immediate and current mentor. Tismanu never Embrace without the approval of an elder. Only a Tismanu who has resided for at least 10 years and one night in one of the Orthodox monasteries historically claimed by the Tismanu may induct other Kindred into the bloodline.

Concepts: Ambassador to heathens, covenant counselor, exorcist, lore master, medieval historian, preacher to peasants, protector of refugees, repentant sinner, spiritual advisor, spy among the Sanctified, treasure-keeper.

Vedma

Bring me a white fawn, alive and whole, and I'll perform the hex you wanted.
Fail, and in seven nights you'll have the hex on yourself.

Not all of the secrets of vampirism kept by the Order of the Dragon lurk in their dusty stacks of books and hidden scholarly lairs. Some, like the Vedma, dwell at the edge of civilized society, in the weeds and woods of the world, where they have been hidden for centuries.

The Vedma are the witches, wise women and grandfathers of the Ordo Dracul. Indeed, the Vedma claim to carry noble, ancient blood older than the clans themselves. Theirs is a mysterious, primordial line of blood stained on Europe since the nights of the ancient world or, some say, trickling down from the hidden mountain of the Dacians, called Kogaion. They have watched the world change over centuries with a kind of patient wisdom the Dragons praise and strive for. But at the same time they resist change with the kind of stubborn arrogance the Dragons seek to overcome. So it is that the Ordo Dracul and the Vedma have much to teach and learn.

The formidable and strange magic of the Vedma is the stuff of legends in Slavic lands, both then and now. These are the witches and warlocks of the woods who prayed on the common folk of Transylvania, Wallachia and Russia when the world was lit only by fire. These are the hex-workers and deal-makers who traded magic potions in exchange for first-born children. These are the monsters who turned the forest birds against townspeople and flew screaming over the mountains in the dark.

The Vedma believe the power of their blood is an ancient remnant of tonight's more "pedestrian" powers. Their wicked art, called Zagovny, is said to have been sipped from the earth and drunk from the fears of sleeping children. The Vedma believe their Damnation and their power seeps from the land itself. It was the Kindred of this line who kept the secrets of Spoiling — an mystic art of the Blood — when the vampires of old forgot its power. Tonight, Vedma remain the keepers of ancient secrets and fugitives from the modern world. With time and finesse, however, these witches may become stepmothers to Dragons.

Parent Clan: Gangrel. The eldest Vedma, however, maintain a legend that has been passed down through the Warlocks for centuries, which claims the Gangrel are an off-shoot of the Vedma, rather than the other way around. The Vedma claim they come from an earlier era of more potent and formidable vampires, before the spread of Kindred blood diluted the oldest lineages into the clans recognized tonight.

Gangrel who become Vedma are therefore restoring their ancient and inherent power rather than refining their blood, at least in the eyes of the Vedma.

Nickname: Warlocks. In domains where other Kindred may be labeled "Warlocks," the Vedma are sometimes called "Dracula's Witches" or even "Yagas," in reference to Baba Yaga. Though the majority of Vedma are women, the masculine nickname somehow caught on during the 14th or 15th century and has been used since.

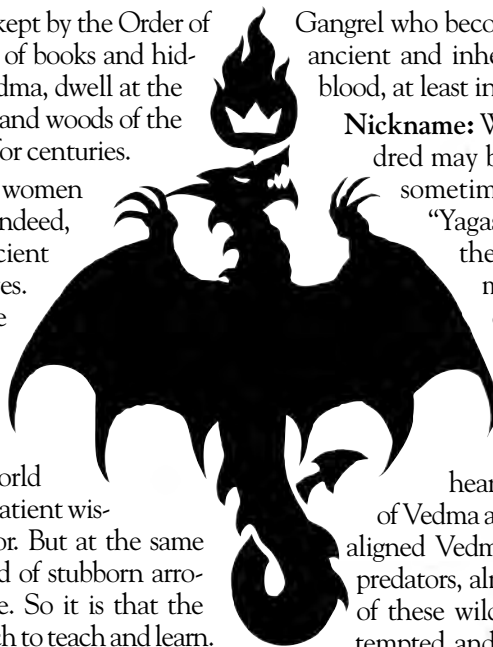
Covenant: The Vedma line is strongly associated with the Ordo Dracul by those Kindred who have heard of it. In truth, however, the majority of Vedma are unbound to any covenant. These unaligned Vedma are loners, nomads or unusual rural predators, almost without exception. No headcount of these wilder Vedma has ever been seriously attempted and would likely be prohibitively difficult — Vedma rarely interact with one another, and few

Kindred outside the line have much interest in plunging into dark mountain woodlands in search of these Warlocks.

The most visible Vedma, therefore, are those who do participate in the urban affairs of covenants and coteries. Of these, the Vedma of the Order are the de facto stereotype: old, riddling witches spying and whispering of the old nights. Dragon Vedma are the speakers for the past in some European chapters and traditional wise women in others. Though the supernatural powers of the Vedma are certainly respected and cherished in those Academies that house them, Vedma of the Order seldom learn the Coils of the Dragon. As a result, Warlocks exist on the verge of the covenant much as they once dwelled on the edges of medieval villages.

Vedma involved with the Circle of the Crone tend to play more central roles — as wise women, high priests and hexers — but most Vedma don't enjoy the idea of being so prominent. Vedma value their protection too highly to be to be easily found when sought and, for a Warlock, protection requires distance from curious eyes. Even a Vedma who stands to gain no renown or prestige in an Acolyte cult might shy away from the covenant's own visibility.

Like so many of the oldest vampiric traditions, the Vedma are often considered by Sanctified vampires to be antiquated heathens too far out of touch with modern philosophy to be meaningful in the modern night. Sanctified Priests may disregard or oppose a Warlock,



but few are likely to entertain notions of conversion. The very blood of the Vedma is wild, pagan and heretical — with their bloody trickery, how could any parish leader confidently believe a Warlock in his domain had converted in her heart?

Secular covenants may find uses for the powers of the blood of Vedma in their various schemes, but most Vedma have little use for political organizations. A few Vedma, to be sure, have secured their relationships with the Invictus or the Carthians of Europe and America in exchange for safer feeding grounds or the promise of privacy, but such agreements hardly constitute membership and seldom lead to anything more formal or binding.

Appearance: In ages past, Vedma dressed in the trappings of witches of other presumed sorcerers. Their garb often reflected the local peasant traditions of weaving and color schemes (and was typically stolen from peasant victims or accessible cottages) but was worn nearly to rags from nights of unclean work and travel through mud and woods. Most Vedma carried a large number of their possessions, and so looked like vagrants or travelers, thick with bags and dangling trinkets.

Tonight, the relative appearance of the Vedma is the same, but the styles are often new. Modern Vedma typically look homeless and crazy, with layers of salvaged clothing and huge, wild eyes behind a face of filth and grime. Some lug huge duffel bags or push shopping carts, while others have rows of plastic shopping bags tied around their belts, each full of stolen and rescued junk.

Unlike other vampires, Vedma do not revert to their mortal appearances when they rest. Instead, all Vedma weather and grow worn out like an old woman's untended house. Their hair grows wild and tangled, their flesh becomes rough and sometimes hairy and their eyes take on unnatural or sickly appearances — some become strong and yellow like a bird of prey's while others turn a jaundiced yellow. Vedma teeth inevitably become a black and yellow mess of jagged edges.

Haven: Vedma sleep apart from mortal and vampire society. How far apart varies, but something in their nature demands privacy and personal secrecy. Caves, cracks in the earth, and burrows beneath tangled roofs of roots are as good as abandoned bunkers, ancient barrows, and derelict automobiles. One rare American Vedma sleeps in the rusty hollow of a rural water tower.

Most Vedma teach their childer or students to sleep within the earth through the powers of Protean; this is one of the few lessons a Vedma is likely to pass on before leaving a childer to fend for itself. Vedma havens, therefore, are often little more than landmarks or shells protecting a patch of accessible earth, where the Vedma can nest like a snake beneath a rock.

Background: The majority of Vedma are European women. Though no arcane factor limits the Vedma bloodline to any gender or ethnicity, the traditionalism and old-world sensibilities of many Vedma lead them to Embrace as they were Embraced. For a long while, it was customary for Vedma to accept students and progeny only from the

very old and experienced — even tonight many, if not most, Warlocks are vampires who were Embraced with gray hair and bony, trembling fingers. Damnation preserves their wisdom and experience, gives teeth to their antiquated biases and stagnant stubbornness and exchanges rattling bones and shaking hands with the fortitude of the Blood.

In North America, Vedma are drawn largely from immigrant populations for whom English is a second language. Though the earliest Vedma were Slavs, modern Vedma of the New World (and even Europe, to a lesser extent) are as likely to be Polish, German, Croatian or Russian. Gender has become less of a factor for these American and Canadian vampires, however.

Vedma avoid cities that lay like concrete slabs on the landscape, like stones over crypts, in favor of sprawling cities with pockets of wild, weedy growth.

Character Creation: The Vedma as a lineage are somewhat diverse, but individual Vedma are seldom broad of interests or training. Most Vedma focus on a single, particular category of Attributes and Skills — if Social Attributes are the character's primary category, Social Skills are likely to be primary as well. Different Vedma prioritize different categories, but often focus on a small number of highly rated traits.

Most Vedma are old-fashioned, or even out of touch. Skills like Drive and Computer are seldom found among their kind. Despite the bloodline's typical role as an odd outsider, many Vedma are stronger in Social Skills than the typical Gangrel. Vedma lure mortals (and other vampires) into tricks, traps and bargains. They negotiate deals for hunting grounds and barter for unwanted children. A Vedma may project an image of muscular ferocity or wild-eyed insight, but often that's all it is: a projected image.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Protean, Resilience, Zagovny

Weakness: The Vedma share in the blood of the Gangrel, and so share in their particular curse as well. A Vedma does not enjoy the benefits of the 10-again rule on dice pools based on Intelligence or Wits, and any 1's that come up on a roll with such dice pools subtract from the successes achieved. (The latter part of this weakness does not affect dramatic failure rules.) This weakness does not apply to dice pools involving perception or reaction to surprise, or to the Resolve Attribute.

Like Gangrel, Vedma seem more bestial over time, as the Man gives way to the Beast. Unlike other Gangrel, a Vedma's appearance changes with her blood, as well. Vedma blood gnarls and weathers the body, so Vedma typically appear unkempt, unclean and bordering on wild. Creatures who knew a Vedma before she became a part of the bloodline must make a Wits + Empathy roll to recognize her. A Vedma suffers a -2 penalty to all Social actions with creatures who knew her before she became a Warlock.

Warlocks are never comfortable when surrounded by the trappings of modern mortal existence and civilization, though neither are they comfortable alone in the wild. What a Vedma

doesn't like to feel is caged. A Vedma can never purchase more than two dots in Status or Resources. If a third dot of Covenant Status, for example, were to be awarded to a Vedma character for free, she would be unlikely to fulfill the responsibilities of the position. A Vedma's total dots in any Status Merits serve as a penalty to interactions with other Warlocks.

Finally, the Vedma suffer from a peculiar deficiency in their blood. A Vedma's own Vitae cannot retain the mystic qualities necessary to harness the bloodline's power of Zagovny. On any night when a Vedma wishes to use the Zagovny Discipline, she must first consume an amount of animal Vitae equal to her dots in Zagovny, in one "sitting." (In this case, a "sitting" consists of a single hunting roll or the total amount of Vitae consumed within a five- or six-minute span.) This is not an extended action; a subsequent feeding for the purpose of activating Zagovny replaces the previous attempt rather than adding to it. The character gains no actual Vitae from this consumption; instead, it is instantly used by the Vedma's body to activate the latent powers of Zagovny. If the Vedma consumes less animal Vitae than she has dots in Zagovny, she can only use Zagovny powers rated with dots equal to or less than the animal Vitae consumed. The Vedma's animal Vitae "charge" is expended when the character next spends Vitae to awaken. (Thus, Vedma who study the Coils of the Dragon can go longer between doses of animal Vitae.)

Example: *Siwa, a Vedma Dragon, is soon to set out on a hunt for human blood. She expects that she'll want to use her Zagovny Discipline during the night, so first she attempts a Wits + Survival roll to hunt for sufficient animal Vitae to activate her three dots of Zagovny. The roll nets two successes, so the Storyteller determines that Siwa gets two animal Vitae on her hunt. Therefore, she can use only her first- and second-level Zagovny powers. If she had gotten three animal Vitae — or tried again and got three animal on her second attempt — she'd be able to use all three of her dots in Zagovny.*

Organization: Whether the Vedma are recognized as the potent roots of the Gangrel tree or a branch of it, it cannot be argued that, culturally, the Vedma are an exaggeration of Gangrel ways. Vedma have virtually no organization to speak of — most seek to distance themselves from the majority of Kindred society, including those of their own line. What little

hierarchy can be found among the Vedma might be seen as a hint of the mentor-student relationships of the Order Dracul, perhaps arising out of some shared cultural foundation common to the Slavic lands where both the Vedma and Dracula originate. To spread their tales and their mystic secrets, Vedma take on students (sometimes called "pets") and instruct them in the ways of earthly survival and bloody

power. A Vedma is likely to take on her own childer as a student, but there are no guarantees — some Vedma progeny are abandoned.

Likewise, a vampire who seeks out an Avus among the Warlocks should expect to serve and study before being inducted into the bloodline.

In the last century or so, a handful of Vedma in Europe and North America have come into contact through the social mechanisms of the Ordo Dracul. These Vedma have extended the Vedma tutorial tradition to the Order as a whole, teaching individual Dragons for perhaps a year at a time and sharing the legends and tales of the Vedma with the archivists and Kogaions of the Ordo Dracul. More than a few unaligned Vedma have come forth to take advantage of the covenant's generosity, but just as many have threatened their fellow Vedma to break away from the covenant and honor the old ways.

Concepts: Baba Yaga wannabe, bag lady, crazy unclean artiste, hex master, Kindred boogeyman, nomadic serial killer, peasant-hunting woodland terror, satanic pagan, wise woman of the woods.

