TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

VAMPIRE

THE DARK AGES



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David's Special Thanks

Dade Ian, Acacia Crimefighter, and Modistina Sophia Hill for being the best kids in the world, Paul Marchant for consultation and righteous anger, Dan Lanman for being positive and meticulous, the Dead Gamer's Society of Orange County for support and PLAYING GAMES, Erik Uriarte and Jessica Hammer for Hebrew translations on no notice, the Mongols for always being the exception, the Onyx Path forums' countless awesome voices, to Allen Varney, Fred Hicks, Brian Newman, and a bunch of others that helped me in a massive time of need, Justin Achilli for being Justin Achilli, Matthew "Black Hat Matt" McFarland for being the best predecessor/friend/developer ever, Monty Python's Terry Jones for a working class take on Medieval history, John Green for encouraging me to remove the word "barbarian" from my drafts, to Tochigi Prefecture for allowing me to live in Japan, Richard Thomas for believing in the World of Darkness enough to keep it undead through everything, and of course to my team for rocking the fuck out of this project.

Vampire: The Masquerade Creators: Mark Rein•Hagen with Steven C. Brown, Tom Dowd, Andrew Greenburg, Chris McDonough, Lisa Stevens, Josh Timbrook, and Stewart Wieck

A Book of Five Backer Thanks

Chapter One: Jason Ludwig. For reminding me of a classical musician.

Chapter Two: Jeremy Miller. For telling me to call him wolfshead, after the single word of 300,000 he contributed.

Chapter Three: Ryan "Ryan-O, Lord of the Thunderbats" Owens, for giving me a name funnier than anything I could have come up with here.

Chapter Four: Henry R. Moore III, for having the only name that would fit fine in this book without any fussing.

Chapter Five: Khrystof, well, to be honest, I guess his would, too. But he'd probably be Tzimisce or something.





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"The High Torturer will be pleased with this one." She dressed as a nun, with chainmail beneath, though it would be incorrect to call her holy. Rather, she was a slayer of men and monsters, and she dragged Dominique into the rural church by the braids in her hair with a meanness unmatched by some Cainites.

"He will. Though she's a cold fish, isn't she?" The companion, a bald-headed inquisitor with all the sanctity of a toadstool grabbed at her arm to yank her to her feet. Dominique allowed herself to be pulled, and inquisitors startled a bit when they realized how tall she was, and how strong her build.

"Too cold," the nun said, her eyes going wide. "It's a demon!" She held up a cross and backed away.

"Wouldn't that be nice for you? But no," Dominique replied, her fangs extended and her eyes wild. "No demon. Just death."

She ate the inquisitors, a waste of time perhaps, but it needed to be done. Then, overly sated, she turned to the altar, and with a bag she'd carried just for that purpose, she carefully made a package of the book that was tucked just under the bible there. With that, she rushed to the door in hopes of beating a second wave of inquisitors when they figured out that a patrol was missing.

"And thus, it is by the Prince's decree that all vessels to the crown under the age of 58 begin to pay an additional pint so equivalent in monthly taxation. I will personally collect this tax or tribute starting tomorrow night. Tell your friends, because ignorance of the law is no excuse here," the Prince's favorite childe, a man who called himself the Duke, announced to a room full of the Prince's court. If a single one of them was under 100, it would have been surprising.

Which might have been why there were murmurs of surprise when Granny Penne stood up, her body slouched in one direction thanks to the degeneration of her muscles and cartilage in one half of her body. "It isn't right. It is unfairly biased and impossible to satisfy this new law. It is inhumane to do to the childer of this city. It cannot stand. Where is your sire to speak to this? Or is this another blank lettre de cachet?"

The Duke glowered at the older woman, and advanced. "How dare you?" he bellowed. "Do you have any idea who you are speaking to?"

"Do you?" she asked in return.

"The wretch is your elder, Duke," the harpy announced with a sort of glee, tossing fuel on the fire.

"Someone should summon the sheriff," a younger and wiser member of the Duke's brood suggested, and deputies went running.

"This wretch is not MY elder."

"I am your elder, boy, and the elder of your sire. But for the gentleness of my nature, I would put you down right now simply because you annoy me. You should thank Heaven for my humanity."

Which was about the point that the Duke lifted Penne by her neck and threw her through a door.

"Nary enough hours a night, and they get shorter each year." The Gangrel pushed through some thick overgrowth between a pair of trees and broke into a solid run. Her muscles trembled and her skin itched. The whole of her wanted to change; the Beast railed against her heart, demanding to run free. She glanced over her shoulder, the great black crow that had been her companion for a decade now, rested on a branch, a small bundle in the claw of its left foot.

Fine, she accepted the pull. She'd long ago made an arrangement with the monster inside of her. You can run, and we will hunt when this is over. Shudders of pleasure moved from her bones to her skin as the change took place. Her human skin molted, turning to ash in the air. Her long, dark braids fell away, both skin and hair revealing the shining grey pelt as if it had always been there, just under the skin. Her bones bent, broke and reformed as she ran, causing her to fall forward, and barely break stride as she became a great grey wolf that smelled of blood. The pain was exquisite and as soon as the sting of it began to fade, she was already craving the next change. Dominique and her Beast ran as one toward London. The crow stayed on her perch in the now distant tree.

"How do you even call yourself a Cainite?" The Duke, a title he'd taken himself, drove a steel boot into Penne's mid-section twice more. "You're not fooling anyone with your holier-than-thou horse shite, old woman."

If the Duke had been anyone but the Prince's childe, he would have known better. The woman he was beating, the one who remained passive while he struck her again and again was his elder by centuries. But the children of power rarely see the larger picture.

"There is no reason to argue with an animal," she said, finally, getting up to hands and knees. A few of the courtiers had filed outside now to watch the violence. Not to stop it, of course, but watch and pretend they were shocked. Someone chuckled when the old wretch called the man an animal, and he turned red, literally, as rage and vitae rushed through his system turning dead muscles into iron and egging his Beast on.

"Get up!" he shouted at her. "Get up and give me a real fight! You want to be some kind of martyr? No one believes in your sanctity, old woman! Your Road is a lie! A crutch for the weak!" His voice broke as he shouted, and frothy blood formed at the corners of his mouth.

"Matters of the soul must confuse and frighten those who have already sold theirs, I imagine." She got up to her knees and now there were a few laughs. For the court, this was the most fun they'd had in ages. The Prince's harpy made a note to insist Penne come along more often.

"Are you trying to make me kill you?!" the Duke bellowed. A Sheriff's deputy stepped forward, but the Sheriff stopped him, shaking her head grimly.

The finely manicured bushes to the west burst open with a shower of leaves and twigs, revealing a powerful grey wolf that stalked just two paces forward toward the conflict.

Seeing this, Penne rose to her feet. "No, but I am hoping that you will try." She held her hands, open out to him, as if offering him an embrace. "Do you have it?" She then called over to the grey wolf as the Duke charged her.

"Don't you lay a hand on that boy! You know the laws," the Sheriff called out to Penne, or maybe the wolf.

With shivers and a groan of pleasure, the Gangrel's fur fell away, and she rose from a crouch in human shape. "It should be along any minute."

The Duke charged Penne, and in the flickering lantern lights outside, it was clear he was not the one driving the body. Rather, he had fallen to frenzy. The blow he delivered drove the old woman ten feet, but she stayed upright this time, as if falling earlier had been her choice. "I can only keep him busy for so long, Outlaw!"

"Look, old woman, this was your plan." Dominique cracked her neck and eyed the Sheriff's men who were inching toward her. She shook her head once, and they stopped moving forward. "I could eat him for you," the Gangrel teased, and from the courtiers, a few gasps as they pretended to be shocked.

"Heaven help you, love." The Duke charged again, but when he reached the old woman, she was gone, having vanished into thin air.

"She's behind you!" the harpy shouted, and the Duke spun to find the old woman ten feet off and behind him, but still making no move to attack. Penne shot the harpy a look. He only grinned at her cruelly. She rolled her eyes at him.

A black bird broke the tree line, its massive wings blocked the crescent moon for a moment. It circled wide, landing on Dominique's now outstretched arm. "Ah, there you are!" She stroked the bird's beak and it cawed.

"He's like that because you spoil him. Never on time." Once again, Penne flickered from existence so that the Duke couldn't grab her. He howled as an animal and the crow cawed back, threatening.

"Why don't you concentrate on not being torn apart, aye?" Dominique took the package from the bird and shouted. "Hey, Cassandra! The prize you coveted." She threw the package into the air, and from the shadows, a figure appeared, caught the package, and disappeared. The Lady of the Lake never dawdled. "Time to go, granny."

"Indeed," said Penne. She flickered again, gone, only this time she didn't appear.

Dominique lifted her arm and the bird took off. She then bowed to the assorted gentry with a flourish, making it clear by her wide gesture that her fingers ended in long sharp talons. No one tried to follow her as she backed up and left the court grounds.

With an hour left before sunrise, it was possibly a mistake to meet with Dominique. She could have put it off a night, but she'd made an agreement, and Penne wasn't of a nature to go back on her word.

"You came," Dominique noted, pacing in a half circle. The crescent moon had moved low in the sky, and the little clearing in a small wood on the border of London was dark as pitch but for that sliver of distant and silvery light. "Let me get this clear in my mind. You went to court and let that imbecile pick a fight with you so you could keep the court occupied while I slipped into town with your delivery? That could have gotten you killed."

Penne shook her head. "I'm not so afraid of the children of power. There was no better place to safely meet Agnes. And publically passing the package to her like that means that everyone knows where it is. That's important."

Dominique stopped pacing. "I don't see why."

"Nor are you meant to. You did your job, and well."

Dominique huffed. "I did nothing for free. I'll take my pay." She advanced suddenly, moving in on Penne with speed like death was at her heels. The older woman put up no fight and let the Gangrel descend on her.

A moment, the Kiss between them, and the Gangrel howled happily as she drank her elder's blood greedily. A moment later, Penne pushed her away. Few could have managed it.

"Your addiction is going to get you killed." Penne preferred to whisper important advice, as if expecting it to go unheeded every time.

"It's no addiction. It's motivation. And it'll give me the strength I need to pull this whole place to the ground some night."

"Call it what you like." Penne got up from the ground, while Dominique rolled onto her back and grinned at the stars. "It will still get you killed."

"Or you. But not tonight, I think." She sank, slipping down into the soil and vanished under the cover of it.

Penne sighed. "No. Not tonight." She left the clearing to make her way back to the London undercity and contemplate the ripples that would come of the rock she'd thrown tonight.

Introduction

Good evening. I hope we find you well. Welcome to **V20 Dark Ages**. To put it succinctly, you're probably familiar with **Vampire**, and probably with **Vampire: The Masquerade, 20th Anniversary Edition**. You're almost certainly familiar with roleplaying games or storytelling games.

V20 Dark Ages is its own product. If you're just coming in to **Vampire**, this is the only book you need to play. If you're a long-time fan, you're going to find all sorts of little love letters in here, as well as updated concepts and some new ideas inspired by the past iterations of **Vampire** and **Dark Ages**.

What This Book Is

Here are some of our goals with **V20 Dark Ages**.

A Nostalgic Experience: Most of you are coming to this book with years of experience with **Vampire**. Every single member of our team shares that. We're digging deep to find the things that we love about **Vampire**, and hopefully the things you've loved about **Vampire**, and we're giving a new set of eyes on them.

An Authentic Experience: The Dark Medieval World is all about style and authentic experiences. Note that this does not inherently mean historically accurate experiences. **V20 Dark Ages** takes place in 1242, but stylistically, we pick and choose ideas, both fictional and factual, that build an evocative experience. In the words of immortal sages, "Just repeat to yourself it's just a show, you should really just relax."

A New Experience: The Dark Medieval World is a large, frightening place. Here, we want to offer some new experiences and characters to help fill that world. In many cases, the material will be deeply reminiscent of past iterations of **Vampire**, but you're not going to be reading the same content over again. We'll tell these stories with new voices and from different angles. We'll be providing new options and new biases.

A Unique Experience: Tonight, we're shaking the dust off our old party dress. We're going to try to remember the old steps, and we're going to show off some moves we've learned since we last wore it. We might stumble here and there, but I think at the end of the night, you'll want to take us home for drinks and maybe a little more.

A Supplemental Experience: This book is not Roleplaying or Storyteller System 101. We offer some advice for storytelling, but we're light on the fundamentals. We have all the rules, but we saved space on rules elaboration and examples so we could devote that space to more game content. **V20** goes to great lengths in a lot of these places, and if you need further details, it's a great read.

What is a Vampire?

In **V20 Dark Ages**, players portray vampires in 1242, or as we call it, "The Dark Medieval World." Our vampires are unique to **V20 Dark Ages**; in some ways, they're even different from **V20** vampires. They share some traits with mythological, literary, and cinematic vampires. But it's best we get some basics out of the way right now:

Vampires are immortal. Mostly true. While they can be destroyed, they can live forever.

Vampires drink blood. True. Vampires exist on the blood of the living. They take no sustenance from mortal food. They

NEW RULES, OLD RULES

Part of our philosophy of bringing an authentic but not always accurate experience is offering some new angles and ideas in game rules. If you're familiar with past iterations of Dark Ages, you'll notice that some of the Disciplines have changed, and some of this, that, and the other thing might be a little different. We want to give you a little more bang for your buck and provide some fresh content to go along with the swaths of reprinted and recompiled material. If you prefer the new editions, that's great. If you prefer the old editions, we've written this book to be highly compatible with old content. If you prefer the **Vampire: the Dark Ages** version of Superpowerus 5 over ours, use it.



drink via retractable fangs, which they develop immediately upon becoming undead. After feeding, they can lick the wounds and close them, leaving no evidence of the vampire's theft.

A vampire's victim becomes a vampire. False. Some vampires kill dozens or even hundreds of humans across their years. Vampires choose to create new vampires by draining a mortal of all their blood, then feeding them from their own veins.

Vampires are demons. False. Vampires are possessed of a dark passenger deep within, a Beast, which compels them to monstrous fight or flight responses. But vampires are essentially people in a horrific situation.

Vampires die in the sun. True. While some can hold off the sun's rays for a few moments, sunlight will quickly reduce a vampire to ash.

Vampires shy from crosses and running water. False. While some rare specimens cannot stand classic banes such as garlic and crosses, most have no issue. However, some of particularly true faith can repel vampires with the strength of their convictions.

Vampires die from a stake through the heart. False. However, wooden stakes that penetrate the heart will paralyze the undead, leaving them vulnerable.

Vampires have unholy strength and power. True and false. With time and with lineage, vampires gain certain supernatural abilities, from frightening strength, to the ability to make an unwitting victim fall into a false love, or to transform into a wild beast.

Vampires have sex. Unabashedly true. Vampiric existence is one of taboo and dark celebration. To many, sex fits those

descriptions well. If anything, to vampires, sex is only diminished somewhat by the constant overstimulation of feeding. To a vampire, the moment of feeding is the single most ecstatic, euphoric experience of their immortal existences. Indeed, some attribute a holy origin to the rapture of blood drinking. A vampire's bite is not a metaphor for sex. Vampires have sex. They have great sex. They also need to feed on human blood to survive. These things can occur at the same time, but they are not the same thing. Mimicking human reproductive functions, lubrication, and ejaculation, requires the expenditure of blood for all but rare vampires. This can make sex a wasteful proposition. But keep in mind that not all sex is penetrative; vampires have penetration down without the need for vanilla sex.

Caine's Brood

In 1242, most vampires in Europe believe they descend from Caine. Caine, from the Abrahamic Bible, who killed his brother. Caine, who God cursed for committing the first murder. According to the legend, Caine took his vampiric curse on the road and created three other vampires. This Second Generation of vampires created thirteen. These thirteen, the Third Generation, each birthed a clan of vampires.

The Embrace

Vampires were once human. They become Cainites through a process called the Embrace. A vampire drains every bit of a human's blood, then feeds the corpse some of her own blood. The corpse becomes Cainite, and rises, hungry. The new vampire is undead; her heart does not beat, she does not breathe, she need not eat. Over the following nights, she adapts and adjusts to her new state, learning the capabilities of her Cainite vitae – the cursed blood that animates her.

The Hunt

The hunt means something different to every Cainite. To some, it means finding drunk derelicts who can't fight back. To others, it means finding lovers who want for the bite, and ask for more when it's over. Sometimes it means frightening a combatant with vulgar displays of power. To many, it means cultivating a cadre of humans who grow to need the closeness of the Kiss – the Cainite bite. The hunt is a shift in power dynamics. The vampire finds a person and puts him into a moment of vulnerability. No matter how she finds that vulnerability, or whom she finds it in, she finds it. Sometimes she creates it. Sometimes she searches long and hard for it. Sometimes she simply waits for it.

Source Material

Vampires are popular. Also, the night sky is black.

Finding source material for your **V20 Dark Ages** chronicle should be no difficult task. But beyond vampire stories, right now, period dramas and stylistic medieval fantasy are huge. You'd be hard-pressed to not find solid inspirational material.

Off the beaten path, there's Terry Jones (of Monty Python fame) and his book The Crusades. It gives a strong, compelling look at every day life in the period. Unlike many accountings, this greatly favors the common, working class person. Which is to say, the kinds of people Cainites would be likely to interact with on a night-to-night basis.

Contents

Here's what you can expect to see in the coming chapters:

Chapter One: A Place in Time

This is your introduction to **V20 Dark Ages**. It covers what it means to be a vampire, a Cainite, in 1242.

Chapter Two: The Clans of Caine

Next, we explore the clans of Caine, and some of the esoteric bloodlines of vampires not so tightly married to the clan structure.

Chapter Three: The Roads

Afterward, we touch on the Roads vampires walk, the philosophies and loose organizations that keep them from devolving into animals.

Chapter Four: Character Creation

Now, we make the characters with which we tell our stories. As well, we define the traits that comprise your characters.

Chapter Five: Disciplines

Next, we address the gifts of Cainite blood; the sorceries and powers vampires wield.

Chapter Six: Rules

These are the basic rules for play. They are how we resolve conflicts in **V20 Dark Ages**.

Chapter Seven: Dramatic Systems

Here, we offer more complex and specific systems for play.

Chapter Eight: Storytelling

This chapter provides advice for how to tell your stories and make a game flow.

Chapter Nine: The Dark Medieval World

Here, we offer advice, essays, and options for crafting the world in which your story takes place. We also provide ideas and systems for Storyteller characters to fill out the setting.

Appendix A: Merits and Flaws

Here, we provide Merits and Flaws, optional traits to add expanded detail to your characters.

Appendix B: Apocrypha of the Clans

This section features bonus content, some new game traits, some additional fiction, and other material to offer some depth to your **V20 Dark Ages** chronicles.

Playing The Game

In **V20 Dark Ages**, you will have the chance to tell many kinds of tales. Sweeping sagas that stretch from one end of the continent to the other. Meandering yet shocking trails through the politics of church and state. Gory crusades, desperate pilgrimages, and hopeful relocations are all fair game. Regardless of the chronicle the Storyteller places before you and the tale you dare to tell, there is one story each player will have to tell: the story of being a Cainite, a vampire, in the Dark Medieval World.

Regardless of clan, affiliations, or missives, the Beast within and the blood-splattered drive to sate your nature trickles through every aspect of the story. Whether you see your vampiric nature as a calling, a blessing, or a curse, your nature is what it is. You can choose how you deal with it. But you must face it. You must build your unlife as a vampire around it carefully, meticulously, lest the structures of society, culture and belief come crashing down around you.

The Beast runs it course. Its dark urge ebbs and flows, waxes and wanes. To control it, to use it, you must become familiar with it. You must learn the cycles of your hunger, how much blood is needed to quiet the Beast to where you can think again, how to deal with the crash after the ecstasy of sinking your teeth into the flesh of your victim, and how to cope with the hunger creeping in again, threatening to shake the brief moment of peace you had. Exercise, habit, and rituals can focus the mind away, prolonging any one stage of the bestial cycle.

Yet everything you do leads you around and around, forever until your final night. Hunger. Hunt. Feed. Digest. You pull back from or claw towards these stages, trying to merge this aspect of your life with that you are forced to lead and survive. Popes, kings, and armies come and go. At the end of the night, your hunger still remains.

Exposition - The Hunger

Every evening you awake and something is wrong. You are hungry.

You recall other evenings, evenings from another life.

You would wake up, your stomach rolling within you, growling. You'd walk over the floor, the stone cold on your feet. You would eat stale, yeasty bread and sharp, salty cheese, wash it down with a gulp of flat beer and go lay down again. You would feel the chunks of food between your teeth. The mossy feel of a dirty mouth as you rolled over in bed and pulled the sheets over your head to keep out the dark.

The memory seems so far off. You always wonder why you bother recalling it.

You wake up and something is wrong. You are hungry.

You are alone. You roll the word "hungry" over in your mouth. It sticks there, like a word you knew, that you're trying to translate into another language but can't. Something is lost on the translation. It sticks in your throat.

Your mouth is dry. It is often dry.

Hungry is as close as you can get to describing the sensation. But your stomach never growls, not ever. You growl. You lack. Yet you are so much improved from days you desired bread and cheese. Faster, stronger, deeper, keener. Still, an emptiness within you yawns. From within it, the growl comes. The demand. It shouts the price for your being, the desire of your unbeating heart. It shrieks.

Craving. Perhaps "craving" is a more accurate description. Still, you hold on to the word "hunger." Hungers can be sated. Hungers hold hope in being satisfied.

You are awake. Something is wrong. You are hungry.

You ate yesterday. Your mouth wasn't dry. It was wet, and sticky, and hot. You remembered in life, at the height of ecstasy, panting, shuddering, sweating. Now you never breathe. You never shiver. You never sweat. You feel hungry.

Now you gulp. Gulp, lick, slurp, suck. Hot, rich blood filled your mouth, flooded your throat. The Hunger inside you melts away, dissolved by what you have greedily taken. Your greed sates it.

But that was yesterday. This is today.

Awake. Hungry.

Yesterday.

Today.

Forever.

Many go hungry in the Dark Medieval World. Food security means the difference between life and death for everyone. A ruler who controls the distribution of food throughout the land amasses power and draws the eyes and wrath of those with open mouths and empty bellies.

Food does not come easily. It must be grown or found. It must be killed and it must be prepared. Food is cooked over fire in homes. Whatever cannot be eaten carefully preserved and stored away for those lean times. Food is often shared and people are thankful for it. Prayers and sacrifices are made for good crops and fair weather, to ensure at the very least, the people will have full stomachs.

And then there is you, the vampire. You cannot partake in the feast around you. The community of eating, so important to this time, is forbidden to you. It sickens you. And crueler still, the food you need presses in around you, tempting you with its scent and vigor.

Feast and famine effects you just as it does the humans who mill about you. Foods you loved in life may tempt you or repulse you now, the memories of their texture and flavor a burden. The hunger you feel is more than the need for sustenance. It is a lack, deep inside, which must be filled. It is destructive, gnawing at you. The power your sustenance gives you makes it more tempting. The nature and scope of the thing you need does nothing to lessen your desire for it. You need blood. You can smell it around you. You know where to get it. It is within your grasp, yet you must not indulge. You are trying to have a conversation with the priest who has information on where the monk in question may have gone off to. Yet you can smell the sweet odor of his sweat, feel the heat pulsing at his neck, and hear the thump of a heart still living within his chest.

You must weigh your opportunities. You must feed before you become too weak, too vulnerable. Whatever you have told yourself is the reason for your nature, for the Beast which snarls and snaps within you must be reckoned with. How hungry do you allow yourself to get? How close do you walk to humans when your craving scrapes at the very edge of your cold, dead skin? What do you do to keep yourself from reaching forward faster than they can anticipate and taking what you thirst for?

Action - The Hunt

If you could salivate, drool would drip from your mouth. You would slobber.

The street is full of them. They walk the street. Some carry torches. Some have destinations. Others wander. Holy symbols hang at their necks and wrists. The symbols never mask the smell. The smell of dirty, hot skin, and beneath that, hotter still, is the heady, intoxicating scent of their blood. Their skin is so soft, so thin. It does nothing to mask the fragrance of what you would take from them.

The buildings are full of them. They lock their doors. They hang their charms in the doorways. These items do nothing to sway you. They cannot deter you. They do not sate you and so they cannot stop you. The warmth of the building is the warmth of those within. You wish to bury that warmth deep inside you.

When you talk to them, the hunger within stirs. The chasm widens, as if to invite you in. Sink deep. Sink your teeth deep. If you could drool, you would slobber. Spittle would spray from your mouth. It would land on their hot skin.

You have found someone. You have made your reasons and your excuses. It's almost romantic. This is the one, you tell yourself. If you could drool, you would wipe your mouth with your hand.

Torchlight dances around you. The torchlight is for the victim. It makes them feel safe. You could see them in the dark. You have marked them. You can feel them.

Anticipation sharpens you. Your prey walks and you follow.

Sometimes you follow in the shadows, away from the bright orange fingers of torches, orange fingers that pry. Sometimes you follow in plain sight. Your reasons and excuses spur you on. Your feet travel over dirt roads, through tall, dry grasses, hot, dusty sand, the haphazard cobblestones of a street younger than yourself, over the smooth stones of the temple floor.

You swallow, hard. A gesture left over from another life. Your mouth would be watering. Your feet are so quiet. If your prey suspects anything, they do not suspect you. They do not suspect what you are. What you will do. No reaction comes from your body, dead but alive. Still you stalk. You follow. You draw closer.

Your hunger is a blessing. It is a gift. It will grant you success. It ties you to your prey. This is the one.

Patience is rewarded with success. Success turns to surprise. You feel their heart thump harder. The reek of fear.

You are real. Finally. They see you for what you are. They see they are the prey and you are the predator. They see it is too late. Still, they run. And you chase.

If your mouth could water you would be drooling. At least you can throw your head back and laugh.

Depending on your life and personal morals, you may stave off feeding as long as you can. Or you may embrace it as a rite of your people, knowing soon the Beast which lies coiled within you will be able to strike and have its fill. Eventually, you will decide the time is right and you will engage in the Hunt.

Some vampires have rituals or parameters they hunt within. They may set aside certain days for hunting or certain phases of the moon, or stars may signal the time to begin your search for your victim. Others still simply wait until their Hunger hones their Beast to a fine point, finding that keen moment where their senses are honed to the delicate instrument needed to exact their prey.

Just as human hunters come with many methodologies and targets, so do vampires. Some are undiscerning and simply grab the first unfortunate who passed by as they lay in wait. Others seek out particular individuals or frequent certain locations, knowing the type of prey they seek is likely to pass through. A number may have stipulations to lessen the cruelty they are about to force upon whoever comes into their grasp. They may lay bait for their prey, reasoning it away as compassion. At least their prey had a full belly and no cares before they were dispatched. Hunting may take place over the course of the night or over a long period of time, the vampire stalking the prey in the open or from the shadows. Why? Perhaps to heighten the connection, to make feeding more meaningful? As a challenge?

Vampires are not alone, stalking the hovels, streets, and roads of the Dark Ages. Charlatans and rogues look for purses and goods. Sex workers look for customers, selling their wares without displaying them first. Inquisitors boldly pursue heretics, torches raised high. Witch hunters and those tuned to the supernatural search in the dark, peeking behind the veil between the worlds, frayed and thin when the sun is a memory. All who linger outside at night have their reasons for doing so.

Hunting is different from hunger. In hunger, the vampire is acutely aware of their disconnect from the rest of the human populace, in all the facets that may entail. In the hunt, the vampire first engages with the prey. Their senses, heightened and precious, see, smell, and hear things the prey is unaware of, the promise of taste both goading the vampire on and forcing them to keep themselves under control. They focus on their intended. Impending intimacy looms. Death looms. They cannot know or they will flee. If they flee, they may cry out and the hunter may become the hunted.

The chronicle may require you to take your eyes from your mark. It may require you to engage a mortal in the hunt that you would not otherwise pursue on the behalf of an organization or individual seeking out the mortal demise of a liability. It may remove you from your hunting grounds or force you to change your methodology. In the hunt, you may still lie to yourself. Others stalk in the evening hours. Yet none are looking for what you are looking for, and not for the same reason. The Beast desires and the self strives to direct. You must measure yourself against your hunger and pace the pursuit of what you require. You will have it. It is simply a matter of when.

Climax - The Feeding

Grip. Grasp. The stretch of your mouth. You bite down hard. Teeth tear through skin, muscle, veins. Soft, tough, chewy, hot. Your mouth will not hold back.

Fear shoots hot, thick blood into your mouth. It gushes. It wants to leave their body. Blood spreads itself wantonly over your tongue. You soar. It is more passionate than the most sensual kiss. It is more satisfying than the finest delicacies, more intoxicating than the headiest wines, and more liberating than the most sacred of religious rites. The Beast has what it wants, and yet it asks for more. And more comes. It gushes. It flows so freely, like an offering, for you.

All your reasons and excuses melt away. There is no need for justification. There is no judgment. There is no damnation. There is you. There is your mouth. There is hot blood. There is a body pressed up against yours, so close, so giving. Blood. Your mouth is wet with it. And still, it comes.

Feeding is the ultimate paradox within the vampire. It is the vibrant, ecstatic joining of two bodies, an intimacy never to be replicated. Yet the act hurls the vampire away from humanity, thrusting them farther and deeper into the darkness as the light of the human victim is snuffed out. In the act of feeding, these two contradictory actions embrace, mingle, and coalesce.

The act of feeding is violent. Even when done quietly, carefully, with a sedated or sleeping victim, it is still the rending of flesh so blood may be spilled. It is Cainite versus Seth. It is Caine murdering Abel again, removing the glory the human may have brought the world. Blood, generally reserved for deities and demons coats your throat, flows through your limbs, invigorating you.

The rush of the chase leads to the rapture of feeding. More intoxicating than any Bacchanal rite, you are a childe



of Caine in that moment. Each vampire will have her own method and rituals for feeding, but the desire to drain the victim dry and move on to the next is strong. The Beast no longer slinks through your nightly life. In that moment, it is your life, and if you cannot contain it, it will rage, uncontrolled. It does not wish to remain in the cage of rules and rituals, only summoned to perform tricks. It wants to sink its terrible teeth and crunch bone, slurp blood and suck the marrow from those it can catch.

Every feeding is the damning evidence that you are not a human. Every feeding is a frenzied proclamation as to your new, powerful, dreadful heritage. Every drop of strange blood that fills you makes you stronger, better. Harder. Mercy is shown at your discretion. The habit of killing and the growl of the Beast makes each drawing from the vast pool of humanity easier. You long for a day where you can glut yourself, even as blood fills your mouth. It is up to you to pull back, to disengage from this fleeting connection and force your Beast back behind the trappings of law and rules you use to contain it.

You have your fill, as much as you dare. As much as you can allow yourself. As much as they have. You are full. But you are never sated.

The Denouement

All you dared to take has been given. Warmth flows through you. The blood within you is fresh.

The event is fresh.

It has not been given. You have taken it.

The Beast within has had its fill. Yet still, it wants more.

It is not your place to be sated. Even when your body can hold no more blood, it still seeks more.

It seeks destruction. It seeks answers. It seeks justification.

You would devour everything in its path, as those deities of old once did. Bone would crack, flesh tear, blood spray across your cold, lustful face. Screams would rise into the sky and gurgle, fade and then be silent under your terrible mouth.

Satisfaction flees from you as this truth enters your mind, mixing with animating blood.

Your face is sticky and you lick your lips. Still you want more. It is never enough. The distractions of politics and knowledge and travel and treachery and friendships and vendettas are never enough.

You bite your lip. You taste someone else's blood. Something else. Something different from you.

They were alive. Now they are dead. And you are alone. Growing colder as the Beast snarls for just a bit more. Just one more. Forever.

If you could cry, tears would fall from your eyes.

A thief, you take what is not yours. A murderer, you snuff out the life of the unsuspecting. A liar, you spin truths and misdirect to hide your secret.

The gorging of blood fills the vampire with hyperbolic emotions, abilities. The Beast is quieted and all your senses quick and keen, able to function without the constant whispers to feed. Human company becomes more bearable, their scent not as tempting.

But eventually, the high wears off. The realization sinks in. This may happen while your victim still lays across your lap, their limbs already stiffening in yours. It could happen after some weeks, when the first pangs of Hunger begin to gnaw, your previous feeding seeming futile.

Your memories are sharp in your mind. The bodies and victims pile up. Each feeding leads to another. You and your kind remain relegated to the dark. Your kin and clan members stretch on and on, fighting and feeding, towards what? You consume and watch people, villages and cities die, fall, decay.

The high of feeding is acute and glorious in its hold on the vampiric psyche and effect on the Cainite's body, but eventually all vampires must come down. Some vampires may crash hard, becoming horribly depressed and macabre. Others may simply become more stoic. Others may avoid speaking of the growing emptiness yawning within them as the fresh blood grows old and then drains away during the unlife sustaining them all. The Beast, sated, sleeps and the vampire is left alone with their thoughts, to consider their place in the world. The distractions of social and clan-related obligations may allow the Cainite to focus and recuperate from the bloody ordeal of feeding. But eventually, the Beast will stir again. And the Hunger will, again, take hold.

This endless cycle will manifest differently for every vampire in the game. Some vampires will embrace all aspects. Some will drag parts out, avoiding certain stages. But no vampire can free itself from this, the need for blood and all that entails. How you decide to interact with humans when you're hungry, how you choose to feed when you do so, and the excuses and lies you tell yourself to help you cope in the end will be specific to you. Other vampires are also being crushed under this circle of gluttonous desire and exultant pleasure, even those who embrace their vampiric nature completely. The famished and the feasted all walk the shadows of our Dark Medieval World. There is no escaping the cycle. How you approach your own vampiric nature will affect your fellow characters and your place in the society of Cainites.





An outside observer might think that writing a Cainite history would be simple. At the very least, he might suppose composing a history of the last thousand years would be a simple matter. After all, the events in question are in living memory—or at least, something like living memory.

(I will take a moment to note here that, despite my ability to compel the truth from them, I have found the histories dictated to me by ghosts are only slightly more reliable than those of the living. These passion-warped shades cannot be relied upon to provide an objective account of anything, but their accounts are entertaining, if nothing else.)

But I digress. It is my contention that the long-lived nature of the Cainites renders the composition of a concise and accurate Cainite history all the more difficult. The labyrinthine nature of our politics and the depths of our intrigues make gaining an objective perspective on any single event a monumental task and indeed casts doubt upon the histories that we've all been taught as neonates.

Let us take the example of Prince Mithras of London. He claims to be the founder of Mithraism and source of its mysteries. By popular account, he styled himself a living sun god and enjoyed the worship of elites all over the Roman Empire, but evidently grew bored of being a deity and decided to enjoy a bucolic existence in London.

I do not mean to cast doubt upon the formidable Prince Mithras himself. It is an extraordinary claim, but Mithras is a most extraordinary being. I wish merely to highlight that not only has our history been written and rewritten to suit the victors for millennia, but also that our histories are simultaneously of outlandish scale and yet entirely plausible. The grand scale of some of our stories (and the depths to which Cainites have been known to lie in order to further their own interests) make the Cainite historian's task a truly daunting one.

I do wonder what they will write of Constantinople in a thousand years. Will they remember it as a glorious paradise ruled by an angel, tragically undone by treacherous outsiders? Will they think of it as the inevitable collapse of a mad tyrant's regime? Will they remember when it was Byzantium, ruled by Cappadocians for a millennium before their arrival? Will the texts recall the plundering of our libraries, the massacre of our clan at the hands of the Latins?

Will Cainites a millennium hence tell a version of history that is utterly unrecognizable to those who lived it? If we could see ourselves a millennium hence, would we even recognize ourselves?

It is impossible to say. Our world has many histories. Some are secret. Some are common. Most of them contradict one another. Some of them might even be true.

It is the task of the reader, then, to which version of history they will accept, and which lessons they will learn from the past.

-from A History of Ash and Bone, by Eudocia Melachrina

Chapter One: A Place in Time

Aye! Here! Who was it that sent you? Did your sire make you, then realize just how very tiring the whole thing is? How hard it is to raise a fledgling vampire up from the mud?

Pay it no mind. No mind at all. You aren't the first, and you won't be the last. You, come sit here at my knee. Stop your sobbing, you're wasting the vitae.

You're the Damned, now, and it could be a whole lot worse. Count your blessings, aye? Being damned, vampires, it's as bad as you feared and better than you ever imagine. You sit here, and I'll tell you all you really need to know. A hundred Cainites or more came and sat here to hear this, and now you join a proud tradition.

The Embrace

There's a beginning to all of this, but that's not a story I know. I know the end though, and what follows the end, so why don't we start there?

Someone murdered you, childe. Someone decided that your life was to come to an end. There are a lot of justifications for a vampire murdering another, but the only reason it's ever done is egotistical selfishness. I know, I've done it more than a few times.

What's worse, though, is that after they murdered you, they corrupted your corpse, put their foul blood in your mouth, and pulled you from the Grace of God back into this mud pit we call Earth. You've been robbed of Heaven, childe, and in exchange, you'll get an eternity of struggle or servitude or a gruesome and painful end. We don't know what happens when we die the Final Death, only that we are gone. So I'll make no promise of Heaven now, but then again, I won't promise Hell, either.

Physiognomy of the Dead

But it isn't all doom and gloom, little bird. Here. You wipe your eyes again with my apron. Put on a brave face and I'll tell you about the wonders of your new self. There's a world of new curiosities and pleasures ahead of you. Oh, don't you turn away when an ugly old woman talks of pleasures. You'd be surprised what joys you'll soon find in horror, and what toe-curling delight you'll draw out of things you'd never speak about in church.

Your body, mine, all of us, are made of sin. It's not a thing to be ashamed of; it's simply what it is. What a human can do we can do better. We can run faster and see in the dark. For most of us, our bodies become more perfect visions of what we were as humans. No, not me, childe, but I am a special kind of sinner. No! You are a creature meant to steal virtue and arouse vice. You drink blood and tempt the holy with your strange secret powers and your allure.

It's the cleanliness about you that's always thrown me. Even in my clan, don't our teeth straighten and grow so very white? I've watched during the Embrace, watches as pox marks vanish and turn to baby-smooth skin, or even smoother. Once, I saw a lad who was struck by an affliction of the crown that left him bald as a friar, but didn't Damnation go and give him a head full of lovely hair. Didn't he just become a randy beast as a result? This is what I'm saying! We're creatures made of sin rebuilt by the corruption of Caine to spread slowly but surely across all four corners of the earth.



What else have you noticed? The heart, aye? Sad, that. No, your heart won't beat unless you make it or you're thick in the heady rush of slaking your lust. See here, the tears you've wept on my skirts? They're bloody too, and so beware, as a good weeping will give away your nature. You'll learn to hold it in, childe; we all do somehow.

Did I say that you are stronger? Throw yourself from a parapet. Get kicked by a horse. Even a well-intended thrust by a man-at-arms will hardly slow you down. Beware only the Sun, God's judgment, and fire, God's purifier, and a blow that would sever your head from your shoulders.

No matter whatever the Orthodoxy out of Russia about a stake killing you, they're wrong. Put a spike of hollywood into a vampire's chest, and all you will do is stop him. When the stake is removed, he will rise, most likely hungry, mad, and bent on revenge against them that incapacitated him in the first place.

The Beast

But you've still got your human mind. Odd, aye? All your memories, your feelings, your attachments are still there. You may still be in the town where you grew up, living on your father's land. You still feel guilt, don't you? A heavy heart over your first kill? Oh, I see it in your eyes.

There's a reason for that! For now, you've got a human soul as you did before you died. Does that comfort you? I don't know that it should, because having a human soul means that you can still lose it. And if you do? You fall to the Beast. You become a creature not of sin, but a creature of destruction and murder. You're nothing but killing and eating without a thought in your head or your heart.

You act coy, aye, but I know you already know what I'm describing. You can feel it, can't you? It moves behind your eyes, testing the confines of your ribcage like your heart is its prison. It's boiling in your blood, this hate, your Beast. But make no mistake; it's as much ally as it is enemy. It needs your body to survive for it to survive, and so, it will keep you alive if you know how to find equilibrium with it. When you see fire and you start to run before you've realized it, that is the Beast protecting you. When you fly into a rage and kill off the competition invading your territory, that is the Beast ensuring you have enough blood to survive. It isn't kind or beautiful, but it is nature, after a fashion. It is your nature, anyway, and nature can be terribly cruel.

Midnight Courts and Churchyards

Anywhere you go in the world, so far as I can tell, you will find vampires. And anywhere you find vampires, you will find us practicing most of the same customs and idle pastimes. We meet in pairs or small groups, we wage shadow wars against other small groups, we plot and plan, and we make sure that our downfall, as well as the downfall of our enemies are a sort of spectator sport by those untouched by the drama.

We call this society, though it has as much in common with society as rats fighting over the pickings on a corpse. We align ourselves by family lines, we vie for affection, protection, and power handed down by monsters that are our elders in age and strength. And we bicker, backstab, and collude. Sometimes we kill, but that's rare, as the first draw of Final Death can turn so quickly into a spiral of revenge after revenge. In most counties, we give up our rights to murder one another to one final authority. In this part of the world, we tend to call these leaders Princes. I'm told outside of Christendom, they have other titles, and sometimes, very different ways of doing things.

And anywhere you find us, you'll find a succession of older and older monsters, those who have seen more and more of the extremes and limitations of forever. Poor bastards. Sooner or later, ten years dead turns to a hundred years dead, unless you've gotten yourself destroyed. A hundred years becomes two hundred in the blink of an eye. For those of us who do not eat and drink at the table of humility like myself, that age flies by and leaves an elder hungry for more than just blood and sin. It leaves them hungry for conquest and the power like unto God.

The War of Princes

In these modern nights where travel, communication, and mechanical wonders leap forward at such a pace to leave old ladies like myself confused and a touch afraid, we have the War of Princes. These nights that are so very holy, and yet, they pass without the Voice of God (if you follow the Pope, that is; we are without a Pope after all). It is in these nights, that the eldest and most listless of us war endlessly over land and power and esteem and sometimes nothing at all.

The Audacity of Youth

Was there peace when I was young? That's a difficult question to answer, but at least, in my wild youth, no great Prince demanded I sneak away as fast as my legs could carry me to conduct clandestine war against the Prince of Cardiff. I have witnessed, to my sorrow, a generation of childer Embraced for no purpose other than quick sortie and death at the hands of other childer Embraced elsewhere for the same ends. I will tell you all I can in hopes of preparing you, but alas, I weep inside knowing what your fate is so likely to be.

Here, I will lower my voice so that we may not be overheard, though such a thing is unlikely. Know that there are youths who have not accepted the endless wars as their only fate. They reject the Right of Princes and the authority of the eldest. They draw from dark histories and mythologies. They gather even now in the forgotten or forsaken places in London and indeed all over the world.

I would not say you should go that way, but it is no more likely a death than the way that was planned for you at your making.

Social Distinctions

The oldest books, records, and recollections of the eldest tell us that we have done the things we do now since God threw Caine out of Nod. How our modern minds operate so much like ancient ones tells you this: change is potentially impossible for us as a whole. May I live so long as to see those words proven false.

Age

Oh the claim of age! See how I lord it about when anyone comes to order me about. Pah!

But pay my bitterness little mind. Grandmother Penne has always been a Fetch and Carry sort. Now I am simply an old Fetch and Carry sort.

For some, though, for most even, age brings with it a granted and obvious shine of respectability. This is a dangerous world we have all been Damned into, and I would say, surviving in it for any length of time is a thing to consider, if not respect in its own right. Any vampire who has lived even a year longer than you may have something to teach you, or at least have a thing you can learn on account of them. While you have no reason to love a monster with decades or centuries on you, it may be wise to give 'em a nod and a bowed head so long as they've got knowledge on how to survive that you don't. If they're willing to teach, then aye, maybe respect is a thing they can earn. If they refuse, ah well. You can draw the knowledge out in other ways.

Fledglings

A fledgling is a youth, a wee, just-born demon fresh from their bloody end. That's you, my love, still under your

sire's wing with more to learn than a fresh-birthed calf. A calf is born knowing how to walk. You barely know even that. You're full of instincts, of course; the Beast guides you to fear fire and sunlight, and that you need to feed to live. What your instincts fail is telling you how to live, night to night, cursed as you are. That's where your sire comes in, or if you're very lucky, Grandma Penne. You are an afterthought in most Cainite courts; a non-being who has not earned the right to even be called a vampire. You may find that your needs are secondary to every other you meet, and there is little justice for you that is not granted you.

Neonates

When your sire's had about enough of you, or else has decided that you've learned what they can teach you, she'll take you to her elder, and usually her Prince, and release you formally from her ward. Two things happen in that moment. First, you are awarded a thousand new freedoms. Second, you are tossed to the wolves. Now, you are a vampire in your own right with your own responsibilities and respect. But make no mistake, to many a vampire, a childe so young as a neonate is still disposable. To many, you are, at release from your sire, a new pawn on the board, and one every vampire around you may hope to manipulate to their own end. Or else, they may simply hope to destroy and consume you for whatever terrible reasons they have.

Ancilla

So here now is a wretch worth paying attention to, aye? An ancilla is a member of the Damned who has managed to hang on for a century or two and not gone so insane as to be put down. To the youngest of us, they may be more accessible than elders and saner, so worth listening to. The eldest of us may still see them as disposable, but since they are so much harder to dispose of, better to use than simply abuse. If you need a thing done right – an elder assumes – you get an ancilla to do it. Never mind that a wise ancilla has lived long enough to know her best bet is to pass along her duties to a neonate to keep her own skin from the fire.

Elders

Sometimes, we beasts last a long time. Forever maybe, or so it seems to those of us who reach these impossible ages. Most vampires grudgingly agree to call a vampire three hundred years or more an elder, though as with any claim of age, manifestation of great power is more important than documentation and years gone by. I know a lad I've got centuries on who most call elder because he's better than I am at throwing around his potency and creating an air of terror and authority. Not so much for this old bird, though. Still, an elder is a terrible thing, a vampire of centuries who must have killed dozens or hundreds of times. Do not think for a second that you are a special exception to them.

Methuselah

Due to my advanced years and incredible patience, I have myself once met a Methuselah. The encounters are always hair-raising, with palpable fear. These monsters are a thousand years or more, and are barely human in their way of thinking. They are clever, ancient, and willing to do whatever it takes to get what they want. At that age, few things can stop them from their desires. Do whatever you can, my little fawn, to never be between a Methuselah and what he wants. Or worse, never be the thing a Methuselah wants. A Methuselah's powers are unknowable, and often only rumored. Do not cross one. And should they cross you, flee just as fast as you can.

Antediluvians

Lastly, we have the Antediluvians, those Damned grandchilder of our mythical founder. If they are real – and that I cannot say – they would be thousands of years old. They exist only in stories, so far as I can tell, and those stories are as varied as the clans. Each one is said to have founded one of the thirteen clans, though there may be more or less of them now, thanks to ancient blood feuds and betrayal. We hear rumors of other clans from other parts of the world which throws our understanding to the winds. Sometimes they are said to be all dead. Sometimes they are said to sleep eternally, exhausted by their own age to wake at the end of nights. Sometimes they are said to be awake and about, pulling all our puppet strings in a war as ancient as mankind's birth.

Clans Both High and Low

Aye? I've said a word you don't well know, and so let me explain. We are all of us, reborn into these nights according to the whims of our sires and perhaps, the will of our sire's elders. As with humanity, how we were reborn, and to whom, as well as where and when, can matter more than a lifetime of right unliving. Much of your eternity was decided for you by the actions of your sire and his ancestors

before him, long before your heartbeat for the first time, never mind when it beat for the last. And it is these sins before you that color all your nights before you. Let me explain.

Clans

You are not just your sire's childe. Sadly, you've got generations upon generations of sinners to answer for. We come from families, all of us, you and I and that Prince in her tower. These families, round about thirteen in number, each manifest their damnation in special ways. We've a family of mangled peasants like your grandmother Penne here, and a family of kings and lords so high above the lot of us we cannot even see their feet. The Curse gives each family a way of survival. To further the example, my accursed blood was granted the ability to hide from sight so as not to frighten my prey. The family of kings and lords can put a command in your mind and compel you with raw strength of will to do as you're told. There is a family of serpents that can make you love them with a smile and a gesture. There's also a family of roving beasts who can sleep in soil and turn into bats. The list goes on.

These are clans. Matters of clan, and therefore matters of family, will go on to fill your nights' worries for the rest of your unlife. You can't escaping the impulses and weaknesses of your clan, let alone release yourself from paying for the sins and sometimes reaping the benefits of your cousins and siblings within your city and outside of it. Your clan is as much the shackle that punishes you during your damnation as it is the freedom and power you wield and the politics you will have to dance around forever.

Crowns and Beggars

You're born into a family, and you take the lumps that come with it, aye? So too do you die into a clan, and with that clan comes centuries of weight trial and sin, as I've said. In general, we see clans as High or Low, depending on who's in charge of the city, what the history is, and who's done the most wrong and been caught in recent memory.

A High Clan's got voice in society, the church, and most importantly, in the Prince's Court. They have rights granted to them without earning them. They bear privi-



leges just by virtue of being murdered into a lineage. For the Low Clans, it's different. While we might be able to earn a place as individuals — and won't that place be a sad dirty place — our clan as a whole always starts off on the bottom rung with plenty stepping on us to get up higher.

Usually, who is considered High and who is considered Low becomes a tradition in an area. We've long had Clan Ventrue on top here in London thanks to the Romans. And thanks to the Celts, my Clan Nosferatu has long been a Low Clan. I think even if I was crowned Prince tomorrow and the city filled with my childer, we'd still be a Low Clan because it has so long been true in London.

There's no universal truth as to what clans are High or Low. There are trends by region, but ultimately, a city's Court determines which clans have high standing and importance and which don't. I'm told it can change in the blink of an eye if a court is totally disrupted, but I've never seen it happen firsthand, or known anyone who has seen it firsthand. Fact is, there tends to be reasons why the High and Low is what it is, and each city has its own justification for those positions.

The Roads

I know, my little love, I see that sadness in your eyes as you soak in what I have to tell you. Damnation and sin and murder all around you, so you ask yourself "how will I hold on and not go mad in the process?" Let Grandmother Penne give you a little bit of hope, then. While the majority of the Damned spiral down and burn up in the first ten years or so, some of us hang on to who we are or what we someday hope to become. We find a sort of spiritual map to guide us away from giving in to the Beast and the oblivion that promises. These maps are highly personal, but certain schools of thinking are followed with their own guidelines for what makes a smart vampire, or at least what makes a moral one. We call these Roads, and they vary from the familiar to the inconceivable.

Your grandmother is what they call a Prodigal, because I follow a Road very similar to my morals in life. There are those whose morals align themselves with the rights of gentry and kings, or those who follow Roads that seek knowledge above all else. I know a Gangrel barbarian of considerable age who functions, thrives even, by following a Road that makes peace with the Beast rather than holding it at bay. I have seen that it works, even if I cannot fathom it myself. There are dark Roads, and Roads practiced by people from cultures so far from what even I know that they seem alien, but we must be careful what we label evil when it comes to surviving the night. Evil is highly subjective when it comes to a culture of murderers, and sometimes, anything that helps you hold on another night is worth almost any cost.

The Traditions

Your sire has told you that there are laws we have that cannot be broken, hasn't he? That's good. You walk with me, and I'll tell you all about our laws, what we call the Traditions. To most vampires, they are things tossed at you by your sire a few times and then remembered only when you've violated them. This is why most vampires don't survive their first decade. You are lucky, because Grandmother Penne will tell not only what they are, but why they are what they are. This will give you an edge, and when staring down the Sheriff's stake in the middle of a court meaning to bury you, any edge is a thing worth having.

See here, love, in my modest library, we've the words of Caine and others, written by a dozen hands. They are the Traditions, but which ones, I wonder, are the right ones?

The First Tradition: The Covenant

"Thy blood makes thee my brood, crafted in my image. My curse is thine, and my salvation is thine. I stand before and above thee as god-regent. I am the way, my Traditions my covenant. Renounce me and Renounce all hope." Thus spoke Caine. - The God-Regent Translations

The blood of the Betrayer flows through you, making you in His image. You are cursed, and it is only through obedience that you survive. You are the Betrayer's kind, and are bound by these, God's laws for you. - The Qaanoon, collected by Duras the Dacian

Don't we all need to know where we come from, aye? This Tradition, more than any other, establishes for us from whence we came and who's got the power night to night. In my part of the world, it's well known that Caine, the first murderer, was also the first of us, and all power as well as all curses flow directly from him. Why does this matter? Maybe not much to you, but this Tradition is how most Princes establish their authority. Caine tells us, in most translations, that those closest to him are those with the most authority, and so age is the right of authority. It's a simple idea and works well enough until you consider the oldest vampire in a city may not be the most willing to rule, or able, and those who take power may use their age to hold a rule they cannot manage.

From these scrolls, as well as travelers who've come to sit down with me, I have come to realize that not all vampires see Caine as the first of us. I've heard our creation myth tied to Babylonian gods, Lilith, a cursed African hero, and even those who believe there is no First, or at least, no single First. I cannot imagine how their elders take advantage of these beliefs, but I'm sure that they do.

The Second Tradition: The Domain

"As I am master of Nod, thy domain is thine own concern. Thou art its master, and all will respect this or suffer thy wrath. All will present themselves when entering, and thou shall protect them in turn. By right, thou art allowed to hunt within the bounds of thy domain, its blood thine own. Accept its responsibility, minister thy domain, and pay others the same respect thou expect." Thus spoke Caine.
- The God-Regent Translations

The herd and the land that they inhabit are the domain. If you can keep it, it is yours. If you can take it, it becomes yours. If you can do neither, you submit to those who can and call them elder.
- The Ways of Hibernia, as translated by Duras the Dacian

The territory where you bed down and where you can feed is the night-to-night affairs of all of us, and at least so far as I'm concerned, the most important politics you can stick your nose into. Often, and due to the Covenant, a Prince declares a city as his domain alone, and his ability to hold and maintain that domain is the reality behind his power base. Age be damned; if he cannot maintain his city, he will lose it.

But that's not to say you will starve. A Prince also knows well that he can claim a city as his domain, but he must divvy up its management as well as provide feeding rights to his subjects. Some cities, like my fine London, are divided up into fiefdoms under the Prince Regent, with his favored friends and childer holding domain over these fiefdoms. From there, the likes of you and me beg for scraps and hope we can get permission to feed in one or another of these smaller domains, but it's an alternative to rule only by one Prince, and so I'll take it. I'm told some cities operate differently, with large neutral areas where anyone can feed. I've also heard that Paradise is full of singing babies and clouds, but I'll believe it when I see it.

The Third Tradition: The Progeny

"Thou shalt only sire another with the permission and blessing of thine elder. To create is the providence of those closest to me, for they shall be accountable. Break this, and both thee and thy progeny shall be slain." Thus spoke Caine. - The God-Regent Translations

Creation is a sacrament, and one not celebrated lightly. One obtains the advice and guidance of ones foremothers and sisters. To celebrate the sacrament without such blessings is to blaspheme and forfeit all that the Mother has given you.
- Traditsiya, as collected by Duras the Dacian

Just as it is with mortals, aye? Everyone is so very concerned with who is whose heir and who has the right to leave heirs. The struggles of kings and emperors are not so different than the struggles of we, the Damned. Is there a spiritual aspect to this particular Tradition? Oh, I'm not the one to ask that, but could be. To me, the Third Tradition is a practical and pragmatic one. If we could all run about Embracing and making ours every pretty lad who turned our eye we'd make a great many mistakes in the process. And to the elders, of course, who they let Embrace and who they refuse helps to stack the city and the Court with vampires in debt to them.

Though the wording in many translations suggests that sire and childer are destroyed, this is not actually a common practice from my understanding. I have myself been wet nurse to many a childe whose sire was destroyed for an illegal Embrace. How often does the Prince say things like, "Well, I could have destroyed you, so you exist by my benevolence. Serve me loyally and live." I've seen the reverse as well, sadly, an unwanted childe destroyed in secret before word can reach court and a vampire in good standing is forgiven the slight since the "problem" no longer exists. Once, I took such a childe in as my own, claimed her, and she lives quite happily here to this night, but that's a risky claim to make for sure.

The Fourth Tradition: The Accounting

"Those thou create are thine own blood until release from thy charge. Until that moment, their sins, their blood and their punishments are thine." Thus spoke Caine. - The God-Regent Translation

What you create is yours and your blood. Their blood and their punishment are yours. - Folk Traditions of the Etruscan Tribes, collected by Duras the Dacian

I will admit, of any of the Traditions, this is the one that perplexes me the most. From a purely selfish beast point of view, why this practice would become so common is beyond me. If there's a Tradition with a humane or maybe divine source, it would be this one. In essence, the Fourth Tradition makes a sire accountable for who they have Embraced. While that will result in some abuse of these whelps, it also means that the sire must be wise in their actions, their education, and in some ways, reminds them that the other vampires of their city are watching what they choose to do. Creating a childe and destroying it before it can be released is suspect behavior to be sure.

I have seen this Tradition used as grounds for punishing a vampire who has created a wayward ghoul. Though it not a popular political maneuver, it can be argued effec-

tively in many courts. Sometimes, being a touch litigious comes in handy.

The Fifth Tradition: Destruction

"Forbidden art thou to spill the blood of another of thy kind who is elder. This right belongs only to the closest to me and none other. It is forbidden for those of weaker blood to rise against their elders. This is my final covenant." Thus spoke Caine. - The God-Regent Translations

Do not spill blood, for it is precious. All blood, no matter the source, must be used and useful, blood in the soil is an unforgivable waste. - The Lost Traditions of Phoenicia, collected by Duras the Dacian

Do I surely need to spell this out for you, love? I think you're clever enough to see what is written all over this particular Tradition. We are all told that killing other vampire is wrong. I can understand the wisdom of that, aye? Most would agree that killing your own stains your soul, no matter the reasons you take your own, and most people have rules or laws about to remind them all that no matter how irritating or troublesome your neighbor might be, taking a hoe to his head is a foul act. Perhaps with vampires, we need a stronger reminder, as the Beast drives us to kill anything and everything we can.

Where the common translations of the Tradition take an interesting twist, I'd say, is how Caine tells us that the real crime is in the young killing the old. As "the old" I would prefer not to be killed by the young, but among people with no natural death by old age, that makes for quite the downward pressure from above, aye?

I showed you a variant wording of the Tradition there, an ancient one, that focused on the waste of the Blood. Talking to greater experts on this, scholars, I understand that this is not an isolated reading of this Tradition. It allows for any means to preserve the blood, not killing, but retaining the blood in other ways, darker ways. And cultures travel. The Phoenicians, for example, may have brought their dark interpretations to Spain.

The Sixth Tradition: The Silence of the Blood

"Never shalt thou reveal thy true nature to those not of the blood. Doing so shall renounce thy claims to my covenants." Thus spoke Caine. - The God-Regent Translation

Do not reveal your nature. - The Traditions of Mali Empire, as translated by Duras the Dacian

It makes you wonder what happens to lose Caine's covenants? Well. Salvation, obviously, if you've been following



me thus far. I imagine if you believe that sort of thing, it's a terrifying premise, an endless eternity with no hope for redemption, because if you want anyone's forgiveness, you surely want the forgiveness of the first murderer, right?

A more immediate concern, though, is what your elder thinks is the consequence of being denied Caine's covenants. In many cities, this puts you outside of the protection of the Fifth Tradition and so, revealing your nature to mortals or whatever lurks in the shadows of the night, means anyone with the fangs to do it can bring you down. Usually, a Prince will still expect to reside over some kind of court to determine how much you revealed, but not always.

Outside of places where the Traditions rest on Caine's commands? I cannot myself say for sure, but I know this: intent is everything. Hunters of the Church are almost everywhere, and no matter how you practice the Tradition, letting our secrets out gets us killed. A wise leader, or a selfish one, no matter their religious beliefs, knows that.

Dead Cities

No matter what it may look like from the outside, there are not two cities in the world that operate in the same ways. While there exist some common themes, they never flesh out in the same way. And even these commonalities are only so common by region. I'm told when you move out of Christendom, none of these titles apply, and even stepping back in time two centuries, you wouldn't see any cities operate in the way they do these nights. I wonder what we'll see in two hundred years from now. Assuming any of us are left when the Prince's War is over, of course.

Prince

In my London and in many of the cities that neighbor the area, we are ruled a Prince Regent, a vampire of considerable age and power who rules the lot of us with as tight a fist as he can get away with. Tradition, and the Traditions, say that the Prince ought to be the eldest of all the vampires in a city. I suppose the idea is that the oldest is the closest to Caine, the most powerful, and therefore the most fit to rule. Even in traditional cities like London, the Prince is rarely the actual eldest Cainite. Current, the city is under sway of the eldest's childer; she rules as he devotes himself to esoteric studies. He can't be bothered. Truth be told, if we practiced closer to Caine's intent, the city would be chaos. The true eldest lost his mind some fifty years back or more.

There is a value in having the oldest, most horrific monster amongst you as the figurehead of the city. The Prince has a target on their head most of the time, and it is best that to hold the position and rule for long, you appear indestructible. Otherwise, you face a short life constantly under constant attack by youthful vampires hoping steal your power, elders disgusted with your petulance, other Princes bent on expanding their regency, and who knows what else.

According to my friend the Greek, Athens is not ruled by a Prince. They have long practiced a form of classical democracy in which vampires who control domain may vote for one of three Triumvirate members. The city's unusually large vampire population is a thing that constantly strains order in the system, and so it does them best to allow the average vampire to feel as if they are a part of the process and a part of the status quo.

Keeper

Sometimes I think that the Keeper is meant to die.

Their job seems simple: to keep and maintain the Elysia throughout the city. That is, places of peace where vampires may gather and show our teeth to one another without biting. Suffice to say, these places are tinder on top of coal. Any place where two or more vampires meet, you will have the potential for violence. That may well be violence by the knife or word or deed.

There's expected to be a cultural aspect to it. In those rare cases where a Keeper is good at her job, it is because she has an eye for architecture and art as well as security and secrecy. She's expected to find places that are aesthetically pleasing, stimulating, and occasionally even finds herself responsible for providing entertainment. Or to put it another way, she provides a distraction from the backbiting, if you ask me.

And it's up to the Keeper to keep the peace, protect the Elysium, and prevent vampire doings from spilling out and giving up the secrets of the blood. It isn't simply herculean; it's downright impossible. A clever thing, really, to give a position of prestige and power to an enemy you want close, then watch him crumble under the weight of it. The late Prince of London offered me the position once. Once.

My companion in Krakow, an odd paranoid old bird, told me that "keeping" Elysium in her city is the duty of neonates. They're expected as a group to maintain the places physically and in terms of security. That communal tie must build strong alliances while weeding out the weak. "They all stand, or they all fall," she said.

Chamberlain

Beside the Prince (at least, beside the wise Prince) is his Chamberlain. If the Prince is a force of might and power, then the Chamberlain is finesse. If the Prince is above the mud and stain, granted his position by power,

age, and God, then the Chamberlain has dirt under her fingers like the rest of us.

In London and the surrounding areas, only the most formidable elders speak to the Prince. Even if the matter is of the most importance, you can't get near the Crowned Head. Instead, you better hope you can catch a second of the Chamberlain's time. She's the one who knows names, knows sires, knows territories, and if you're very lucky, knows why what you've got to say matters. She's in the thick of it, and it's easy to assume that she's the real power in a Domain.

And she may well be. I know of a Chamberlain in Ireland who has carefully maintained her power base through seven different Princes. When the Prince begins to reach for too much power, she simply arranges for rebellion and overthrows him. Then, she returns to her job. It's a pretty thing, so long as you're her or her people.

I'm told that in Paris, the Court's so large and the Prince's Domain so populous that he has a small fleet of Chamberlains, with each one handling different matters. A fine job he must have, with so many hands handling things for him. Poor Grandmother Penne can't even get a flea to do her bidding, but then, I'm no Prince.

Sheriff

Once, maybe two hundred years ago or more, your good Grandmother Penne spent a while as the Prince's Sheriff. In London, that mostly entails having a full understanding of the complicated common laws that make the London Domain what it is. I spent many a night arguing law and procedure with the Rabble as well as the Lords in hopes of keeping the peace and protecting the Domain from chaos and lawlessness. Every now and again I'd be called in to break up a row, but that was rare. The Prince of London's got himself some petty criminals and thugs dressed up as Knights that do his bloody deeds. That was never the Sheriff's job here.

I'm told this is not always the case. Sometime a leader of a Domain will look out at her court, see among her courtiers a brute or a savage or a swaggering tough itching for a fight. If she is wise, she will give that vampire a job breaking necks and spilling blood in a legitimate way. Sometimes that job is called Sheriff, but not always.

Sheriffs, like Chamberlains, can sometimes outlive Princes and I've even heard stories of bloodless revolutions where Prince and Sheriff arranged for a switching of titles and duties. Though I don't imagine the former Prince-become-Sheriff lasted so long in that city.

In almost any Domain, the Sheriff is most likely to have his own territory and private hunting grounds, even over the Chamberlain.

Once, I talked with a Mongolian silk trader, a hardy type to travel so far as he did while Damned. He told me that in his court, the council of elders had their own Sheriff, in counterpoint to the Prince's. He has his own words for all of this, mind, and assured me the functions were different, but that ultimately the Sheriffs were charged with looking after the interests of the elders or the Prince, respectively, and striking a balance to keep peace was their thankless duty.

Harpies, Scourges, and Others

Each Domain has needs unlike any other. In smaller Domains without so many of us lurking about, one city position might do the work of two or three positions in a place like London or Paris, and some cities have needs so unique that the positions they make are like no other. Let me think if I can remember some.

London's Own Rat Catcher: We remember a time when the Romans brought a dole to the humans of London, and we uphold that tradition ourselves. So London's got a rat catcher whose duty it is to herd rats, see to it that they're edible, and corral them in cisterns where London's unfortunate vampires can take their fill.

Quanzhou's Murder of Harpies: In small Domains, rumors and gossip move naturally from vampire to vampire, or maybe the Chamberlain keeps himself busy making sure the right people hear the right stories. In cities with incredible populations, like Quanzhou far east of here, I hear that the court elects a group of socially deadly gossips to maintain social order. It's a brutal business, sure as anything.

Free Lances and Scourges: Rough and rowdy, a pack of savage dogs no matter what you call them or who pays for their services. Most cities have a crew of no-good and brazen bloodmongers who gain favor and wealth beating, harassing, and maybe even killing whoever they're paid to. Of these sorts, there's a rare but not unknown special kind of murderer. In London, we call her the Scourge and she moves at the Prince's secret behest. We see no movement, no message, no evidence left behind. We just know that sometimes, an enemy of the Prince simply vanishes. We guess the Scourge, but really, no way of knowing. Mostly, she seems to handle the chores that can't be handled in public. When the Prince needs too much out of his own stables, she's the one disposing of the shite. By the time a blood hunt has been called, she's already reported the death to the Prince. Always in secret. Always.

Meeting of Elders

No matter the Prince, or how the court is set up, if there are old monsters in your home, they will meet. And rest assured, there are old monsters in your home, wherever you live. When word gets back to London town about great sweeping changes in a city or even a region, know that old monsters met in the hoary darkness and either struck a deal or declared war.

Sometimes, the elders in a city meet formally, with acknowledgment or even recognition of the Domain. These elders may act as a governing body on their own, support the current Domain, or act as vassals in a line of lieges and lords.

Sometimes, these groupings happen in secret, even forbidden by the Prince, though he would have to be a singularly powerful creature to make that sort of demand. I'm told that in the Holy Land, there is a Regent-Prince so powerful and unknowable that he declared no vampire past his hundredth year in death can ever meet with another of that age and beyond. If two elders find themselves in the same place, one must flee or both die. What's most frightening is to think that this law is somehow enforced. I shudder to think of how.

Tales of Damnation

Aye, where did we come from? Perhaps the most painful question for any of us to ask, and here you are, cheeks red with blood, and you ask it so innocently.

The truth is, we may never truly know. I can tell you only what stories are told and treated as gospel inside Christendom. Outside of that, the stories are different. As you go about your unlife, you will likely be surrounded by those who believe the story of the First Murder. Always question, my little bird. Always.

Brother Slays Brother

I am supposed to tell you that the first vampire and the first biblical murderer are one and the same. And that's how it's told anywhere the Bible is read, even in those places controlled by the Hebrew tribes and even parts of Arabia.

It's a sad, long story where one brother grows jealous of another, or does not know how to make his father happy, and so he slays his brother in frustration. Or out of fear of his terrible father, depending on what translation you read.

You do read, don't you, bird?

From there, he is either cursed for his wrongdoing or transformed by the supreme feeling of loneliness left by his brother's death. No matter which way you read it, he becomes the Dark Father of all of us. From there he wanders, and suffers, and meets many strange and terrible beings, and many awesome beings. While he wandered, he made childer; the First Generation of the Damned, if you believe the stories. They say he sleeps now, and soon, at the end of the world, he'll rise again to destroy what he created.

Out of love.

Generation

What's that mean, Generation? I say it with a serious weight, don't I? Well, perhaps even more than age, or at least, along with age, it is a measure of the strength of your blood.

Or like the common of us tend to think, your Generation is the thickness of your blood and the strength of your Beast.

Traditionally, we count Generation from Caine and his first direct set of childer. Then their childer, and their grandchilder and so on. But it's just a number, when you get right down to it.

I've heard that given enough age, the blood thickens, no matter how close to Caine your sire was, you can grow to have blood like ice and a beast as terrible as a burning, lightless sun. This, of course, is rumor and hearsay. Nothing to concern yourself with too greatly.

The Amaranth

There is, I'm afraid, one way that your blood may be thickened, but it's a terrible, and unforgivable sin. If we are sin in flesh, then this is the thing that even the wickedest of us shies from. I would rather not tell you about it; I dread to say the word out loud. But it is vital you know about it so that you remain very careful who you let close to you and when.

This most vile act we call the Amaranth, and to commit it is to drink the blood of another vampire. But not just his blood, the whole of him, even drinking his soul and destroying all that he ever was so that you can rob him of his power and increase your own. Make no mistake, it is not a thing you can do by accident, and even if you found yourself needing to drain another of your kind to unconsciousness, there is still a chance to turn back and leave him in torpor or ashes, which is better than the alternative. Believe me. If you so will it, if you push through your mind and sanity, resist, it is possible to complete the act, but never by accident.

It thickens the blood. It strengthens the Beast. It may give you powers the likes of which you've never dreamed, but what it does to you is irreversible.

And what we do to you if we find out is very simple: we destroy you.

Understanding the Generations

A Generation isn't just a measure of potency and age. Nothing is ever that simple with the likes of us. No, Generation also confers a sort of position and, in some cases, a title and a whole set of assumptions to go along with that title.

Second Generation

The childer of Caine are the Second Generation, if you follow the God-Regent translation of the *Book of Nod*. Most stories say there were only three direct childer of Caine, them that he made to live with him in the great city of Enoch before the flood. One, they say, was an impossibly beautiful woman, and the others are up for debate. Wiser minds than mine look back over the history and assume that these first childer and Second Generation were destroyed in the flood right along with Enoch, because if not, they would be creatures of incredible age and strength now. If you believe that the world will end when Caine and the Antediluvians rise from slumber to fight, you have to wonder, what would the Second Generation, Caine's closest childer, do should any of them have survived? Common wisdom is that the childer of the Second Generation went on to form the clans as we are now, though there are those of us who make claims that their lineage and clan comes from the Second and not the Third Generation.

Third Generation

Once the childer of Caine began to Embrace, Enoch must have become one very large very dangerous family drama. The Third Generation, they say, is the start of us, the start of the thirteen clans of vampires. We hear in stories that the first thing the Antediluvians did was get into blood feuds with each other and wrestle one another for power. There was killing, mayhem, and maybe the first cases of Final Death and the Amaranth in the streets of Enoch. Is it any wonder we fear them, when so many of the stories are of powerful madmen who seem to know only war and destruction? If the end of nights is the rise of these monsters, the Antediluvians, then those nights will be beyond terrible.

We don't know how many remain tonight. We only know that their touch is present in every trouble and strife any vampire feels anywhere in the world. Is your sire cruel to you? He was probably made that way as a part of a grand scheme by an ancient that none of us will ever fully fathom. Did your Prince suddenly declare open war with a Prince nearby who had yet been her ally for a century? You can guess that's because an Antediluvian made it so. They meddle and they interfere and they manipulate out of a need for power and to perhaps, to destroy one another.

I'm told that the myth of Golconda comes from these beings. If there are any who are seeking redemption and found it, it is likely that they are Antediluvians. I don't know if I believe it, and more, even if they did, it makes no difference, since they'll still wage the wars of the ancients if only to keep the world out of the hands of their more horrific kin. I'm a pawn and disposable no matter how warm-hearted and blessed my master may be. I don't assume any of these beings, if they are real, even approach human understanding any more. Gets harder for me, night by night, and I'm still in the thick of it without the eons they have suffered through.

Fourth and Fifth Generation

If we are barely pawns in the games the Antediluvians play, the Fourth and Fifth Generation are the Knights. Useful, powerful, maneuverable, the most potent and dangerous holders of domain in Christendom come from these Generations, and we call them Methuselahs. In Arabia, they have another name, and so I understand, yet another in the distant East. Because they are the most powerful waking monster any of us should hope to see, their power and their lives are under constant threat. Of course, we're barely more than gnats compared to the Methuselahs, and so there is a strange balance between power and those what would eat up that power and make it their own. I think it is the Methuselahs who started and maintain the War of Princes, but that's only because one told me so.

Sixth and Seventh Generation

These, my dove, are your elders, and you should steer clear of us whenever you can. While the rare Methuselah may rule a large and ancient city, most domains belong to the Sixth or Seventh Generation. Remember, dove, even now, I may be your enemy, because I am old and I am hungry in ways you cannot yet imagine. Stay on my good side, stay away from me, or else stay on your guard in my company.

Remember also, that many of us at a certain age and a certain potency of blood can no longer sate ourselves on the blood of the living. For us, the only way to satisfy the hunger is to feed on you. For the eldest, sometimes it is the vampire that is prey. If you find one of us has suddenly become overly kind to you and yours, she may be grooming a new herd. Then again, you don't put your cattle on the front lines, so maybe there are worst ways to be used by the elders.

Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Generation

Who doesn't love an upstart, aye? These monsters may well be your sires, and they are lean and hungry. They have been around long enough that they've seen the way the world works, but don't have the age and thickness of the blood necessary to rule. Though from every ancilla I have ever met, they seem to think they all have some greater, better way. There is not a vampire in all the world more deserving of power and position than whatever ancilla you happen to be talking to. That said, recall that most of them are young enough to remember being human, and may come close to your way of thinking. If anyone can intercede on your behalf against the dangers of the night, he may be an ancilla. That is, until he turns around and uses you against an elder he hopes to usurp, of course.

Eleventh and Twelfth Generation

These are your kin and your rivals, my dove, and there are a great number of them. I should say that the young, the neonate, outnumber the elder by at least three to one, and that's liable to increase as we make more and more to struggle and die against the countless neonates being created by the our enemies. If you make it ten years, it will be a miracle, but you have things we don't have. You have numbers. You have strong intimate ties with humanity as well as your own morality. Maybe you still have your faith or your wealth or your ability to travel. All in all, we make you because we need you, and don't let any other older vampire tell you otherwise.

Thin Blood

It is possible, I'm told, for the youngest of us to create a vampire themselves, but it is rare as few of you have the strength to do the act, physical or political. Without the physical power, the victim simply dies. Without the political power, some angry elder kills you both for the having the audacity to try it.

We don't tend to bother counting Generation after the Twelfth, as anything further removed from Caine can scarcely be called a vampire at all. Tragic wretches, one and all. We call them Thin Blooded and watch for signs that they need to be put down.

Wassail

One sign we look for is reaching their final frenzy, or what we often call the Wassail. When a vampire entirely loses themselves to the Beast, when the man or woman they once were is gone forever, there is one final frenzy as the Beast seeks to destroy as much and as fast as it can manage. The vampire becomes a raw force of destruction, and in that time, becomes more powerful and dangerous than they could imagine before they kill and eat and kill and eat and nothing else.

There is no reasoning with the Beast in this form. There is probably no return. We put these plagued animals down as soon as we find them. That is the only sure way to stop the destruction.

Of course, your Grandmother Penne has heard of a monster in the cold north woods that is a vampire in a constant state of frenzy. It is old and powerful and can seem to plan and reason. It chooses its battles to ensure its survival. Is this what comes of a long period of Wassail, or a unique expression of the Beast? Who can say? I don't go into the woods. Ever.

Golconda

And so what's the end of your story? Murdered by a fellow? Soul eaten by a nemesis? Become a wild animal to be put down? Fall asleep and never wake?

Maybe there's another way. Here, I'll speak softly as there are those vampires who don't care for these things to ever be discussed.

The story goes that you can make peace with your Beast, and find a balance between animal and human that grants you a state of beautification. You become like a saint among us. You retain your dark powers, but the sun no longer kills. You do not need the blood of others to survive. You cannot be stopped by a stake through the heart.

Those of us who go looking for the blessed state of Golconda likely die in the process of looking. Further, it is possible that the Antediluvians themselves have the secret and seek to keep it from the likes of you and I. So even if you did reach such a blessed state, be assured, you'd be hunted until you were ash.

But maybe it's worth it, even if you only have a moment of peace before the Final Death, aye?

Enemies and Mysteries

I am not your enemy unless I have reason to be. So it is with any vampire. Well and true, we are meant to be like-minded with each other, even as we are territorial and violent. Even as we are a touch cannibalistic we are still first nepotistic.

We are not your only threats, and knowing us and knowing of us is not the only mystery to unravel in these dark nights.

Hunters

If you want my honest opinion why it's so difficult to be a vampire in these violent and fiery nights, blame the Cathars. There have always been hunters, humans foolish enough to think that they have right and virtue to put us to ash. Then again, being Damned, they have a point. The problem is not that sometimes humans find us and want to kill us. The real problem is that now they can gather and unify under papal decree. They can use torture and murder to root us out. They can burn whole villages to the ground to get at just one of us. And they will. But somehow we're the monsters.

Werewolves

Here is what I know about the Lupines. Don't go into the woods unless you've made peace with your maker. Lupines are roving packs of wild men that can transform to wolves and rip you to ashes, or so they are described. I have never seen one, but a beloved Gangrel friend of mine assures me that I have met a few. He says when they are in the cities, hunting for mates and the unclean, they are impossible to tell from humans. This is, until you bite them and they turn into towering monsters and destroy you. They're wolves in lambs' skins.

Witches

If there is a thing more and wretched than us, then it is the witches and warlocks of this dark time. Your Grandmother can remember a time when those rare humans with magical powers were revered instead of feared. In those days, they lived freely and were worshipped as servants of gods, if not gods themselves. Like us, they have since been chased into the shadows of humanity, living as a shallow echo of their past gloryand fearing the stake and the Inquisitor. Unlike us, though, they have only one miserable



lifetime to suffer. Unlike us, they cannot hope to survive to wiser more worldly times. Don't assume them as automatic allies against the Cross, my love, because they're greedy for your life and the power in your blood. They will use you in pieces and parts if you don't use them first.

Shining Ones

Now you'll think this old woman mad, but the hours wear on and I think my guard is low enough to tell you about the other things that lurk in the brambles and the thorns. Living in this world and also outside this world are the Others, the Shining Ones whose name you should never speak aloud. They are wild nature embodied, and unknowable to us. They are our opposites in every way, and you do not want to mix with them.

Ghosts

I have told you that you will kill, if you have not already. And when you kill, sometimes the soul of those you've slain will not cross over for judgment. They will linger to torture you, to finish their lives' works, to protect their loved ones, or out of sheer malice and rage. Whatever the reason, ghosts are as real as you and I, and you will make more than one before your Final Death. And believe me when I tell you, ever there was a ghost who was upfront about the cause of their torment. They are no simple puzzles to unfold and destroy, no matter what our Roman cousins might tell us.

Deeper Mysteries Still

Here now, I'll tell you that these are not the only things that share the night with you. Danger and excitement are around every corner, if you go looking for it or not. Dig deep enough in the ground, look to the trees and the deepest wood, under the Holy See or in your local crypt. Know that there are deeper mysteries than the likes of me hopes ever to experience.

Dig, and you'll find something. Always.

Lexicon

Amaranth, the: The act of drinking the hearts-blood or soul of another Cainite. While questionable in its ethics, it is highly effective as a means to gain an instant, significant increase in vampiric power.

ancilla (pl. ancillae): A middling-aged vampire usually somewhere around Tenth and Eleventh Generation, though age is a more important indicator. Tends to be between 100 and 200 years old and hungry for power.

Antediluvian: Vampires of the Third Generation. Unknowable and perhaps only myth, the secret motivations behind the War of Princes is often attributed to the Antediluvians.

Beast, the: The tangible manifestation of a vampire's Damnation, the hungry monster that lives in her skin and drives her to hunt, kill, and frenzy.

Becoming, the: Either a term for a vampire's Embrace, or the agonizing period just after the Embrace as the human dies and the vampire is born.

Bitter Crusade, the: Events surrounding the Fourth Crusade, which bring about the end of the Long Night.

Blood Oath, the: The bond of blood that enslaves someone who drinks Cainite vitae.

Book of Nod, The: An often-translated text purported to tell the story of the first vampire. Many translations exist, but none agree on every detail.

Cainite: A vampire.

Caitiff: A vampire with no claim of clan, or a vampire who was forced out of his clan.

childe: A vampire's get.

clan: One of 13 great vampire family lines. Each clan has a unique collection of gifts and a unique curse to their blood.

consanguineous: Vampires who share a sire; a brother or sister in blood.

coterie: A group of vampires that live and act together for mutual protection.

Damned, the: All vampires in any culture where the *Book of Nod* is recognized. A society of the dead.

domain: A region of land, industry, wealth, and herd ruled over by a vampire. A domain can be as large as the vampire that holds it can maintain. Some are only so big as a building or a farm, while others are whole sprawling city states.

domitor: A vampire who possesses another via the Blood Oath.

elder: A vampire over the age of two hundred years old.

Embrace, the: The act of killing a person and birthing a vampire.

Erciyes Fragments, the: A known collection of apocrypha from the *Book of Nod*, detailing the Cainite creation myth.

fledgling: A freshly Embraced vampire, traditionally one that has not yet been introduced to Damned society still under her sire's wing.

Gehenna: The Final Nights when Caine and the Antediluvians will rise and battle each other over the final fate of the world.

Generation: How many steps a vampire is from their progenitor, which denotes how potent her blood is.

ghoul: A human tool, empowered by and addicted to vampire blood.

Golconda: A state of balance between the Beast and the soul, achieved by a vampire making peace with herself.

haven: A safe place a vampire sleeps to escape the ravages of the sun.

kine, the: Humanity. People. Anything not a vampire or a ghoul.

Kiss, the: The act of feeding, specifically the euphoric feeling in kine when bitten by a vampire.

Laibon: African word for Cainite; this term eschews the Caine mythology.

Lextalionis: The Traditions as handed down in the *Book of Nod*.

lineage: The family line of a vampire tracing back sire to sire.

Long Night, the: The dark, calmer period prior to the War of Princes.

lord: A vampire ruler of a domain.

Lupine: A werewolf.

Methuselah: Vampires of the Fourth and Fifth generation. The oldest active vampires.

neonate: A vampire under one hundred years old.

Prince: A traditional city ruler, claiming authority over the Traditions.

progenitor: The first vampire, thought to be Caine in regions where the *Book of Nod* is accepted as true.

regnant: A vampire in possession of a ghoul.

revenant: The offspring of a ghoul family that has developed some strange powers independent of direct intervention from a regnant.

Road: Vampiric ethics and spiritual guidance that a vampire uses to justify the actions he takes and survive the ravages of the ages.

sire: A vampire who creates another vampire.

Thaumaturgy: Blood magic.

Third Mortal, the: Another name for Caine in Noddist regions.

thrall: A vampire or kine possessed by a vampire through the Blood Oath.

Traditions of Caine, the: The rules allegedly handed down by the progenitor of vampires through the *Book of Nod*. The wording and meanings of each Tradition is hotly contested.

vessel: Most usually, a kine from whom a vampire drinks.

vitae: Blood.

War of Ages, the: The ostensible war between Antediluvians, fought with entire clans, cities, and nations as pawns.

War of Princes, the: The current war for territory and control between provincial lords.





She appeared a pious woman of great kindness. One must never trust a woman too giving, for she is a trap laid out by the Devil.

The nest of vipers has afforded me a strange sort of kindness. My cell has a bed, table, and paper on which to write. Ink. I think that in their animalistic intelligence, they understand that I am a scholar and that writing is a way to keep me idle.

Brothers, I scarce believe these words will ever reach you, and I mourn for the wisdom I have garnered as it will die with me. We so long believed that the demon, the vampyre, is one species. We were so very wrong. I have come to find that these beasts vary in shades and means in an array and verity that we have never expected. And worse, these varieties of damned are each unique in the ways to combat and destroy them. Heaven help us. Where is God in the face of it all? Where?

My keepers debate outside of my cell what to do with me. This is a nest; they live together though they are from varied family lines, as if they were different monsters entirely. The beautiful one, she pretends at piety with skill enough to fool the saints, and sometimes I believe she believes what she says. She is begging for me to be treated with mercy. There is a brutish one, he wears the mark of a king on his brow, though his dress is of a common man. When my food is brought, he barks "kneel," and Heaven help me, I kneel and stay knelt until he leaves the room. He is stronger than flames, I think. He wants me slain.

There is a wretch among them, a terrible victim of hideous birth with a face like a melted wax doll. She assures the others that there is always a use for a man who can write.

The wretch is cunning, clever, and would be impossible for us to find and destroy if we were pressed to. They are like rats, mostly harmless until they are not, and impossible to be entirely rid of. Oh God, what have you made?

Saints weep, she has come to see me and lay beside my cot. She weeps blood from her eyes and prays to the Virgin for deliverance from her condition. I believe her. I tried to minister to her, telling her that if she simply let me go, I could help, but…

Outside my door was yet another variety of beasts. He dressed as a priest, and commanded her with shadows in his soul. He spoke of a Dark Father with weight of true belief. Jesus strike me down, please, least his compelling words sway me too.

Chapter Two: The Clans of Caine

13:19 The angel spoke thusly. "If the dragon has thirteen heads, do not strike at the neck. If you shouldst remove one head, another shall grow in its place.

13:20 Strike between the heads, then move aside, for they will lash out and strike itself.

13:21 The dragon cannot regrow a head it itself devours."

-The Testament of the Demon Finder of Hattin, Noddist Apocrypha

One creates three. Three create thirteen. The thirteen of the Third Generation created thirteen clans, which comprise most of what we call Cainite society. While the thirteen clans are far from all vampires, they stand as a stark majority of vampires in the Dark Medieval World of 1242. They are the status quo.

Muddy Waters

In 1242, what defines "clan" is not so clear as it once was. To most, the Salubri are no longer considered a clan, yet they boast clear lineage back to an Antediluvian progenitor named Saulot. However, in 1133, a mob of Tremere sorcerers raided Saulot's tomb and committed Amaranth upon his corpse. This turned the Tremere into a de facto clan, as their eldest became Third Generation with the crime. Over the past century, the Tremere have grown in size and prominence, and most Cainites recognize them as a clan, despite their ill-gotten status.

So what constitutes a clan? Ultimately, it comes down to those groups with the gall to call themselves clans and the power to shut down any argument against the claim.

High and Low Clans

Cainite society, and indeed Cainites in general, thrive on power differentials. In the Dark Medieval World, this happens through a phenomenon called High and Low Clans. At its core, a given region or city determines which clans are fashionable and aristocratic, while labeling others as less so.

This can vary widely from region to region. While there are recurring trends (for example, the Ventrue and Lasombra are recognized as High Clans most the world around, and usually Nosferatu are recognized as a Low Clan), the rules are far from hard. Often, a region's ruling Cainite hails from a High Clan, and clans who have a history of antagonism in a region are generally seen as Low Clans.

The delineation is also harder in some places than in others. For example, in Cairo, one would not dare insult the Followers of Set. In Cairo, they're the highest of the High Clans, despite being considered Low Clans in most



European courts. When a clan stands as a wide majority in a given region, they're afforded High Clan status.

In some cities, High Clans derive their placement from some mythological divine right. If a city ascribes to a certain scholar's interpretation of the *Book of Nod*, that interpretation might favor certain ruling clans, heralding them as blessed by Caine, God, or some other force (coincidentally, of course).

Members of Low Clans are typically expected to defer to those of High Clan lineage. Traveling Cainites quickly learn to uncover these local traditions immediately upon or before entering a new region.

Lastly, any bloodline not openly boasting genesis in a High Clan is considered a Low Clan, or lower, depending on location. Exceptions to this rule dwindle by the night, which bodes ill for the waning Salubri.



ASSAMITES

We are not here to reap the benefits of your hard work, or to take what you so richly deserve. No, if you sow a strong seed, we will not take it. We are here to reap the rotten, the corrupt, and the depraved — those who have been judged unworthy.

Most of Cainite society remains ignorant about the Assamites' nature and intentions. They view the Assamites as a young clan emerging from the Middle East to take a bold stance in the nightly struggles between Cainites. Only elders and Cainite scholars can describe a time when the Assamites were active members of vampire society, before they retreated into their own studies in Alamut, the clan's sanctuary in the mountains of Anatolia. European vampires rarely interact with any but the clan's ambassadors, the viziers, and a few sorcerers. The clan presents an organized front with an uncanny ability to communicate over long distances, as well as keep in touch with their brethren in Alamut.

Many Assamites trace their roots back to lands now known as Persia, where the clan's founder was born, but members come from all over the Middle East. In recent years, many younger members follow Islamic beliefs. Older ancillae and elders look upon these younger Cainites with disdain, believing that mortal religion distracts from their true purpose. However, the rest of Cainite society mostly interacts with the younger vampires, and the name Assamite has become nearly synonymous with Muslim, earning them the sobriquet Saracens. Many older Assamites are happy to let the other Cainites believe what they want, as long as it allows them to further their own goals.

The Assamites do not refer to themselves as Saracens, preferring instead to be called the Children of Haqim, after their progenitor. Haqim crafted a specific set of rules, which he charged his clan to follow. Cainites are dangerous creatures who meddle too much in the affairs of mortals. The Children of Haqim are charged with respecting their elders, protecting mortals from other Cainites, and judging (and punishing) other Cainites. The Children of Haqim are charged with reclaiming the blood of wasteful Cainites, those who misuse mortals and should not have such gifts. This leads the clan to engage in diablerie as a matter of course, though few adhere strictly to this tenet.



The clan consists of three sects that work together closely to accomplish the goal of judgment. The sorcerers keep the other members of the clan in communication with each other, as well as providing for the clan while at Alamut. The warriors judge vampires and mete out punishment when necessary. The viziers are the public face of the clan, gathering information and keeping the clan informed on politics and current affairs. Most Assamites living within Cainite-held cities are viziers, with a few sorcerers supporting them.

Sobriquet: Children of Haqim, Saracens

Appearance: Nearly all Assamites are Middle Eastern in appearance, though some neonates have been Embraced as far west as the Iberian Peninsula. All Assamites are required to spend time in Alamut shortly after Embrace, and most adopt traditional Middle Eastern dress regardless of their origins. Dress between the three sects of the clan varies due to functionality. Sorcerers tend to dress strictly traditional, warriors adopt more comfortable clothes for long sojourns, and viziers sometimes adopt the dress of whatever city they happen to be living in.



Haven: Assamites choose easily defended dwellings away from the eyes of mortals. This is especially true when visiting European domains. They tend to value security over material comforts, favoring a well-defended shack over an exposed estate. Many Assamites choose dwellings outside city centers, but near enough to keep an eye on other vampires and their interactions with the mortal population. However, practicality sometimes means luxury; certain Assamite viziers need to impress mortal and Cainite courts, so if they open their doors to visitors, they decorate well.

Character Creation: Assamite viziers are both scholars and act as ambassadors, and prefer a mix of both Social and Mental Attributes and Abilities. Most Children of Haqim have at least one dot in Mentor (usually their sire). Some have one or two dots in Generation, due to the practice of diablerizing those who are judged unfit. Many tend to follow the Road of Heaven or Humanity, with a few following the Road of Kings. Many of the older warriors and the more traditional Assamites follow the Road of Blood.

Sorcerer and Warrior information is on p. 431.

Clan Disciplines: Auspex, Presence, Quietus (Hematus)

Weakness: Assamite viziers are rigorous to a fault. Each character has an obsession with her highest intellectual or creative Ability, which acts as a derangement. While the derangement is active, the character's aura glows in a way as to provide hints to the vizier's true Nature, as well as the object of her obsession, visible to Auspex users. Additionally, Assamites darken with age. This is a slow process. But over the centuries, Assamite skin blackens to a matte onyx.

Organization: Due to the abilities of the sorcerers, Clan Assamite is more intricately organized than most. The clan follows the Eldest, usually the eldest of Haqim's childer not currently in torpor. Each of the three sects has its own internal leader. The three sects collectively work together to deal with the night-to-night operations of the clan. Each sect's role is loosely defined by their own interpretations of Haqim's decrees. The viziers view themselves as judges only, taking the measure of Cainites in the world and alerting their brethren to those who are unfit to retain the blood of Caine. The sorcerers spend their time researching ways to improve interactions and relations with mortals, and play a large part in keeping the three sects in communication at all times. The warriors tend to fill the role of executioner when a Cainite has been judged unworthy, often leading nomadic lives and going where their brethren direct them to fulfill their duties.

Stereotypes

Tremere: They do not know what they toy with.

Brujah: They claim to be Philosopher-Kings, yet their passions dictate their actions, leaving little room for actual philosophy.

Cappadocian: As long as their research into death does not somehow leak into the mortal sphere, I see nothing wrong with them.

Gangrel: Probably the least problematic of all the other clans, the Gangrel understand honor. I have yet to judge a Gangrel unfit.

Followers of Set: Heretics, every last one of them. Their debauchery and evil should not be tolerated.

BRUJAH

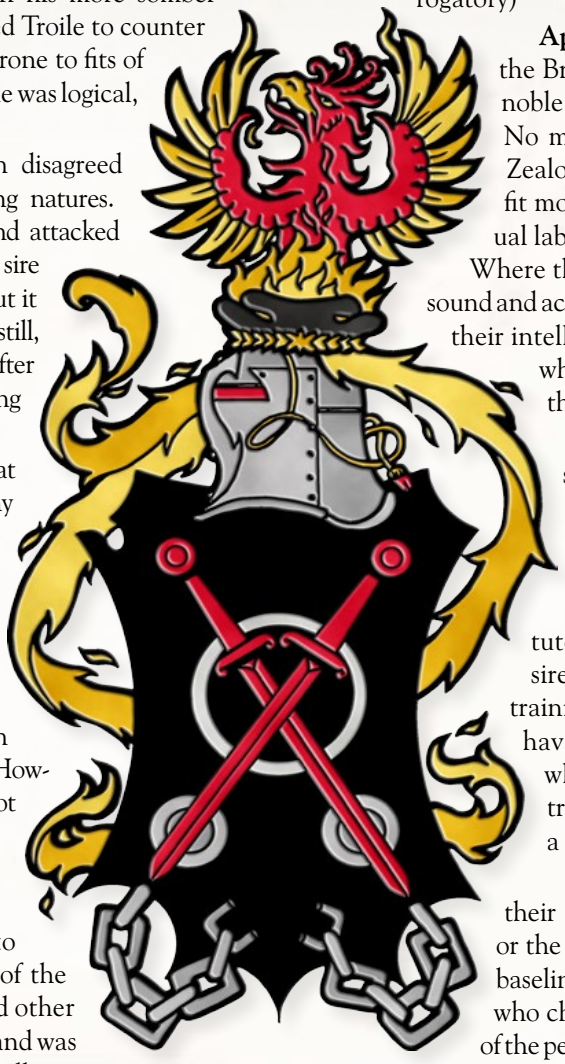
Last night wasn't the end of times. Tonight is. Every night, wake knowing tonight is the last night ever, and fight to end it a better place. When it doesn't end, build on that change, and create a more perfect tomorrow. Why? Because tomorrow's the end of times.

In the First City, the first among the Brujah sought to explore and understand the Cainite condition from as many angles as possible. However, his passion for his existence caused difficulties with his more somber brethren. After the Flood, he sired Troile to counter that passion; where Brujah was prone to fits of rage that set his Beast to roar, Troile was logical, methodical, and calculating.

However, Troile and Brujah disagreed frequently due to their conflicting natures. Finally, Brujah flew into frenzy and attacked Troile. Troile sank his fangs into his sire to drain the fury from his blood, but it only enraged Brujah further. Worse still, Troile continued to drink even after his sire's veins were dry, consuming Brujah's soul.

When called to answer for what he had done, Troile listed a litany of reasons based soundly in logic. Troile's reasoning convinced other Antediluvians that murder was the best course of action to preserve the peace between the descendants of Caine and the children of Seth. Some say this was the first rebellion that sparked the Second City's fall. However, when Caine returned, he was not convinced. He cursed Troile and his line with the fiery passions of their progenitor, multiplied threefold.

Troile eventually came to Carthage. Longing for the days of the First and Second Cities, he called other Cainites to recreate those times, and was quite successful for a time. Eventually, envy and fear led the Ventrue and Malkavians of Rome to incite the fifty-year battle that destroyed the Brujah utopia, cementing the enmity between the Brujah and the Ventrue for centuries to come. None have seen Troile since, and many assume he met his Final Death during the fall of Carthage.



Sobriquet: Zealots, Philosopher-Kings, Rabble (derogatory)

Appearance: Depending on the area, the Brujah could be the most influential noble or the most innocuous peasant. No matter where in the world a given Zealot is, they tend to choose physically fit mortals for the Embrace; hardy manual laborers, strong knights, and the like. Where they can, they look for mortals with sound and active minds as well, if only to preserve their intellectual pursuits. However, in areas where conflict with other clans is high, they get less picky about intelligence.

Havens and prey: The Zealots seek out the highest concentrations of people they can, such as cities and major trading villages. Rare is the Brujah who ties himself solely to a small fiefdom. During a fledgling's tutelage, he often havens with his sire, undergoing physical and mental training. Recently, likeminded Zealots have established communal havens where they argue philosophy and train together. These "packs" provide a unique challenge in self-control.

Backgrounds: Zealots collect their prospective childer from nobility or the clergy to ensure a strong, educated baseline. They especially favor those kine who champion a cause to improve the lot of the people around them, whether through strength of arms or wit and cunning. A few rare exceptions come from the peasant class, namely those with remarkable speed and strength in life.

Character Creation: Brujah can be fierce warriors favoring Physical Attributes, charismatic leaders favoring

Social Attributes, or scholars of Cainite history or philosophy favoring Mental Attributes. However, Zealots tend to prize physical prowess, so it rarely comes up as tertiary. The vast majority of Brujah have at least some martial Abilities, either through mortal training or during their initial tutelage as a fledgling. Most possess at least rudimentary Academics and other Knowledges.

Clan Disciplines: Celerity, Potence, Presence

Weakness: The passion that inspires the Brujah from night to night can send them into fits of rage if left unchecked. The difficulties of rolls to resist or guide frenzy are two higher than normal. Additionally, a Brujah may never spend Willpower to avoid frenzy. However, they may spend a point of Willpower to end a frenzy that has already begun.

Organization: With so many causes to champion, Brujah don't so much organize as they would hope. Several Zealots find themselves working at cross purposes, spawning rivalries that last for centuries when they don't explode due to flaring tempers. When several Brujah do work together toward a common goal, only an act of God can dissuade them from their course. A sire and her fledgling childe often operate as one unit while the childe receives proper tutelage. When the childe finds a cause of their own, however, she usually moves on to pursue it. When Brujah organize, it's in cliques, it's in salons. They gather in large enough numbers that bystanders can restrain any debaters that grow violent.

Stereotypes

Baali: Have you ever woken up after a long night, not remembering anything from too much drink, to be sleeping in filth next to the rotting carcass of a sow? Add some more heresy, and then you know the Baali.

Followers of Set: Dead gods are just that. Dead.

Gangrel: They understand the need for the Beast within to come out just as keenly as we, if not more so. It is a shame I see so few of them.

Giovani: I'm sorry, who?

Lasombra: Second-best to the Ventrue, of all clans, is a poor aspiration. Surely they can do better.

Malkavians: Seers? Perhaps. Complicit in letting whatever broken visions appear in their head come to pass? Certainly.

Nosferatu: Useful, but keep them at arm's length, and not just for the stench.

Salubri: A cautionary tale. The passion of their Warriors put some of my brethren to shame.

Toreador: If they pursued important things like they pursued beauty and decadence, they could rival us in the scope of the changes they could bring about.

Tremere: Many of my blood are strong advocates of change. The Tremere are a clear example when change can go too far.

Ventrue: They call themselves Kings, but so much corruption in the world comes directly from royalty.



Cappadocians

Do my methods unnerve you? They shouldn't.
If you want to find something eternal, you must be prepared to face the cruelties of death.

To the Cappadocians, death is a mystery to be revered, studied, and ultimately solved. Some seek their answers in dissection and studies of the cadaver. Others commune with the dead or use the clan's magics to explore the depths of the Underworld. The Cappadocians are the lorekeepers and historians of the Cainites, and they command powerful Necromancy to aid them on their quest for mastery of unlife.

The clan's founder, Cappadocius, is not eager to share his personal history with his clan, but freely dispenses his wisdom to the clan's elders. This wisdom has included everything from vague instructions to seek out the mysteries of death to grand visions of underground utopian cities and apocalyptic visions. It is not uncommon for clan members to discuss these visions either in scholarly texts or during their regular meetings at Erciyes.

One of the unique and well-guarded powers of the Cappadocians is the discipline of Necromancy. While many Cainites consider the practice of Necromancy distasteful or even immoral, it is difficult to argue with its power or effectiveness under the right circumstances. Though Cappadocians rarely seek the notoriety of princedom, it is not uncommon to see a Cappadocian as a seneschal or an advisor (such as Lord Camden, Chamberlain of London) to a higher political authority.

Sobriquets: Necromancers, Graverobbers

Appearance: The Cappadocians are a cosmopolitan clan and can be found from the Holy Land to the monasteries of Ireland. They tend toward conservative dress, as many Necromancers were members of religious orders in life. When traveling among mortals, the Clan of Death dresses to conceal or obscure their features. Veils and hooded cloaks are common. More theatrical members of the clan may dress in funerary masks or burial shrouds.

Haven: Like most scholars, the Necromancers tend toward practicality in their feeding and lodging arrangements. They feed from targets of opportunity, and make practical and secure Havens. They are typically not picky about feeding from corpses (or corpses-to-be). A steady supply of corpses for Necromancy is a necessity for many, and urban Necromancers will typically purchase from local collectors.

Background: Mystics, poets, cenobites, and dervishes as well as scholars, magicians, and surgeons are commonly seen among the Necromancers. As a rule, the Cappadocians do not Embrace capriciously. The clan is diverse and cosmopolitan, however, and Necromancers originate from all walks of life. An inquisitive mind and insight into matters of life and death are far more important than mortal breeding, occupation, or influence.

Character Creation: The Clan of Death highly prizes Mental Attributes and Knowledges such

as Medicine or Occult. Typically, Physical Attributes come second, with a particular focus on manual skill or Stamina. Rare is the Cappadocian with high Social Attributes, though a sly, manipulative Necromancer could easily take advantage of the fact that most other Cainites do not see the Cappadocians as political rivals.

Many Cappadocians follow the Road of Heaven, viewing their religiosity and morality as a way to achieve knowledge of God and thus triumph over death. Others take a more detached approach and follow the Road of Bones.

Clan Disciplines: Auspex, Fortitude, Necromancy

Weaknesses: The Cappadocian affinity for death is marked indelibly on the visage of its clan members. All Cappadocians appear ashy and corpselike, and are unable to affect the appearance of life like other vampires by spending vitae. This condition becomes more pronounced as the Necromancer ages, with the eldest Cappadocians appearing as mummified corpses. This grim visage presents the Cappadocian with a +2 difficulty on any Social rolls that would be hindered by a corpselike appearance.

Organization: Every ten years, a grand meeting of the Clan of Death is called at the temple of Erciyes, an ancient city built by order of Cappodocius himself. There, the Necromancers confer with one another and look over the clan's prized collections of Cainite lore, including the *Erciyes Fragments*, the most complete version of the *Book of Nod*. Of course, not all members attend, as travel is hardly practical. This leads to a sense that physical proximity to Erciyes grants additional favor in clan matters.

Individual clan members will also meet less formally at mortal universities or correspond with lengthy letters with each other about scholarly manners in a less formal fashion.

Stereotypes

Assamite: Tread lightly. Learn what you can and bend their laws to placate them when you must.

Followers of Set: You have nothing to offer me but a knife in my back. Begone.

Lasombra: There are two types of Lasombra. One is a master of shadow-puppets who rules by lies and chicanery. The other knows the true depths of the Abyss, and his knowledge is dangerous, seductive, and powerful. It is not always easy to tell the difference.

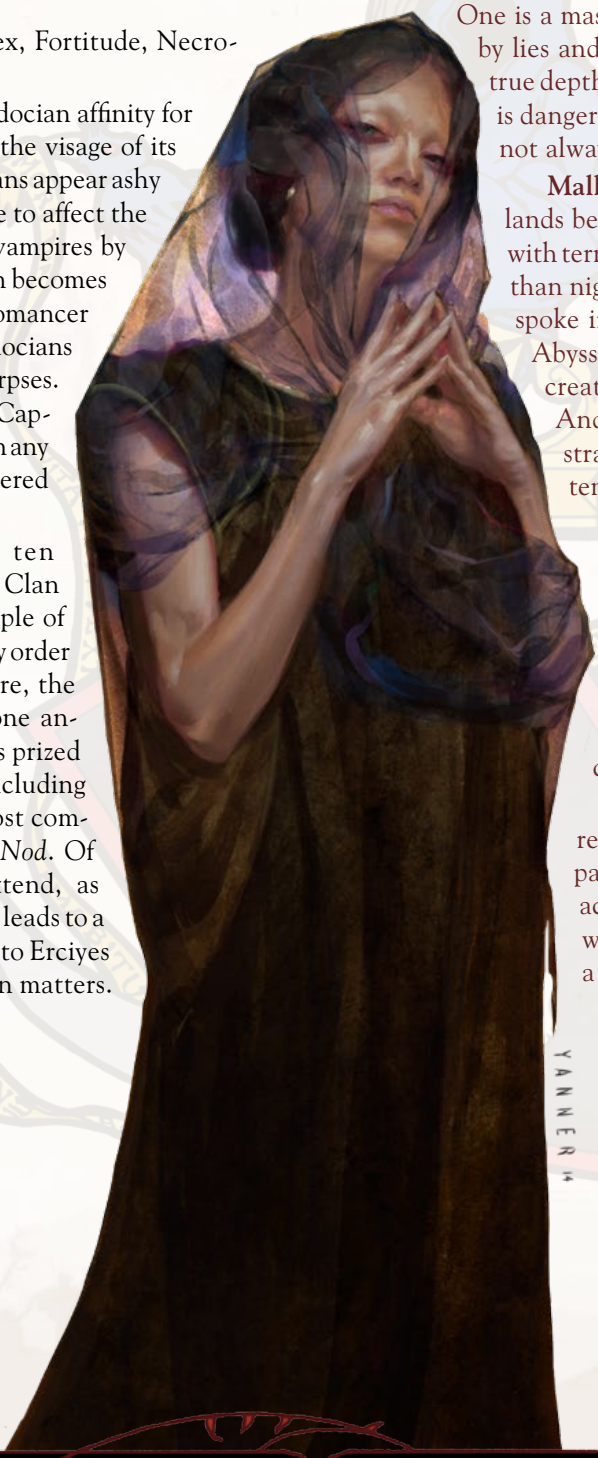
Malkavian: While venturing in the lands beyond, I found a pack of the Dead with terrible twisted claws and eyes blacker than night. They moved as one, and they spoke in chorus the dark wisdom of the Abyss. I have no doubts that those vile creatures wanted nothing but my end. And yet, I find them much more straightforward and useful than attempting to deal with a Malkavian.

Nosferatu: What sort of necromancer would I be if I refused to deal with ugly or foul-smelling things?

Toreador: A grinning skull holds more secrets than a painted face.

Tremere: Impressive, if not commendable.

Ventrue: They are quick to remind us that they are our glorious patrons and protectors, and slow to actually provide us with protection when we've needed it most. Perhaps a change is in order.



GANGREL

Of course it's uncomfortable until you get used to doing it. Come closer. I'll show you how to do it right.

No one sane, sensible, or with a choice chooses to live alone in the wilds and on the roads between cities, towns, and communities. Even rugged farmers and woodsmen still live as close to other people as their purpose allows. For the vampire, what is folly in humanity is death for the Damned.

So why do the Gangrel live at the crossroads, under the harbors, and in the mountains? They are driven to it. They may be driven out by frightened peasants, ignorant authority figures, jealous husbands, or wicked clergy. They may have left on their own, pulled by adventure, curiosity, or considerable misanthropy. But no matter the trigger, the Gangrel left because they could not fit anywhere civilized. Outsiders like this were strange and special as humans, but as vampires, they thrive.



As humans living outside of normal society, their lots were difficult but they survived against the odds, and so it is no different for the Gangrel as a vampire. She may have been Embraced with no ceremony, little romance, and no explanation, but no matter. She survives and endures in ways no other vampire could. She was hard and right and different in the ways she lived and loved before death. In that way, the transition to the Becoming is considerably more seamless. A Gangrel does not mourn her humanity; people never had much room for her anyway.

That is not to say that Gangrel eschew all human contact. While many prefer solitude or the company of loyal and predictable animals, they crave humans and their blood like any other vampire does. And like any other vampire, they're drawn to other predators in the complicated push and pull of the Beast. The main difference is that the Gangrel flaunts societal expectation, interacting with others on her terms. She talks only to who she wants to, lives where she feels like it, and beds who she desires to bed with little regard to propriety or the law.

Sobriquet: Outlaws, Wolf's-Heads

Appearance: Whatever is expected and appropriate in local human society, the Gangrel ignores it or only pays enough attention to mock it. She may wear the armor of warriors and lawmen she's slain while protecting her freedom. He may wear the gowns of a lady and live as one, if it suits him. The Gangrel is mutable and can live as he likes.

Overall, his dress, like his life, is rugged and practical, but just like his life, it is how he chooses. Some Gangrel may be very particular about the image they present, treating their look like he might treat his herd: with considerable consideration and territoriality.

Haven and Prey: A Gangrel sleeps anywhere she damn well wants to. That's not to say all Outlaws live in the dirt and under the water. Havening in the land is costly, so most Gangrel have a real haven somewhere on the outskirts or outside of civilization. Lone hunting shacks, watchman's posts, outlaw camps, and fur trader outposts all function well for Outlaws. For the nomadic Gangrel, moving with a herd like travelers,

highwaymen, or pirated vessels is not uncommon, though it can be more challenging.

Note that these locations are rarely totally free of human contact. Even the isolated woodman's shack may be visited on occasion. Animals work for some, but it's very rare that a Gangrel can live entirely without human vessels. Some Gangrel need the wild hunt, running after a harried prey through village streets and along empty roadways. Some prefer husbandry and herd tending. Some live like spiders, luring in prey. The point is, the Gangrel does it however she pleases, and damn anyone who tries to limit her predilections and preferences.

The Embrace: When animals mate or eat, few would describe the act as romantic or erotic. This is where the Gangrel differ. The brutality of grabbing a human off the road or from the tavern and into the night to breathe their last is sensible to the Gangrel. Doing it any other way would be passionless and cruel. Abandoning a new whelp isn't done out of selfishness or abuse, but to ensure the new childe will survive the long nights ahead. Most Gangrel sires are watching from the shadows, and so it isn't usually actual abandonment. It's hard to see the intimacy of what a Gangrel does from the outside, which is how they prefer it.

Character Creation: Gangrel tend to favor Physical Attributes first, with cunning and wit coming from secondary Mental Attributes. Gangrel tend to come from among the most Talented human stock and favor these instinct-driven abilities, with Skills as secondary with a focus on what they need to learn to survive. Gangrel can build some truly grand Herds over the years while controlling their territory.

Clan Disciplines: Animalism, Fortitude, Protean

Weakness: When a Gangrel frenzies, her Beast rises to the surface, and the wildness in her blood finds purchase in her flesh and in her mind. She may develop a small physical or mental animal trait that suits either local vampire mythology, or a predatory or scavenging animal in the region. Examples include overgrown eyebrows, patches of fur, or an hour of torpor after feeding. The net result is that the trait should give them a +1 difficulty penalty and one automatic failure on some relevant dice pool. The trait and the penalty remain until the player accepts the automatic failure.

Organization: There is no organization universally accepted or practiced within the clan. While a city may have a tight-knit family of Gangrel following a strict, pack-like hierarchy, the next city over may have a group of Outlaws who barely recognize each other's existence. Some may practice a dedication to clan against all others, while some particularly strong or arrogant Gangrel may see it as every monster for herself. Respect is never given within the clan. If your sire respects another Outlaw, there is no reason you should respect the clansman in kind unless he's earned it. Hierarchy, if there is one, is built on blood and deeds, not tradition.

Stereotypes

Ventrue: Stone walls can't keep me out, Prince. Hope I never have the need to come in.

Tremere: We won't forget what you've done.

Nosferatu: What are they digging for?

Tzimisce: We're the same. You just do it in an empty old castle to screaming peasants. I do it to myself in the glory of the open moonlight and wild of the wood.

Ravnos: I travel as well. The difference between us is that I leave no trace in my passing.

Followers of Set: They worship snakes. Snakes aren't even proper predators.

Malkavian: Why did you drive me from your city, but he stays? Think about your answer.

Brujah: There is more to the Beast than anger.

Cappadocian: Who?

Lasombra: Sad days coming for you. I can smell it on the wind.



LASOMBRA

Jealousy is the provenance of fools and pretenders.

The Lasombra are leaders and prophets, kings and caliphs, generals and holy men. They are scrupulous in deciding who merits the Embrace, and ruthless in destroying those of the clan who prove unworthy. The only threat to the power of clan Lasombra is, perhaps, clan Lasombra itself.

No longer as actively involved in clan affairs, Montano, Lasombra's eldest childe, rules distantly from the Castle of Shadows in Sicily. It is there that he guards his sire's slumber, which is said to be troubled with dark dreams of shadows and the Abyss.

Religious sentiment runs deep; perhaps it is because of the clan's deep connection to darkness, but many of the clan walk the Road of Heaven. This deeply-held fervor fuels conflict within the clan and turns their attention inward. In Iberia, the Shadow Reconquista rages – a war between Christian and Muslim Cainites dividing the clan. The ripples extend far outside Iberia, involving even distant partisans.

Christian Lasombra within the Church funnel resources toward Christians forces, while Muslim Lasombra seek alliances with other clans, especially the Assamites. They also try to convince their Jewish clanmates to stand with them, as they will surely face worse treatment should the Christians seize power in Iberia.

For Christian Lasombra, the schism without is mirrored by the schism within. Within the ranks of the Church lurks the Cainite Heresy, a heretical cult dominated by Lasombra priests and bishops. The Cainite Heresy believes that Cainites, having been marked by God, are akin to angelic beings, and the Curse of Caine marks Cainites as holy beings. Of course, even non-Christian Lasombra find this view to be blasphemy and take every chance to expunge such teachings they can.



Sobriquet: Magisters

Appearance: The Clan of Shadows is diverse, with its membership evenly split among those of Spanish, Italian, Jewish, North African, or Arabian origin. Most Lasombra dress in the finest clothes that money can buy, be it precious silks from China, rich French brocades, or the lush woven fabrics of Arabia. Even those in the Church, which nominally eschews wealth and its trappings, are often of sufficiently high rank that some sartorial extravagance is to be expected.

Haven and Prey: Some Lasombra born to wealth and power choose to remain in their family holdings, masquerading as their own heirs in order to retain control over what is theirs. This allows them plenty of opportunities to feed, as large numbers of family, servants, and retainers are needed to maintain such estates.

Others, not wanting the troubles that come with concealing their true nature among such large numbers of mortals, establish solitary, lavishly appointed havens, sacrificing the convenient availability of prey for secrecy and security. Some members of the Cainite Heresy feed on their congregants, passing it off as a sacred rite. But

this practice is best kept secret, as it is sure to draw the ire of Christian Lasombra with more orthodox religious convictions.

The Embrace: Lasombra frequently choose their childer from among the wealthy, powerful, or politically elite. However, Magisters will just as frequently Embrace someone of low status but high ambition and intellect. Mere accidents of birth cannot determine someone's strength of character or their ability to lead.

Clan Disciplines: Dominate, Obtenebration, Potence

Weaknesses: Lasombra cannot be seen in any sort of reflective surface, which makes it difficult to conceal their supernatural nature from mortals. Additionally, members of the Clan of Shadows cannot abide the presence of bright light; they take an additional level of aggravated damage from any exposure to sunlight.

Organization: Within the clan exists an organization known as the Amici Noctis, the Friends of Night. Membership is by invitation only, and invitations are only extended to those who have truly proven their value to the clan. The Amici Noctis preside over the Courts of Blood. Any member of the clan may petition to the Courts of Blood for the right of Amaranth against someone they see as unworthy to be Lasombra. By officially sanctioning the Amaranth, the Amici Noctis maintains strict control of its use. Any Lasombra performing the Amaranth without permission faces summary destruction.



The Amici Noctis is most powerful in central Europe. Montano famously dislikes the Friends of Night and has barred them from Sicily and the Castle of Shadows. In the Iberian Peninsula, the Shadow Reconquista hampers the power of the Amici Noctis. Officially, the Amici Noctis has declared neutrality on any issue relating to the Shadow Reconquista. In practice, this is because they have no power to impose order on the chaos in Iberia.

Stereotypes

High Clans: A useless distinction drawn by equally useless people. The Lasombra hold power because we value excellence, not birth. That we are counted as High and not Low says more about them than it does about us.

Low Clans: Let the other High Clans spurn them. Only a fool shuns a useful tool or an invaluable ally.

Assamites: We share more with the Children of Haqim than we do with most other Clans. Let others be blinded by prejudice. They are honorable and worthy allies.

Ventrue: The Scions have always confused power and station, much to their detriment. Let them chase after high office; it only makes them easier to manipulate.

Followers of Set: Let them try to bring back the worship of their dead god. Time moves ever forward, and those who try to stand against progress will get trampled every time.

Tzimisce: Godless heathens, the lot of them. They have been offered the chance to turn away from their pagan ways, but have refused. While we cannot deny their power, we cannot trust them either.

MALKAVIANS

You tell me you envy my insight. It comes at a cost. When you speak, I hear you through the cries of everyone I've ever known who passed away. When I beg you repeat yourself, it's because I cannot hear you over the screams of anguish. Yes, that teaches me truths about the soul. But do you envy the lessons?



The year 1242 stands as a particularly difficult time for the Cassandras. In the mortal world, the classic Greek take on mental illness – that it came from organic causes – falls by the wayside. The Church's stance that mental issues are stains on the soul, caused by ungodly behavior, is making great headway. This leads to scrutiny, which leads to misunderstandings, fear, and backlashes. Some of Malkav's brood met Final Death during unexpected daytime exorcisms. Of course, these violent, unholy deaths only fanned the Church's fire. The Malkavians see a great sickness, a catastrophic blight upon the people coming in time. They know this means further persecution of those outside the norm. Cainites objectify the Children of Malkav, seeing them as seer stones, divining rods, and crystal balls. Everyone knows the War of Princes is coming to an end; the ones that can see the winds of fate will know who is destined for victory, and what alliances to make. To some Princes, Malkavians are little more than Court fashion accessories they can use to boast their obvious awareness.

In most Courts, this meant the Cassandras were seen as a Low Clan. In these places, Malkavians were befitting only whatever respect they earned, not afforded recognition for their lineages. Clever Malkavians recognized this meritocratic sentiment and developed a system with which the clan could benefit. These Malkavian cults, these Ordo, sought to revive the clan's ancient role as prophets. They experimented extensively, taunting their Beasts, flaying their skin, ingesting blood fueled with psychotropic substances, and otherwise tempting destruction for wisdom. Sometimes, these dangers bore fruit. More importantly, these Ordo shared their knowledge extensively in order to make every member appear every bit the ideal font of wisdom.

Malkavians don't fight battles; they start wars. Throughout Cainite history, if you look to most major struggles, you'll find a Malkavian at the epicenter. A Malkavian seer urged Roman Ven-

true to devastate the Brujah stronghold at Carthage. The Brujah still hold grudges against the Children of Malkav; they refuse to acknowledge that their dealings with the Baali could have meant an end for all of Caine's get. This is the Malkavian curse. No matter how wise, how intuitive, how insightful a Cassandra happens to be, human nature looks to pick apart the messenger to the message's exclusion.

Sobriquets: Cassandras, Children of Malkav, Seers

Appearance: Sometimes, Malkavians look the part of madness. These rare examples tend to lead short existences, whether they die at the hands of the Church, Cainite society, or even as an act of mercy from their clanmates. If there's one signature trait among the Cassandras, it's *normalcy*. Malkavians learn quickly to blend with their surroundings, even if they couldn't at time of the Embrace. Most were very plain people to begin with, however. The spark of insight presents in the mind, not on the flesh.



Haven: The Cassandras haven in places that look normal in their context. A Malkavian monk sleeps in a monastery, for example. They'll do anything to blend in and not stand out. Rare is the Seer who keeps a lavish home, as most carry a deep-seated awareness that soon, fire will come. After the fire, they say, a deluge.

Backgrounds: Every Malkavian stands as an individual, so each possesses unique needs and interests. They Embrace in accordance with those needs. That lack of predictability affords the clan one of its greatest strengths. If one feature is common amongst prospective Cassandras, it's an inherent calmness and sense of judgment. Finding lucidity presents great challenges for even the most stoic; passionate people make for explosive Malkavians. Of course, some Seers look to the oncoming crises with a sense of denial, and outright violent refusal. These Cainites look for the loudest, the brashest, and the most willing potential childer who will take up the sword of Dementation to defend the clan in the struggles to come.

Character Creation: Malkavians are a cerebral clan. Almost all favor Mental Attributes, and most favor Knowledges. The less stable favor Talents, with which they can manipulate and force change in the world around them. Many possess Allies, in case they need a quick save in the face of persecution. Enterprising Malkavians, particularly Ordo, foster Mentor relationships and Status in order to stage themselves as invaluable.

Clan Disciplines: Auspex, Dementation, Obfuscate.

Weakness: Malkav's children each suffer from an imbalance of the humors that'll never truly fade. At character creation, choose one derangement (see p. 352). This derangement can never be cured, and a Malkavian may only use Willpower to ignore it for a turn at a time. Even powerful gifts of the blood such as Valeren may only push it aside for a night. After such an effort, however, the derangement comes back in full force. For a week thereafter, the Malkavian cannot use Willpower to resist her derangement at all.

Organization: Malkavians cannot formally gather in large numbers, for fear of persecution. If a convocation of Cassandras ever came to pass, it would almost certainly see devastation at the hands of Brujah soldiers.

Clan members each bear unique signs of imbalance. However, certain threads, certain vague hints of prophecy flash among most or even all members. Many assume this a coincidence, that clan members change their stories to make them sound alike. Others whisper that their dead progenitor seeks to return with secrets lost in the labyrinth of the mind.

Stereotypes

Baali: We know the burden of truth at a high price. They overpaid.

Brujah: The tragedy is, we could have let them die. They'll never forgive us for saving them.

Gangrel: Soon we'll be seven together. Then we'll be six apart, and they'll be one alone. In the end though, we'll all be one alone.

Lasombra: You don't know the darkness like I do. To you, it's a tool. To me, it's everything.

Salubri: They aim to heal souls. Our souls are changed, not damaged. So their efforts are a fool's errand.

Tzimisce: Fiends chew bitter flowers. Avoid them.

Ventrue: They value us only because they feel we're useful. Make no mistakes; they'll oppose us quicker than the Brujah when our prophecies stop coming true.

NOSFERATU

Whatever it is, the thing you haven't found yet, or hoped no one would ever uncover, I've got it already. Whatever it is, however much you think it's worth, you can't possibly pay the price I have for this information.

Clan Nosferatu is hunted, make no mistake. When they are skittish, cravenly, or quick to run, it is because there is something out to get them. If they bluster with bravado and aggression, it's because they are cornered. They possess knowledge none were meant to know. It drives them to dig deeper in hopes that somehow they will find a secret so precious it will keep them safe. They delve further into shadows that should stay untouched, and so their danger grows. The clan as a whole spirals toward the sulfurous pits or deeper places that even the Devil fears.

There are secrets in the blood. These terrible truths manifest in Nosferatu flesh, corrupting skin, bending bones, and leaving them as nightmares that even revolt the blind. The story goes that the clan founder, Absimiliard, was a covetous and vainglorious beauty whose obsession with comeliness drove Caine to curse him with a countenance so horrific that the angels wept. Endless rejection by the beautiful people he once counted himself among caused him to seek out and destroy his own get. Stories also tell of terrible blood witches in the eastern woods that devour whole villages in the hopes of killing one single Nosferatu. But those are just stories, and the only truth is what the Nosferatu understand in their blood: they are hunted for what they know, and their only hope is to know more.



Nosferatu deal in secrets. The mundane secrets of their cousins are little more than distractions. No shadow in the Prince's larder can rock a Nosferatu like the truths of their existence, and that is why they can laugh when a city falls apart from the rumors they let loose. The truths behind murder, blackmail, and power corrupted come all too easily.

Sobriquet: Priors

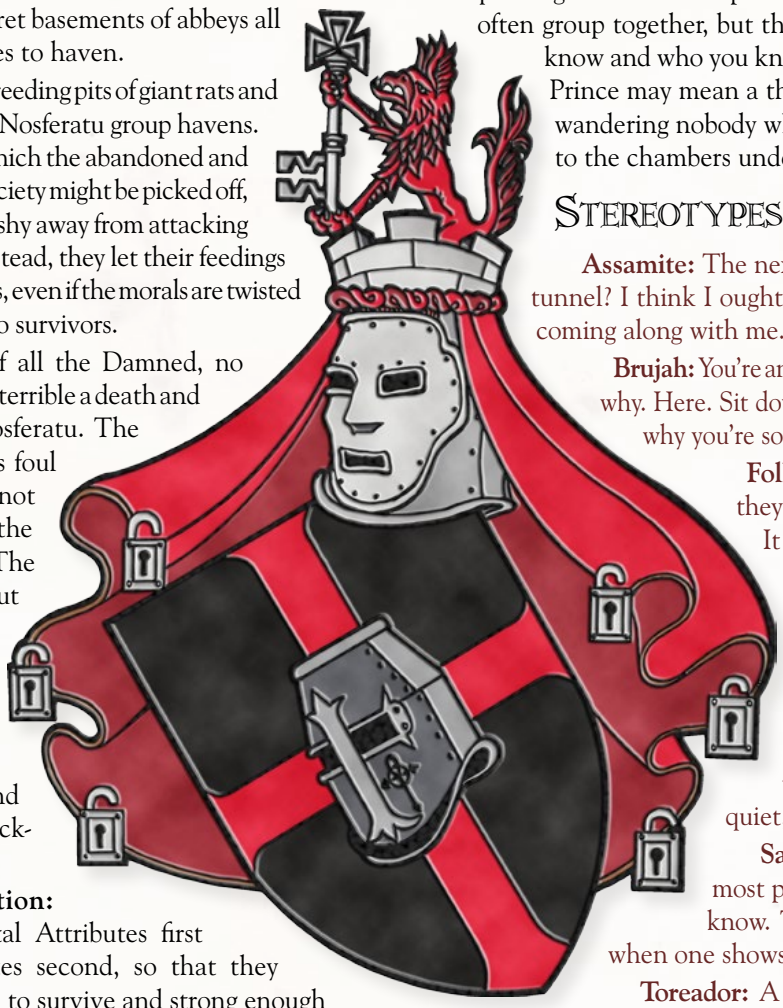
Appearance: Whatever truth is in the blood of the clan corrupts the flesh. To any god-fearing man or

woman, the Nosferatu bear a terrible curse at best, or are evil incarnate at worst. This corruption is unique from one Prior to another, though occasionally family lines will share monstrous features. The horrific condition of the Nosferatu is highly personal, and as some scholars of Cainite physiology have noted, is occasionally darkly poetic in its expression.

Haven and Prey: Nosferatu seek havens in lost, forgotten corners. Solitude is second only to obsession with security and a need for quick escape. More, it is a place to hide hidden lore, secret documents, and lost artifacts – or perhaps a place to dig deeper. Old Roman sewers and necropolises, the forgotten wings of crumbling castles, and the locked and secret basements of abbeys all serve as excellent places to haven.

Rumors persist of breeding pits of giant rats and pools of blood in secret Nosferatu group havens. Despite the ease with which the abandoned and forgotten members of society might be picked off, most Nosferatu tend to shy away from attacking the disenfranchised. Instead, they let their feedings offer moral object lessons, even if the morals are twisted and the lessons leave no survivors.

The Embrace: Of all the Damned, no Cainite goes through so terrible a death and resurrection as the Nosferatu. The first taste of their sire's foul blood imparts on them not just immortality, but the blood's terrible secret. The change is not instant, but rather, over a period of days or even weeks. The body is wracked with the blood's burden: muscle, skin, and gristle grind, break and reform in a horrific mockery of humanity.



Character Creation: Nosferatu favor Mental Attributes first and Physical Attributes second, so that they might be smart enough to survive and strong enough to defend themselves in their endless harrowing. While many Nosferatu may be brawlers and liars, there is nothing more precious than Knowledges. On some level, Nosferatu respect all fields of study. Since the clan at large does not know what it seeks, it is impossible to tell what expertise may be important. Whether from paranoia, cunning, or an endless search for compassion, Nosferatu tend to reach far and wide, building up Backgrounds like Allies and Contacts into intricate spy networks or information repositories.

Clan Disciplines: Animalism, Obfuscate, Potence

Weakness: All Nosferatu wear the blood's corruption on their face. As a result, all Nosferatu start with zero dots in Appearance, and this cannot be raised. Because of this, they automatically fail any first impression roll (except to intimidate) and have difficulty with many social interactions.

Organization: Few families among the Damned claim such tight connections as the Priors. Who else can understand the pain, the fear, and the knowledge of their shared burden? Nosferatu in cities will often share one large warren, or keep passages connecting independent havens for quick egress and to help disseminate secrets. Broods often group together, but the clan respects what you know and who you know above who you are. A Prince may mean a thousand times less than a wandering nobody who happens to have been to the chambers under the Vatican.

Stereotypes

Assamite: The next time I go into that one tunnel? I think I ought to talk one of them into coming along with me.

Brujah: You're angry without understanding why. Here. Sit down. Let me explain to you why you're so angry.

Followers of Set: I am told they worship darkness as a god. It is possible that darkness could be a god. It's certainly strong enough.

Gangrel: I am... uncomfortable... around those with no secrets.

Malkavians: If I'm talking, and she's being quiet, you are in a lot of trouble.

Salubri: You know, it's almost possible they know what I know. This is why I leave town when one shows up.

Toreador: A Toreador took me as his lover once. He must have thought it was delightfully profane. I learned absolutely nothing worth my time.

Tremere: They're looking for the things I wish I could forget. Idiots.

Tzimisce: Even if I could tell you what I know about them, you wouldn't believe me.

Ventrue: I imagine they think we spend a great deal of time spying on them and trying to undermine them. As if they are that difficult to figure out.

RAVNOS

In these nights, I am a god. You, sir, are a monster, and there is no helping it. I cannot relieve you of your burden any more than you can relieve me of mine, and do not condescend to believe that my burden is any less than yours. While you must struggle to master yourself, I must struggle to master all those around me. I would say my burden is greater.

Probably some of the most misunderstood and mistrusted Cainites in the world, the Ravnos are viewed as deceivers and tricksters. Few trust them, and fewer still want them havening in their cities, forcing the clan to be a traveling people by necessity.

The origins of the Ravnos are not well known, though some claim that their progenitor comes from the East. Certainly, many of the clan can trace their roots to India and even use the extensive caste system, referring to their traveling bands as *jati*. Those who have spent the majority of their unlives in European countries have a harder time tracing their lineages so far east, and tend to speak in ambiguous terms when asked about their origins. Of course, getting a straight answer from any Ravnos is rare. Most of the Charlatans prefer to keep their secrets close to the heart.

The single most defining thing about the nature of the Ravnos is the very reason they are so mistrusted. Many Ravnos believe that the Embrace grants them the ability to see past *maya*, or the illusion that is reality. In this new transcendent state, they can manipulate the illusion, making them masters of reality. This is not madness, and should not be confused as such. Instead, it is simply a different way of looking at the world, in which the Ravnos have a distinct advantage. Ravnos have no compunction about using illusions in their everyday dealings. Younger Ravnos do not believe in the *maya* myth. Instead, they gravitate to the power that comes with the ability to manipulate reality. These arrogant Charlatans use their powers to deceive and take advantage of others, hoping to ultimately rule the world. These very acts give the Ravnos their worst reputation.

The Charlatans are often mistrusted on sight and treated like criminals before they can even do anything wrong. Of course, any who treat the Ravnos too badly will feel the wrath of their *jati* seeking retribution.

Sobriquet: Shapers, Charlatans, Seekers, Vagabonds, Unwelcome

Appearance: Most Ravnos wear traveling clothes of all varieties. Many wear loose-fitting garments that are both comfortable and utilitarian, with layers to adapt to the weather. Some of the older Ravnos that hold onto pride over functionality wear brightly dyed woolen garments such as saris and sarongs. Younger Charlatans have eschewed any ties they may have once had to their Indian roots, preferring European styles over anything else.

Haven: Ravnos do not stay in any one place for too long. For some, the only havens they can lay claim to are traveling caravans or roadside inns for a few nights. The Charlatans are experts at finding out-of-the-way places and small towns to stay in for short periods of time. It is rare for Ravnos to haven in a city held by other vampires. Yet, when she decides to do so, there is very little the Prince of that city can do to eradicate her, else her entire family comes down on him.

Character Creation: Ravnos rely on trickery and social acumen to get them out of most situations, so Social Attributes are often primary. Younger Charlatans tend to be Embraced from traveling professions. Older Ravnos are often workers, warriors, priests, or gentry. Typical backgrounds include Allies, Contacts, Mentor (for those in a *jati*), and Resources (usually merchants, but even thieves can acquire a fortune). Ravnos follow many different Roads. Older Ravnos favor the Road of Kings, while the young prefer the Road of Sin. Many follow the Road of Humanity regardless of age. It is rumored that some of the most dangerous Charlatans follow their own faith, called the Road of Paradox.

Clan Disciplines: Animalism, Chimerstry, Fortitude

Weakness: While the Ravnos are masters of changing the reality around them, they have a harder time changing their own fundamental reality. All Ravnos have a key personality trait, chosen at character creation, which they are incapable of resisting if the opportunity to express it presents itself. This can be some kind of virtuous act, such as defending the weak, or something more sinister, such as taking advantage of someone in a lesser position. Often the trait is tied to the *jati* the Ravnos belongs to. When presented with the opportunity to indulge in her virtue or vice, she does so unless the player succeeds on a Self-Control or Instinct roll (difficulty 6).

Organization: All outward appearances show the Ravnos as small unorganized groups, which do not communicate with, or trust each other. In reality, the Ravnos follow an unspoken code based on the jobs they do and a complex caste system within the *jati*. While many Ravnos do find it hard to trust another, they maintain respect within the *jati*. The clan holds to an honor system that prevents them from truly turning their backs on each other, and even has them coming to each other's aid when threatened. Rumors abound about a scourge or seneschal somewhere who ran a Ravnos out of his city, only to find retribution a few nights later in the form of his entire family.



Stereotypes

Assamites: Demon hunters and warriors. I could see us allying with the Assassins if they would stop ignoring us while they try to suck up to all the other clans.

Ventrue: It is a shame the Ventrue cannot see past their noses while looking down on us. We could prove more useful to them than they think. They are the only ones who might be able to truly understand our strict adherence to lineage and blood relations.

Low Clans: Even the low look down on us. Unfortunately, such a binary delineation cannot begin to truly describe how the world really works. For shame. So many of them have such great potential.

Malkavians: They claim to be seers and wise-women. I don't doubt they are, for they certainly seem to be able to see the illusion of reality for what it really is. Of course, this makes them dangerous associates.

Nosferatu: Intelligent, cunning, and downright dangerous. If you can get one to open up to you, you should have enough information to give you all the power you want. Just be wary, as their mind tricks can be far nastier than any illusions we might try.

Tremere: Honestly, if you want to call someone deceitful and dishonest, save those epithets for the Tremere. I will never understand what it takes for some to realize who the real enemies of this world are.

SETITES

You call us heathens, thieves, and serpents.
You fail to understand that your hatred says more about you than it does about us.

The Followers of Set are corrupt, hedonistic, and venal. They are evil incarnate, spreaders of disease, heresy, and dissolution. They devote themselves to their god and their sinful pleasures, and must be uprooted whenever discovered. Or at least that's what most clans would have you believe. As always, their interpretation of the truth is selective at best.

Set was one of the chief gods of the Egyptian pantheon. The god of the desert and storms, he was a harsh god for a harsh land. Then the Ptolemies came, and the Romans after, and twisted the myths to suit their own purpose. Ptolemaic influence turned Set into a god of violence and chaos whose worship was gradually forgotten in favor of the gods of the Abrahamic faiths. And so the rest of the world remembers Set as an evil god best abandoned.

The Followers of Set remember the truth. Set, not Caine, was the progenitor of all vampires. The myth of Caine is lies and propaganda, designed to Christianize vampires. Though Set disappeared from the world, it remains the duty of his faithful to spread his word. Followers of Set actively seek to undermine Christian and Islamic rule in Europe. They do this not out of a love of chaos, which is anathema to Set. Instead, they seek not only the restoration of worship of their god, but to spread it across the known world. More than anyone, the Followers of Set know that religions are living things — they are born, flourish, and die. By working to eliminate the invasive influence of Christianity and Islam, they seek only to hasten the inevitable.



Sobriquet: Serpents, Followers of Set

Appearance: Followers of Set are mostly Egyptian or North African in origin. The few Europeans they Embrace tend to have red hair, which is seen as a blessing or sign of favor from Set. Styles of dress vary according to need. When traveling in less tolerant regions, Setites often dress in the style of North African merchants to avoid drawing undue attention. In the safety of their temples, however, they favor the linen robes of the old Egyptian priests.

Haven and Prey: Hatred of the sun god, Horus, and a need for secrecy lead many Followers of Set to places underground. They frequently establish centers of worship to Set in abandoned temples long-since buried or natural caverns. However, this is not always practical. Many Setites bow to necessity by establishing havens in port city slums, or risk maintaining a secure mobile haven as part of a trading caravan. Regardless of location, most Setites feed on the dregs of society who will not be missed, so as to not draw attention from those in power.

The Embrace: Followers of Set tend to recruit from within the ranks of the secret Set cults that they establish. Through these cults, they identify mortals with the cunning and charisma needed to survive and spread the worship of their god. Potential recruits often serve as ghoul retainers to their vampiric

masters. Those with real promise are selected for the Embrace, while the weak remain as servants to their betters. The Embrace itself is a secret ritual that serves as the new childe's initiation as a priest of Set in their own right.

Despite that many of their adherents are European, most new childer are of Egyptian, Nubian, or Arabian descent, as many elders of the Clan look down on the colonial aggressors who destroyed their way of life. As the Followers of Set expand further into Europe, however, they invite more Europeans into their ranks — particularly Gauls and Franks, as they are more likely to have red hair.

Clan Disciplines: Obfuscate, Presence, Serpentis

Weaknesses: The enmity between Set and Horus, sun god and son of Set's hated brother Osiris, is eternal. The Followers of Set carry Horus' curse more heavily than other vampires and take twice the amount of aggravated damage from any exposure to sunlight than members of other clans.

Organization: Setite enclaves follow the old Egyptian temple system. A Prophet and High Priest of Set leads each temple, with varying numbers of subordinate Priests beneath them. Larger enclaves might have many mortal cultists as well as ghoul servants and retainers, while smaller temples might boast only a handful of mortal adherents.



Stereotypes

Assamites: The Children of Haqim are our enemies. They preach the word of a god that has supplanted the old ways. If the worship of Set is to flourish once more, they must be destroyed.

Lasombra: The poor godless fools. They tear themselves apart from within, unable to decide which face of the Abrahamic god to devote themselves to. You need only give them the occasional nudge and they will destroy themselves.

Tzimisce: Misguided, perhaps. But their war against the Ventrue crusaders is a noble one and should be supported, so long as it would not damage the cause of Set.

Cappadocians: Their abiding interest in the past and the dead make them occasionally useful. However, they lack any real passion or fervor, which makes them useless as potential adherents of Set.

Tremere: Their hunger for power makes them useful tools against our enemies, though one must never forget what lengths they are willing to go to for that power.

TOREADOR

My faith teaches these cravings are wrong. I vowed to abstain, yet I worship the village beauty for a sennight, writing odes to her eyes. I bind her with a thousand lies, then end her life in a grove smelling of pine, my hands wound in her golden braids.

I'm tortured by what I've become. Where is redemption to be found?

Toreador live by their whims. Do they feel like strolling in the gardens or tossing away a fortune on a game of cards? It's the age of chivalry and Toreador are coming into their own magnificence. The worship of beauty in the Dark Ages, the fascination with mysticism, all these influences draw a Toreador like a moth to a flame. Sometimes Toreadors are the moths. Other times, they're the flames.

Toreador watch mortals play out their brief lives and often intervene. Drama adds zest to their unlives, their machinations tied into the tiniest detail. They are directors and mortals are the actors.

Toreador are the original hedonists, but with a twist. They can never feel what they seek. They seek warm, mortal flesh to stave away the chill of undeath. They drink fine wine, though it tastes of dust, chasing the memory of bursting grapes on their tongue. They fill their homes with art and music, though they struggle to create it themselves.

For some Toreador, religion is their passion. They take it to extremes frowned upon by the Church, self-inflicting stigmata or flagellating their sins from their body. Yet they sin and sin again, living in the vacuum of God's displeasure. After all, if Christ's great gift is forgiveness, why waste that gift on a life of temperance? These vampires particularly feel the loss of grace.

To hear a Toreador talk, their clan is responsible for the entire history of art, from cave paintings to early Byzantine mosaics. As with many things involving Cainites, this carries a hint of truth, as Toreador have patroned and inspired many great artists throughout history.

If a Toreador was artistic in life, she spends her unlife pursuing the perfection humanity brings. However, because all Toreador lack something ineffable that mortals possess, they never achieve what they once did with a limited lifespan. It is traumatizing, but they never stop seeking it.

Sobriquets: Aesthetes, Artisans, Vanitas

Appearance: Toreador pursue not only beauty, but propagate themselves through beauty. Their beauty often reflects the ideal from the era and homeland from which they come, so they range from exotic beauty, to a collection of whatever is in fashion locally. A collective of Toreador is a breathtaking sight.

Haven: A Toreador wants to be surrounded by art and lovely things, but he is equally likely to seek out artists in their garrets, or a patron of his own to help him afford his expensive taste. Toreador are true collectors, focusing their obsession on finding rare and precious items to add to their collections. They do the same with their retainers, curating the people around them.

Backgrounds: Toreador are mercurial in their choice of childer, choosing by passion and conviction. It is not unusual for a Toreador to Embrace a favorite artist, lover, or muse to stay as eternal as she is. Unfortunately, the changeable nature of the Toreador leads to some cast-offs, as a sire tires of the childe he chose. This fosters resentment and some creative revenge plots.

Character Creation: The arts and graces of society are of the greatest importance to the Toreador, so focus on high Social Attributes and Abilities. Preferred backgrounds include Herd, Retainers, and Resources. Toreador struggle to sever themselves from mortal pleasures, so the Road of Humanity is most common. However, some choose the Road of Kings instead. They have the strongest connection to mortals, and this allows them to hold their humanity tighter, but they can't keep the Beast at bay forever.

Clan Disciplines: Auspex, Celerity, Presence

Weakness: The Toreador has the shortest attention span of all Cainites. Once struck by beauty, it's as if Cupid's dart pierced them. If they encounter beauty (Storyteller and player work together to determine appropriate triggers), they must roll Self-Control or Instinct (difficulty 5). If they fail, the daydream of their senses continues until the scene concludes or object departs.

The rush of pleasure they receive from objects of beauty is highly addictive. An undisciplined Toreador can end up reeling from one moment of aesthetic bliss to the next and his enemies can exploit this.

Toreador may interact with their objects of obsession, however. For deeply inhumane Toreador, this can mean terrible things for a living obsession, as the Toreador seeks to take in every aspect of nature's art, understanding them on a visceral, fundamental level.



Organization: From time to time, Toreador gather in loose collectives to refine their individual tastes and inspire each other. These gatherings are not for the faint of heart or feeble of wit. Passionate arguments over art, music, and theater are common, as are performances and impromptu art galleries. The art on display can originate from the Toreador in attendance or showcase the special talents of their protégés.

Dimly-lit corners are perfect for arranged rendezvous, with the intellectual dalliances Toreador hold dear. Hot-tempered Toreador are known to duel to right a wrong or just for amusement.

Stereotypes

Cappadocians: Long-faced cadaver dullards. They say they have much to teach us (as do most of our other brethren), yet who wants to sit around listening to them drone?

Gangrel: The beasts are boorish, too brutish for us. Chase them back to their forests and caves.

Lasombra: We feel a great kinship with this clan and their exoticism intrigues us. Are they slipping from their high perch? Alluring, yet dangerous to enrage.

Malkavians: The Children of Malkav hold special fascination, perhaps because they dance along the line of real and delusion like us. They then charge forward into madness, but are diverting companions.

Nosferatu: Is it possible to imagine a clan less suited to our feasts and gatherings? With few exceptions, they are off the guest list unless you want rotten flesh dripping in your wine.

Tremere: Dull with their blood magic and their tedious experiments. There's always one that turns up, latches onto a conversation he has no business participating in, and ignores all hints to go away. We use them when useful.

Ventrue: Almost our equals. Almost. They are on the rise – we will watch their struggles with interest.

Tremere

The true magus is one with the power to act. Blood is our power, and the time for action is now.

Faced with undeniable signs that the power of magic was fading from the world, a small group of Hermetic magi sought to revitalize themselves through other means. In 1022, under the leadership of Tremere, they discovered the elixir of vampiric blood that gave them their desire. They became the first truly new clan: self-created, obligated to no one but themselves, and ready to carve out a place for themselves in the society of the Damned through their arts.

They were not welcomed. Plunged immediately into conflict over lands and strongholds with the Tzimisce, the fledgling clan worked rapidly to develop new spells and rituals to protect themselves. The speed with which they created their new Discipline, Thaumaturgy, shocked other vampires. They accused the Tremere of gaining their power through diablerie and blasphemous experimentation, and even of being responsible for the destruction of the Salubri Antediluvian, Saulot.

Few in number and with no true allies, the Tremere must rely on bargains with other clans and their own close-knit hierarchy. The Ventrue have proven especially receptive to trading protection for magical services. The Tremere guard themselves first and foremost, but even within their ranks, factions, and cabals struggle with each other to seize what meager influence the clan has in the world. Younger vampires are made to carry out their elders' schemes, all while maneuvering themselves into positions of greater authority.

This is the paradox of the Tremere: They have gained the immortality that their founder searched for, but they still act with the rashness of mortals who believe their time is limited. They carry out many of their schemes for immediate benefits, not considering how their decisions might change their destinies in the centuries ahead. The enemies that they make now will haunt them in the future, as will the bargains that they strike and the sacrifices they make for the sake of security. For all of their vaunted self-discipline, their position is still a fragile one.



Sobriquet: Usurpers, Tremores ("the trembling ones")

Appearance: Tremere vampires favor simple and practical attire for whatever location they find themselves inhabiting. In cities with universities, that tends to mean presenting a scholarly appearance, either as students or professors. In the countryside, donning the robes of wandering monks (like those of the Franciscans) allows them to move undisturbed through many areas.

Haven: Most Tremere gravitate toward cities, especially

cities with universities or cathedral schools. Depending on their relationship with the vampiric authorities in those cities, they may dwell near the scholarly centers or be relegated to the slums and ghettos. Tremere who do not live in cities tend to construct small, secure lairs in which to conduct their research undisturbed, often near sites of magical power.

Backgrounds: The Tremere fill their ranks with individuals who hunger for both knowledge and power: occultists, alchemists, theologians, philosophers, and scholars of all kinds. Neither age nor religion are any hindrance, although they do expect those they Embrace to accept their Hermetic-Neoplatonic theories if they wish to learn Thaumaturgy.

At the same time, the clan is pragmatic in its choice of members when need arises. Tremere Embrace warriors to lead their forces against the Tzimisce and Embrace courtiers to represent the clan in the domains of the noble Damned. Such vampires face a difficult existence, however. Without the lure of magical power to keep them bound to the Clan's designs, they are kept under close watch by their superiors and rarely afforded the opportunity to advance.

Character Creation: Most Tremere follow the Road of Humanity simply because, due to the clan's youth, other possibilities have not occurred to them. Mental Attributes and Knowledges are usually primary, and even those Tremere with a less scholarly focus are expected to be open to learning. For those who practice Thaumaturgy, a high Willpower is a must. Mentor is the most common Background for individuals.

Clan Disciplines: Auspex, Dominate, Thaumaturgy

Weakness: The Tremere's rush to exploit the powers of vampiric blood comes with its own disadvantages: they are particularly vulnerable to blood bonds when they drink the blood of other Damned. The first draught of blood that a Tremere consumes counts as two for the purposes of establishing a bond, meaning that the next drink will complete it. Furthermore, all newly Embraced Tremere must surrender a vial of their blood to the Council of Seven, who stores it in a hidden vault in their Carpathian chantry. That blood, they warn, can be the means by which they exact thaumaturgical punishments on any who disobey, no matter how far they run or how well they hide themselves.

Organization: The leaders of the Tremere are the Council of Seven, who issue commands through successive and rigidly structured ranks of vampiric underlings. In theory, each rank — Council Regent, Domain Regent, Chantry Regent, and Chantry Apprentice — is made up of seven vampires for every superior, but in practice, the numbers vary wildly in these uncertain times. Rising through the ranks requires patience, demonstration of occult power, and the ability to survive the internal politics of the clan.



Stereotypes

Assamites: They know secrets of the blood that we do not. This must be remedied.

Brujah: A pity we did not meet them before their descent into degeneration.

Cappadocians: Worthy of respect, although their focus on the dead means that they neglect other sources of power.

Gangrel: Their animal vitality makes them excellent subjects for experimentation. They can endure so much.

Nosferatu: Look beyond appearances at what they can offer: knowledge that the other Clans do not think worthy of their attention.

Salubri: The world cannot be healed, only mastered. They forget this lesson at their own cost.

Tzimisce: Their grotesqueries are nothing but masks to hide the fears of a Clan whose time will soon come to an end. Their crude sorceries keep them bound to territory we will soon make our own.

Ventrue: Let them believe that they rule and that we are eager to serve. They will be the path by which we ascend to prominence.

Tzimisce

Do not fear, little mortal. The earth feeds you, you feed me, I feed the earth. This is the order of things; it is natural.

Vampire. Like the shadow of an osprey looming over the field mouse , the word alone conjures fearsome imagery in the hearts of men: tall, darkly gracious fiends of aristocratic bearing, forlorn castles athwart craggy mountainsides, and primeval forests swaddled in mist through which hungry shadows haunt the night. These are the Tzimisce, sometimes called Fiends; the vampires of vampires, the eternal bogeymen stalking the nightmares of mortals.

The wilds of Eastern Europe are inseparable from the legends of vampires, and the Tzimisce ruled these lands since before mortal memory. The Carpathian Mountains are their bones, its soil their flesh, and they share their vitae with it — just as the kine share theirs with the Tzimisce — in a perpetual cycle of life and unlife. The *koldun* recall a time when Tzimisce dwelt in the Second City, but ached with sickness, a longing for a home he had never seen. He exiled himself, following a call to these mountains. So it has always been, the two indivisible; here, no history excludes them, no kings may rule above them, and no enemy can contest them. Or so the Tzimisce believed.



The Tzimisce sense of superiority allowed the Tremere to go uncontested for far too long; now the Usurpers and their Gargoyle soldiers trespass upon Tzimisce lands and engage openly on the fields of battle. Never ones to ignore a strategic advantage, the Ventrue raid across Hungary's eastern border into Transylvania and launch crusades into the pagan northlands, looking to seize Fiend territories. The Mongol horde provides some respite as it boils through mountain passes into the west, forcing their enemies to face them in the field while the Fiends watch safely from mountain strongholds above. A quiet war brews within the clan, only forestalled by the clan's ancient tradition of hospitality, as the elders call for a return to the old ways while the younger generations push for change. Revolution seems just around the corner for the Fiends.

Sobriquet: Fiends

Appearance: In ages past, the Tzimisce were the most regal of clans, tall, unbent and broad like the mountains they dwell upon. They elevated only the choicest of mortals, drawing directly from their own ghoul families to ensure strong frames and proper dispositions, which were then further idealized through the vagaries of Vicissitude. As war creeps into their lands, though, the Fiends find themselves forced to compromise their preferred forms, replacing limbs with weapons and assuming their monstrous battle-shapes for greater and greater periods of time. Some younger Fiends found liberation through modification and embrace shapes others would consider alien and bizarre, following their own path into the future.

Haven: Most Tzimisce keep their haven in whatever constitutes luxury for them. They stand as regal by their own definitions. This almost always means surrounding themselves with massive subjects and herds, wherever they happen to roost. Due to their tie to the earth, if they leave their homeland, they will find some way to establish a bond to their new home.

Background: Traditionally, Tzimisce drew from among the most suitable members of their own nobility, prizing loyalty, fierceness, and strength above all other qualities. To this end, they prefer to Embrace ghouls, and they have established whole families of revenants to serve that purpose. Tzimisce rarely Embrace foreigners, and when it happens, they are truly exceptional. Meta-

morphosists, however, will sometimes eschew tradition, seeking out those who inspire them with their spiritual perfection, while some among the younger generations delight in the aesthetic possibilities of strangers.

Character Creation: Tzimisce equally prize Mental and Physical Attributes. While the image of the Tzimisce warrior cutting a gory path through a battlefield is a common (and accurate) stereotype, the clan also boasts its share of scholars, priests, monks, and sorcerers, meaning any given Tzimisce might favor any Skills, Talents, or Knowledges. For a clan defined by its relationship to the land it rules, Domain is by far the most important Background. Herd is vital for any Tzimisce; one cannot call oneself a ruler without subjects. Road of Kings is most common among the Fiends. The Road of Metamorphosis is populated almost entirely by Tzimisce, though they are still very much a minority.

Clan Disciplines: Animalism, Auspex, Vicissitude

Weaknesses: Tzimisce draw their mandate to rule from the very land itself, but this comes with a price. A Tzimisce must rest with at least two handfuls of native soil — that is, soil from a place of importance to them, usually their home or their grave. For each day of rest without it, halve all dice pools (round down), cumulatively, until the pool reaches one die. A full day of proper rest with her native soil will restore the dice pools to their normal value.

Organization: Tzimisce abide by ties of family and blood; they are an incestuous clan with sprawling legacies of dozens, if not hundreds of members. The eldest afford the most respect and the maneuvering among the childer for attention and affection brings new meaning to the phrase "sibling rivalry." Outside one's own legacy, it is important to recognize other Tzimisce as rightful rulers — they are, after all, blood of the land too — but no family is willing to submit to another. This constant struggle for dominance creates an uneasy tension among Fiends. Because of this, Tzimisce recognize a necessary tradition of formal, unflagging hospitality. Almost in defiance of their basic natures, man or vampire welcomed into a Tzimisce's home can expect safety and basic comfort, so long as the guest commits no affront to the host's graciousness.

Stereotypes

Anda: These newcomers remind us of Gangrel, but understand loyalty and family. I would like to know more.

Brujah: I respect their prowess, but not their cause. Which cause? None of them.

Gangrel: Unruly and unkempt, but as close to brothers as we will ever have outside our own.

Ghouls: Useful, sometimes even worthy of respect. So long as they are ours.

Tremere: Nothing worth discussing. Soon others will only speak of their memory. Then we will kill them as well, and the Tremere will simply never have existed.

Ventrue: Theirs is no true authority; they have no mandate to rule. They have played this charade for too long; they will kneel now or suffer for their insolence.

Lupines: Do not underestimate these beasts; they have their own connection to the land, which makes them very dangerous.



VENTRUE

I smell power in the air. A king has died. Long live the king. I stand in the throne's shadows, but most do not know my name. Years slip away like tides, dynasties fall, and yet I remain a most trusted advisor. He will not see the string tied to his limbs until it is too late.

The king is dead. Long live the king.

The Ventrue trace their line back to the Second Generation. As the eldest of Enoch, their sense of tradition guides them. Divine right is their birthright: Their legitimacy is documented in blood-red letters throughout Cainite history. Let those who are most fit to rule do so.

Leading is their gift and their burden. Ventrue chafe at Lasombra restrictions, ever hungry and ambitious. All the power they want is within their grasp. When the time arrives, those merchant princes and warrior kings will lead their brethren to cast the yoke off of those who've ruled far too long.

The Ventrue take their cue from Ancient Rome, from the Julii and the Brutii, those aristocratic conquerors who relied on a framework of discipline, fortitude and charisma to lead. They can be a potent combination of powerful speakers and brave soldiers, currying favor as capably as any Caesar. In fact, the word "dominate" arose from the Dominus and Domina, titles of the Roman aristocracy.

Heavy is the head that wears the crown; Ventrue often worry more than other clans about the mortals in their care. Memories of glory from their mortal days are too poignant and heady a draft, so they pursue power through their unlives as well.

With their powerful Disciplines of Dominate and Presence, they are frequently sent in to keep the peace amongst Cainites, using their divine right of authority to maintain the Silence of the Blood.

During the Long Night, the Ventrue withdrew from most visible positions of power, preferring to steer from out of sight. But with the War of the Princes, the Ventrue are ready to rise. All they must do is convince everyone else.

Ventrue are not as flexible as their opponents and subject to infighting, but when they do band together, they can accomplish terrifyingly ambitious goals.

Sobriquets: Power Mongers, Ambitiones, Patricians (derogatory)

Appearance: Ventrue are not seen in ostentatious clothes. The cloth and cut will be exceptionally fine, tailored to their figure. Depending on the Ventrue's temperament, you will see costly embroidery or merely exceptional cut. They always dress appropriate to their station, but they take care not to outshine the ones they are manipulating.

Haven: Ventrue dislike being in the middle of nowhere, unless there is a stronghold with vast lands and resources they can draw upon. Because of their feeding specialties, they tend to gravitate toward locales that provide ample flocks to draw upon. They thrive on being amidst the populace, for what purpose in being a leader if there is no one to lead?

Backgrounds: The Ventrue sense of self-superiority is so strong that it can be quite off-putting. It makes sense that they seek the aristocracy and the cream of society to Embrace, those whose education, background, and talents draw the attention of Ventrue elite.

Ventrue never reproduce haphazardly, but select prospects like fine wine. Once they Embrace a childe, they focus on her training and upbringing to hone them to Ventrue expectations. Purity of bloodline is preferred, but they also appreciate the strengthening brought by mixing in a prodigy of a more mongrel background. Ventrue with a less rarefied history can rise in the ranks, but it demands true commitment, the backing of a well-regarded sire, talent, and luck.

Character Creation: Ventrue characters need a keen balance between Social and Mental Attributes, between social graces and knowledge. A Ventrue with low Charisma is like a fish without water: flailing in desperation till the end. As far as Backgrounds, Allies and Retainers are extremely useful. Resources and Domain for holdings should not be neglected. The Road of Kings calls the Ventrue in their deepest desires, for each Ventrue believes his birthright is to lead.

Clan Disciplines: Dominate, Fortitude, Presence

Weakness: Rarefied taste has its cost, as the Ventrue are restricted to one particular type of mortal (merchants, French, Catholics, small children). This choice severely limits their feeding pool. They can consume mortal blood outside of this selected preference, but it does not forestall the Beast or provide nourishment.

Organization: The Ventrue believe strongly in the feudal order. Structure and hierarchy allows them to understand precisely who is above them and who is below. An oath, backed by blood, is one of the easiest ways of enforcing loyalty of those below.



Stereotypes

Brujah: They hate us, but need us. We temper their ferocity with understanding of the requirements of rule. If their ambition can be sculpted, they can be dangerous but powerful allies.

Cappadocians: Death-mongering withered husks. Let them remain amongst their corpses and their crypts and leave us to our conquests.

Gangrel: Beasts, pure and simple. Excellent attack dogs, but best kept on a very short leash.

Lasombra: Though they are ascendant now, their time comes to an end. We need only seize the opportunity.

Nosferatu: Vile and often smelly. If you employ them, be sure to keep your handkerchief close. A few are clever enough to be useful, if they can be endured.

Toreador: Though we may be impatient with their obsession with beauty, the Toreador are often our equals in social settings. Flatter them with honeyed words, but do not forget they are the most unreliable of our kindred.

Tzimisce: Ancient rulers unaware their moment is long past. Even those fair of face are fiends at heart. We will ally with whomever necessary to wipe them from the world.

Tremere: They speak in riddles, hinting at vast storehouses of ancient knowledge. If you must, use them and be done with it. Let them rot with their dust and their books.

Bloodlines

The clans of Caine do not represent the entirety of the vampiric condition in our Dark Medieval World. While they are a majority, numerous other lines permeate Africa, Europe, and Asia during this period. In many cases, these lines branch and diverge from mainstream clans sufficiently that they cease to be recognized as members of that clan. Some come from unknown origins. Some come from histories that question the truth of the Caine mythology.



Evolutions

Some bloodlines shifted away from their parent Cainite clans at some point in the clan's history. Clans that travel constantly and often stray outside societal norms tend to produce divergent bloodlines more frequently than urban, status quo clans. For example, nomadic Gangrel boast multiple bloodlines, whereas noble Lasombra do not.

Evolved and branched bloodlines give your chronicle facets and exceptions to the normal clan expectations. For example, Anda came from Clan Gangrel. There's certainly something of the Gangrel in the Anda perspective, but the Anda are a unique angle for the Gangrel. This gives you an opportunity to explore narrow or shifted concepts of what it means to be part of a Cainite clan.

Unknown Origins

Some bloodlines, the Niktuku for example, come from questionable origins. The Niktuku are related to the Nosferatu somehow. But are the Nosferatu the parent clan? Are the Niktuku? Are they indirectly related by circumstance, but not by blood?

When a line comes from indeterminate roots, it brings a layer of mystery into Cainite history. It gives an opportunity to explore these mysteries in play and weave your chronicle into the greater Dark Medieval World. In your chronicle, the Niktuku may have been an experiment by the Nosferatu clan progenitor. You have the opportunity to tell that unique story and offer an increased level of player buy-in as they can discover these truths.

Alternate Origins

Some bloodlines owe their origins to the Cainite clans, while some maintain completely separate histories. In these cases, the status quo of Cainite society tends to doubt or deny those backgrounds, as they call into question the infallibility of their *Book of Nod*.

These bloodlines offer a conspiratorial air to your chronicle. After all, Cainite society is predicated on the thirteen clans of the Third Generation. If they're not the beginning and end of what it means to be a vampire,

Other Vampires

In the Dark Medieval World, Cainites comprise most of Europe's vampiric population. However, two other major types of vampires encroach into Europe.

The first kind doesn't get much attention in this book, because they haven't pushed into Europe much just yet (but they will soon). They're an Asian breed that goes by numerous names and has connections in some Salubri and Assamite circles. They may very well be a different, even incompatible creature to what Cainites call vampires.

The vampires who comprise the other type call themselves Laibon. They are vampires, in the Cainite sense of the word. They possess vitae. Their childer are each of thinner blood than their sires. However, they hail from Africa and eschew the Caine mythology. Each line of Laibon has its own creation myth. The Setites often use the term Laibon for themselves and the other Laibon bloodlines use the term for Set's followers. However, most European vampires believe Set was one of Caine's Third Generation, so they're considered a clan to mainstream Cainite society.

should their foundation persist without question? In the Dark Medieval World, dissent bubbles up more and more nightly. The young seek out any reasons to question the ancients' divine right, and what better reason than clear evidence that their story contains gaping holes?

Air of the Exotic

Bloodlines, as noted, deliver different play experiences. Their existences raise questions of the setting and tend to be more regionally grounded than other European Cainites. Some quickly become hard to believe in certain locations, and can break down suspension of disbelief. Their Disciplines and weaknesses are often stronger but narrower in focus, which may not fit in the scope of every game. While all rules in **V20 Dark Ages** are up for interpretation and choice at the table, bloodlines require special attention. As Storyteller, when planning your chronicle, determine what bloodlines may or may not fit in your setting and provide this information up front.

Even if players are disallowed from playing a given bloodline, they can still make for engaging Storyteller characters. However, if you choose to do so, ask yourself why you're reserving the bloodline for plot usage but disallowing the players from making the same choices. As a Storyteller, favor finding a way to make things work over saying "no."

Exclusivity

In some cases, the bloodlines featured in this chapter have unique Disciplines, or unique Thaumaturgy or Necromancy Paths. While a vampire can teach others their Disciplines or blood sorcery if they wish, exclusivity gives a bargaining chip. To vampires, being useful can mean survival. Not only does teaching an outsider dilute that usefulness, but it plays your hand. If you teach someone, they understand its limitations, and by that, they understand your limitations. Mystery can be a weapon, and once that mystery is opened wide for the world to see, it can't be forced back into the box.

With blood sorcery, we don't dictate directly that any Paths are truly exclusive, but if you wish to feature certain bloodlines in your chronicle, consider making certain Paths off-limits. For example, if your chronicle features Nagaraja or Giovani, consider making one or two Necromancy Paths exclusive to them. If someone outside those lines wishes to learn those abilities, they should expect steep costs or high risks.

Ahrimanes

I have sky, earth, and sea. You can keep your city.

The story of the Ahrimanes begins with Ádísa, a Valkyrje and daughter of Freyja. Traveling far and wide, Ádísa drew the attention of a Persian king named Ahriman. The king commanded Ádísa to fight for him in his army, but she refused to be tied so. Furious, Ahriman sent his forces to subdue Ádísa and, while she was exceedingly powerful, even the Valkyrje couldn't stand against such overwhelming forces. Unwilling to submit under any circumstances, Ádísa remained standing until a warrior slew her on the third day.

When Freyja came to take her daughter to Fólkvangr, Ádísa refused. She did not begrudge the warrior, since he had fairly bested her, but she loathed the king for his presumption and waging war against a single woman. Seeing her daughter's distress, Freyja consented to hide Ádísa from the other gods for three nights, though not days, so she might seek her revenge.

The first night, Ahriman and his court fled from Ádísa in great carriages and ships. However, Ádísa's mother had taught her daughter to speak with the animals of the earth when she was young, and they told Ádísa where the king had gone. The second night, even more fearful of Ádísa, Ahriman slew all animals around him so they could not betray him. But Ádísa wasn't her mother's little girl anymore; she was dead now and could speak to the spirits of animals. The third night, Ádísa arrived at Ahriman's castle where the king had bricked up all doors and windows. Enraged by his cowardice, Ádísa tore the castle apart with her bare hands until she found the king. As she killed him, she took his name from him as punishment so he would wander forever lost in the afterlife.



When Freyja returned to take Ádísa with her, the Vakyrje still refused. Ádísa's own vengeance was done, but other women had been wronged too, and she would support them. She gathered them under the name Ahrimanes, which was hers by right of conquest, as a reminder of her purpose. Ádísa has walked the night as their leader ever since.

Ádísa's lineage has spread predominantly along the coasts of Scandinavia, Scotland, Ireland and, to a lesser extent, England and Normandy. An Ahrimane usually shares Ádísa's willful independence, and while she acknowledges Freyja as her divine mother, she bows to neither god nor king. This attitude does not endear her with Europe's Princes, but she rarely feels the need to be part of anyone's territory anyway. She is passionate about everything she

does, whether it's simply enjoying the small pleasures of the open road or the merciless pursuit of vengeance.

Sobriquet: Valkyrjer, Sisters (amongst each other)

Appearance: Most Ahrimane sires Embrace warriors and the typical Valkyrje is tall and well-muscled. She is usually Caucasian, with a normal mix of blonde, dark, and even red hair. Placing great value on practicality, an Ahrimane might cut her hair short or keep it braided and out of the way. She places little value on material wealth, but ensures that her clothes, weapons, and armor are well suited to both combat and travel.

Haven and Prey: An Ahrimane's existence is usually nomadic and she quickly learns to make daytime shelters inside fallen trees or small caverns. An Ahrimane doesn't generally thrive in cities. If she finds herself there, she seeks out abandoned locales to make her haven.

An Ahrimane usually doesn't discriminate when it comes to prey, feeding on men, women, and children alike. Only breastfeeding mothers, infants, and pregnant women seem to be excluded as Ahrimane prey, perhaps as deference to Freyja, who is also the goddess of fertility.



The Embrace: Ádísa's bloodline consists of women only. There are some stories, far and few between, of an Ahrimane embracing a man, and these usually end with the renegade couple hunted down and killed. If a person's physical gender conflicts with her spiritual gender, Ádisa favors the spirit. After the embrace, these Ahrimanes are treated the same as any Sister.

An Ahrimane sire seeks out strong, independent women for the Embrace. Knowing how to hunt and fight is a bonus, but a sire knows that skills are more easily taught than attitude. Social standing does not matter to her, as a nomadic lifestyle usually renders lofty positions moot. Her deeply ingrained independence seems to have a mystical aspect as well, and it is not uncommon for an Ahrimane to be unbondable.

Clan Disciplines: Animalism, Potence, Spiritus

Weaknesses: An Ahrimane's blood resists the ties of bondage. She can create neither blood bonds nor ghouls.

Organization: The Valkyrjer are surprisingly well-organized for a nomadic group spread out over Europe's coastlines.

THE AHRIMANES CONNECTION

Sometime during the long night, Ádísa and her bloodline were lost and subsumed into Clan Gangrel. They returned, in a fashion, centuries later when a Cainite named Muricia sought independence from her clan. Calling upon arcane powers to alter her vitae, she unknowingly sparked a lingering trace of Ádísa's infamous independence inside her. Since then, the Ahrimanes roam the night again, albeit under a different guise and leader.

An Ahrimane usually learns a runic script from her sire not intended for outsiders, so she can leave messages for other Ahrimanes. These symbols convey only basic meanings such as 'hostile cainites' or 'good hunting,' but it's enough to give a small edge to an Ahrimane entering a new territory. She does not always share a common goal or leader with them, but an Ahrimane will usually stand with her sisters.

Stereotypes

High Clans: Clans who lord over others by grace of… what, exactly? Pray do tell me, what makes you better than others?

Low Clans: I have no words for any who would allow others to trod on them so easily. Cowardly wretches.

Cappadocian: Books and death. There's poetic symmetry in that. I'll take freedom and life.

Gangrel: They understand the value of life and the open sky. Trade for their stories, for there is power in them.

Lasombra: Shadow puppeteers who think they can control others. Beware their strings and if those cannot be cut, then cut the puppeteer's throat.

Ravnos: Wanderers make good company, but be careful for they cannot be trusted. Still, if you want interesting, this is where to start.

Salubri: Proud warriors with a noble code. I so rarely see them anymore and they are missed.

Ventrue: I met a Princeling once and told him about *Ádísa* and the cowardly king. He was not amused.

ANDA

You call yourselves survivors, and you try to conscript our axes? Let us show you the strength of survivors. Our axes pale alongside our perspective. We'll walk, then you'll pay for our perspective.

As brutal an environment as the steppe is for mortals, it is magnitudes more deadly for a Cainite trapped upon it. How precisely do you cross hundreds of miles of open terrain in search of prey among sparsely populated plains, all before the sun rises in a few hours? The Anda manage it well, making them truly unique among vampire-kind.

The first of their line is Dobrul the Brave, who some say was the childe of Ennoia herself, Antediluvian of Clan Gangrel. To this day the Anda and Gangrel recognize and respect their common ancestry; each regards the other as distant kin and may ally with each other from time to time. Still, the Anda are distinct from their parent clan, and their true loyalty lies with their mortal brethren, not other Cainites.

This loyalty sets them apart from all other Cainites and makes unlife on the steppe possible. Most vampires understand the need for a herd, but few associate so closely with those from their former lives as the Anda. The Anda do not think of the Mongols they travel with as herd or themselves as having "former" lives at all. They feel they have been given a unique role to play in the destiny of the Mongol people. Where their brothers occupy the daylit hours, they are the nighttime riders, the favored of the Earth-Mother Etügen, those who look upon the sleeping face of Tengri and protect his people in the dark. Their methods are simple, but effective. In the day, the majority of the Mongol tumen advances, and at dusk, the Anda emerge to follow, converging with their fellows before dawn. In the east, the enemies of the Mongols know better than to approach a kuriyen in the night, particularly from the direction the Mongols rode in from. Western armies have not learned this lesson, nor will they any time soon. The Anda leave no survivors to tell of the monstrous horsemen who materialize from the darkness behind the ambusher, as if birthed from the ground itself, to feast upon the blood of the battlefield while alerting the Mongol kuriyen of impending attack.



Of course, this symbiotic relationship is far from perfect. A Mongol warrior is not easily frightened, but is prone to superstition as any. That the Anda are supernatural creatures can scarcely be denied; they do possess powers not easily explained in mortal terms and explode in flames when

exposed to the sun. That they are Tengri's chosen may serve as explanation, but it's hardly a gift. Mongol mortals accept and respect the Anda, but they feel a certain amount of unease around them as well; only fools allow themselves too much comfort near an obviously superior predator. It is well that these creatures sleep in the daytime and move only at night, sparing the mortals the need for protracted contact with the Anda. Indeed, Tengri is a wise god.

When caught alone on the steppe and without food, the Mongols will sustain themselves on their horse's blood. It is the same with that Anda, who prefer to feed on the blood of enemies, or even the blood of animals, but will take from their mortal siblings as necessary. The mortal Mongols accept this as a natural, if unpleasant, extension of what is common among their people.



Sobriquet: Tartars

Appearance: The Anda are drawn almost entirely from Mongol stock. The "typical" Mongol is often portrayed as brown-skinned, short, broad, and bow-legged, with dark hair, often braided or shaved in elaborate patterns or both. Sometimes the men will slash their cheeks to inhibit the growth of beards and possess deep scars to mark the occasion. This alone, however, does not speak to the vast diversity within the Mongol Empire, itself made up of dozens upon dozens of tribes and cultures.

Haven: While most Anda travel with a Mongol army and thus do not possess traditional havens, this is not always the case. Some attach themselves to particular families — often their own — and see after their welfare upon the harsh eastern prairie in exchange for the gift of their vitae. In these cases, the Anda still does not truly have a physical haven, but may find herself lairing amid three or four common locations throughout the year, rotating as necessary to accommodate her herd's movements. Others take up more permanent residence in stable Mongol cities, such as Karakorum or Sarai, where they serve the Mongol hierarchy in different vital capacities.

Background: Most Anda are horsemen, drawn from eastern tribes who share political and ethnic ties to Mongolia proper. As they conquer each new civilization, the Mongols assimilate the most worthy into their own; the Khan himself has Chinese advisors, and many tumens travel with Muslim doctors. As the Horde presses westward, they adopt other steppe-dwellers, such as the blonde-haired, blue-eyed Kipchaks and Cumans, into their armies, and vast numbers in the Kingdom of Georgia swear loyalty to the breakaway Mongol nation of the Ilkhanate. Any of these might be Embraced into the Anda; the only true requirements are the ability to survive nocturnal life upon the steppe and unflagging loyalty to the Khan.

Character Creation: Anda seldom possess different Natures and Demeanors. While Mongols are among the most cunning adversaries one should ever be doomed to face, their individual attitudes remain straightforward. As might be expected, they value Physical Attributes above all, and Skills for their focus on Archery and Ride.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Fortitude, Protean

Weaknesses: The Anda suffer from a kind of loneliness that comes with being cut off from the vast majority of their people, and most especially, from the warm waking face of Tengri. For one hour after sunset, and for the last hour before sunrise, their dice pools are limited by their Road rating as if they were acting during the day.

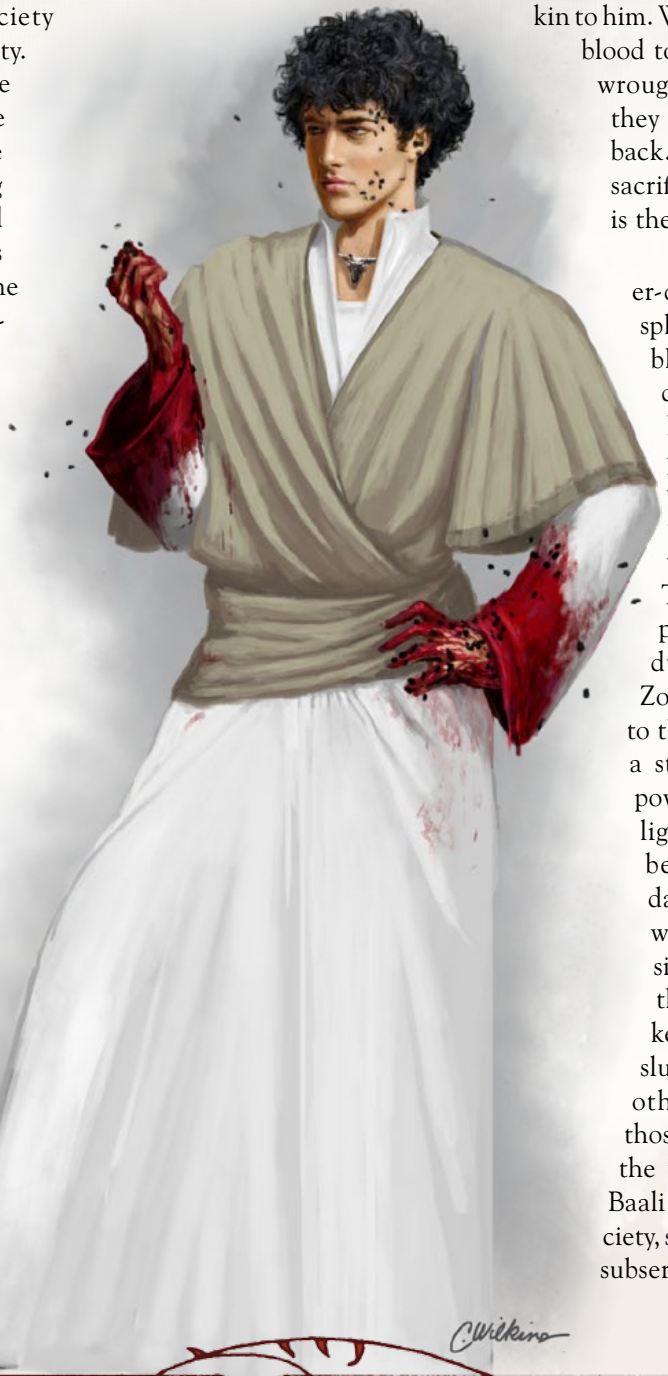
Organization: Though the Anda often travel with Mongol troops and are thus at least nominally a part of their structure and under the command of a mortal Noyan, their nocturnal life means they most often operate independently. Because of this, they impose their own order upon their activities, often modeling it upon the mortal hierarchy they are most familiar with. Like all Mongol society, life as an Anda is a meritocracy; those in positions of power and afforded the authority to make decisions come from those most skilled and able to handle the responsibility. Anda recognize this by bestowing the title of Noyan upon certain individuals of their kind. Anda with that title are not only able, but obligated to lead in the way they best know how. While Noyan are usually the oldest and lowest Generation among their peers, this is by no means a certain thing, or a requirement.

BAALI

You're close to the truth now. You've gone from beating heart to withered organs. You're a demon chained to dead meat, almost free from the prison of flesh. Seek those who can unbind you further.

Legend holds the Baali to be the first bloodline to stand apart from the Clans, a tainted and cancerous lineage plaguing society from the time of the Second City. As for what progenitor sired the wicked line of infernalists, none can say. Some believe the Tzimisce responsible, due to that clan's long association with the demon called Kupala. The Tremere spread this tale, but they will turn and blame Saulot in another breath; the Shepherds' pogrom against the Baali smacks of hidden guilt, they say. The Malkavians refuse to speak on the matter at all.

The bloodline's record of their origin is transmitted orally from sire to childe. Their genesis lies in a nameless tribe in what would become Tyre, a people that clung to atrocity as revelation and sacrificed without understanding. During a pre-dawn rite around the sacrificial pit, their orgiastic violence was interrupted by a terrible figure, silhouetted in the sun cracking the blood-red horizon. It tore into the tribe, rending their mortal flesh into obscene patterns and twisting their hearts to the sky before tossing their mutilated corpses into the pit before departing.

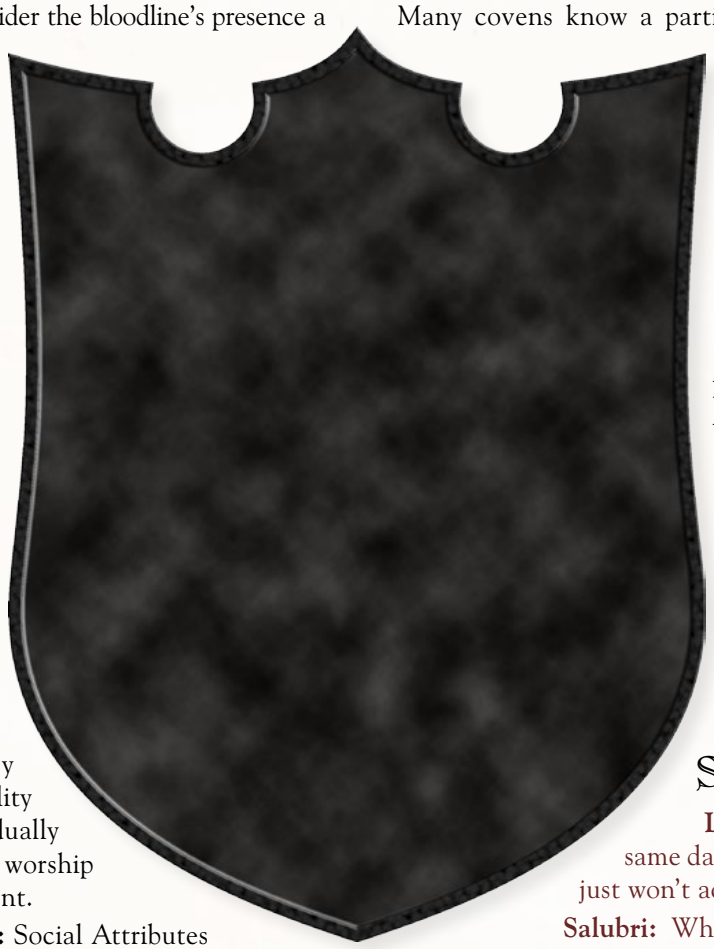


Three crawled out at sunset. They took their mortal god's name for their own, for they were kin to him. When they turned their blood to the summoning rites wrought by mortal mages, they found Hell answering back. They still spill blood as sacrifice, but now the blood is their own.

Broken into ever-quarreling factions, the splintered and fractious bloodline claims they do not serve the Abrahamic Devil (they long predate that theology, without question) but they cannot agree on whom they *do* serve. The bloodline last saw philosophical unity during the advent of Zorastrianism, clinging to the idea of existence as a struggle between great powers of darkness and light. As vampires are beings of irrevocable darkness, they reason, why not play for their side to win? Others fear the demons, seeking to keep them placated and slumbering in Hell. Still others seek to awaken those same Fallen to end the world. To these ends, Baali hide inside Cainite society, seeking favors, showing subservience to (and in some

covens, compelling obedience from) a diverse group of infernal powers. The vast hierarchy of demons known as the Children, the Lords of the Abyss, insect-demons, dark gods – the list goes on. Most Baali agree that the greatest joy comes in service, taking their rightful place within the hierarchy of the truly Damned.

Devils are almost universally reviled, receiving the same warm welcome their mortal infernalist brethren do – a heretic's blazing pyre. Princes call blood hunts on mere rumors of a coven's infestation. No clans would defile themselves by association, but most consider the bloodline's presence a useful diversion from their own hidden schemes, and rumors persist of Baali aid to the Tremere's wars in exchange for unspecified favors.



Sobriquet: Devils

Appearance: Reviled by all, the Baali must blend into their surroundings, and thus dress in mortal fashion. Their clothing is usually of fine quality, and their elders bear meaningless ritual scars, fleshy relics of mortal years spent in ignorance.

Havens: The Baali love abandoned places of worship, desecrating former altars with blasphemous rituals. They gather cults of personality around themselves, gradually converting the mortals to worship of powers dark and ancient.

Character Creation: Social Attributes are primary, with Mental secondary. The Baali are social creatures first and foremost. Stealth is a Skill drilled into every Baali neonate. Knowledges are highly common, particularly Academics and Occult. Subterfuge is an especially prized Talent. Most Baali follow the Path of Screams on the Road of Sin, but a few walk the Road of Kings.

Clan Disciplines: Daimonion, Presence, Obfuscate

Weakness: The Torment in the blood of Caine recoils from religious symbols, and the Baali are particularly vulnerable. Unless those religious symbols have lain abandoned for half a century, any individual brandishing a religious symbol at a Devil is considered to have a True Faith rating one higher than their actual rating.

Organization: Diminished in numbers and strength after two great holy wars with the Salubri, and a smaller war against the Assamites, the Baali bloodline still metastasizes across the Levant and the Kingdom of Jerusalem. They remain inconspicuous, slowly infiltrating a city and Embracing those who dabble in the occult or turn to darker gods despite the wrath of Crusaders. Once established within a city, the Devils establish a coven to worship whichever flavor of infernal might they fancy. Many covens know a particular Dark Thaumaturgic ritual, the Rite of Apostasy, which corrupts a vampire's clan curse and grants them access to the Baali Discipline of Daimonion. The affiliated Lasombra infernalist group, the *Angellis Ater*, are a coven comprised of such converted. The Baali seek to check the power of the Salubri, the Assamites, and each other when they worship rival demon lords. Ironically, mortal infernalists serving those bound to the earth are the bloodline's most ardent enemies; Baali have a disturbing tendency to enslave demons rather than obey them.

Stereotypes

Lasombra: They serve the same darkness we do. Most of them just won't acknowledge it.

Salubri: When their blood howled in rage at Saulot's death, ours sang with joy. Let us be happy together.

Setites: Our interests and practices align; we should be allies, not enemies. Are we not serpents of a different scale?

Tremere: Like us, they traffic with powers dark and ancient. Like us, they wield the magics of the inferno. Unlike us, they don't see the true game they're playing. We *must* educate them.

Assamites: They hunt us without mercy, slaying those we serve and those we command with practiced ease. The Salubri are our loudest enemies. We should fear the quiet ones more.

BONSAM

[Perfect stillness, followed by a single branch snapping and a quick, gurgling sound. Then, perfect stillness again.]

Long ago, in what would one day be the Akan city states and, even later, Africa's Ivory Coast, a young hunter strayed far from home. He hailed from the Akan ancestors and lived in a small village plagued by famine, as all animals in the area had died. Venturing out far to seek prey, he instead found an ancient darkness. Born before the universe was formed, the darkness hid under the earth in an effort to escape the hateful light. Now the hunter came across the cave where the darkness lay and, lured by its song, explored inside. Eager to find a host made of flesh and bone and hoping that this would yield protection from the sun, the darkness poured into him. But it was too eager, too fast, too much, and the hunter died.

The next night, animated by a darkness that acknowledged neither life nor death, the hunter rose again. Confused, he returned to his village, but as the darkness saw the hated sun-dwellers, its rage rose like bile. When the hunter returned to his senses, his people lay slaughtered at his feet. The hunter, horrified by what he had done, fled far inland never to return.

The first Bonsam claims never to have shared his curse. It's possible that he extended the Embrace in the throes of darkness and does not remember, or maybe he is lying. But if he is telling the truth, that opens some interesting, and concerning, possibilities about the Bonsam's origins.

A Bonsam is typically a loner, and highly territorial at that. He is not inherently violent (though very capable of it if provoked) but does demand that any Laibon or Cainite trespassers move on immediately. Those who do not comply will find themselves dead before they even know they were targeted; the Bonsam is a supremely stealthy hunter. A Bonsam is more tolerant toward others of his kind, since he knows that none of them would willingly linger in a territory marked by another, and thus the trespasser's stay is temporary.

The Bonsam lineage has spread inland over the African continent, avoiding the Kingdoms of Ghana and Kanem and instead claiming the equatorial forest as territory. A few years ago though, the Bonsam began to emerge from the forest to push into



the coastal territories and even venture North, which put them in conflict with the Laibon and Cainites already controlling those regions. Nevertheless, the Bonsam refuse to turn back and, on the very few occasions that they have spoken about their exodus, tell of a great horror from beyond the continent's near-impassable forest barrier.

Sobriquet: Unseen, Stalkers

Appearance: A hunter or warrior during his life, a Bonsam is usually lean and well-muscled. Sires recognize that experience is invaluable, and the Embrace cures most mortal ails; a prospective childe might be middle-aged or older. He cares little for material possessions and owns only what he can carry. His lineage has mastered an art of shapeshifting and a Bonsam, living in the abandoned regions where no one ever sees him, may exhibit some animal features.



Haven and Prey: A Bonsam prefers to carve out his habitat far from other vampires, though this territory usually includes a handful of mortal villages. He might have learned to meld into the natural terrain so he can sleep anywhere from the forest floor to the canopy. A spot high enough to keep an overview, yet low enough to grab prey is liked best. A Bonsam who has not yet mastered this power must make do by digging underground tunnels or crafting cocoon-like nests that block the sunlight. Very rarely does a Bonsam fledgling stay in his sire's shelter, as Bonsam are not the hand-holding type.

A Bonsam feeds on animals as easily as he does on humans. Some Bonsam hunt for human prey on the trade routes spreading out from the inland Kingdoms, or their more remote villages. In such cases, he rarely has moral qualms about grabbing man, woman, or child.

The Embrace: A Bonsam sire prefers to Embrace skilled hunters and sometimes warriors. Gender does not matter to him, but a talent for stalking and killing does. A sire usually chooses a hunter who is skilled, experienced, and careful without being cowardly. He might have little patience for foolhardy bravery; he considers this a sign of inexperience and bad judgment, though he can understand bravery born of desperation.

A Bonsam is usually Embraced and abandoned, as sires believe the early nights to be a test of mettle; if the young Bonsam does not survive, then he wasn't worth the trouble. Not until he has mastered the basics on his own does his sire, or sometimes another elder, approach to teach him more.

Clan Disciplines: Abombwe, Obfuscate, Potence

Weaknesses: Possessed by a darkness before time, a Bonsam inspires primordial terror in mortals. Mortals who fail at a Courage roll (difficulty 7) when seeing a Bonsam in his true form either flee in terror or gather up weapons to kill the monster, depending on the size of the mortal group and the Nature of its leader. This fear can be overcome however, and a mortal who has succeeded at this check need not roll again upon meeting the same Bonsam (or at Storyteller's discretion, any Bonsam).

Organization: Spread out and territorial, the Bonsam is not beholden to a greater organization. However, he speaks a communal language of bat-like shrieks and whistles that allows him to communicate with other Bonsam in a radius of roughly one mile, depending on terrain and wind conditions. He might also form a temporary pack with others of his kind to track down and kill a threat to their combined territories. These packs are utterly terrifying in their efficiency and, fortunately, usually disband after the deed is done.

Stereotypes

Cainites: Intruders claiming territory that is not theirs and that they cannot hold.

Brujah: I remember you. Where is your city now? Perhaps you will learn to stand on your own, rather than rely on walls.

Followers of Set: Impressive, turning into a snake like that. Can you do other creatures?

Gangrel: These lone hunters are more like me than my Laibon brethren.

Impundulu: There is power here and they are not afraid to use it. Tread with caution.

Nosferatu: Did the Hunter in the Dark touch you, too?

Ramanga: Leave the Ramanga to their shadow games; they don't know what real darkness is.

Children of Osiris

Ra has chosen me to bring light in the darkness and healing to those who suffer.

In the ancient kingdom of Egypt lived two brothers: Pharaoh Osiris and his younger brother Set. Osiris was a wise ruler, but Set envied him, lusting after both the crown and Osiris' wife, Isis. Striking a dark bargain with the god Apep, Set became an unliving demon with great power so he might strike his brother down. With a heavy heart, for he still loved his brother, Osiris prayed to Ra to give him the power to deliver his land from this new evil. Ra responded by granting Osiris divine gifts, but also tying him to darkness so Osiris might forever serve as Ra's representation in the night. When the two brothers clashed, even Ra could not match Apep and Osiris was struck down, killed and dismembered by Set. Yet Set had not reckoned with Osiris' wife, for Isis was a great sorceress who set out to make her husband's body whole again. She succeeded at the cost of any offspring they might still have had, as Osiris could no longer create life. Even in defeat, the Pharaoh remained wise and other creatures cursed like Set willingly sought him out in an effort to heal their souls with the light of Ra. Since then, Osiris has been a beacon of hope and redemption in the night.



This is the story the Children of Osiris tell. It might paint Osiris in a more positive light than he strictly deserves; as an Egyptian Pharaoh, Osiris could probably scheme and betray with the best. Indeed, the Followers of Set tell a very different story in which Osiris begged the dark gift off his older brother, only to be consumed by bloodlust and rage until finally his own wife cast a spell to rein in his temper and prevent him from creating other monsters like him.

Whatever the truth of those long ago nights, a Child of Osiris usually strives to emulate the myth. He has a reputation for being kind and wise; a renowned Golconda seeker and mentor. While many Children of Osiris are indeed like the good shepherd, carefully tending to each lost sheep, another might have his eye on the larger flock. Such a Penitent could manipulate a Prince into greater depravity, with the intention of inciting a backlash that deposes her and instills a renewed sense of morality in the fiefdom as other Cainites grow wary of going down the same path. This is a risky gambit, but by no means impossible with the right tools and positioning. A Child of Osiris might have good intentions for the most, but the road to hell is paved with them.

Sobriquet: Penitents, Pharaohs (mocking)

Appearance: Hailing from many different clans and bloodlines, the Children of Osiris as a whole are as varied in appearance as they come. After his initiation period however, every Penitent shaves his heads to symbolize that he is like a babe on his new path. When inside the temples, he usually wears white Egyptian robes, either plain or lavishly adorned with Egyptian symbols in gold thread.

Haven and Prey: Hunted by the Followers of Set and sometimes shunned by Cainite Princes for her talk of humanity, a Child of Osiris usually finds that it is best to stay with others of her kind. She congregates with her brethren, as much as such a thin spread lineage can, in well-hidden communal temples far away from other Cainites' havens. She might also see a resemblance between her progenitor and the Christian Messiah (for both have died and been reborn) and take up residence in Christian churches if she can do so without drawing attention.

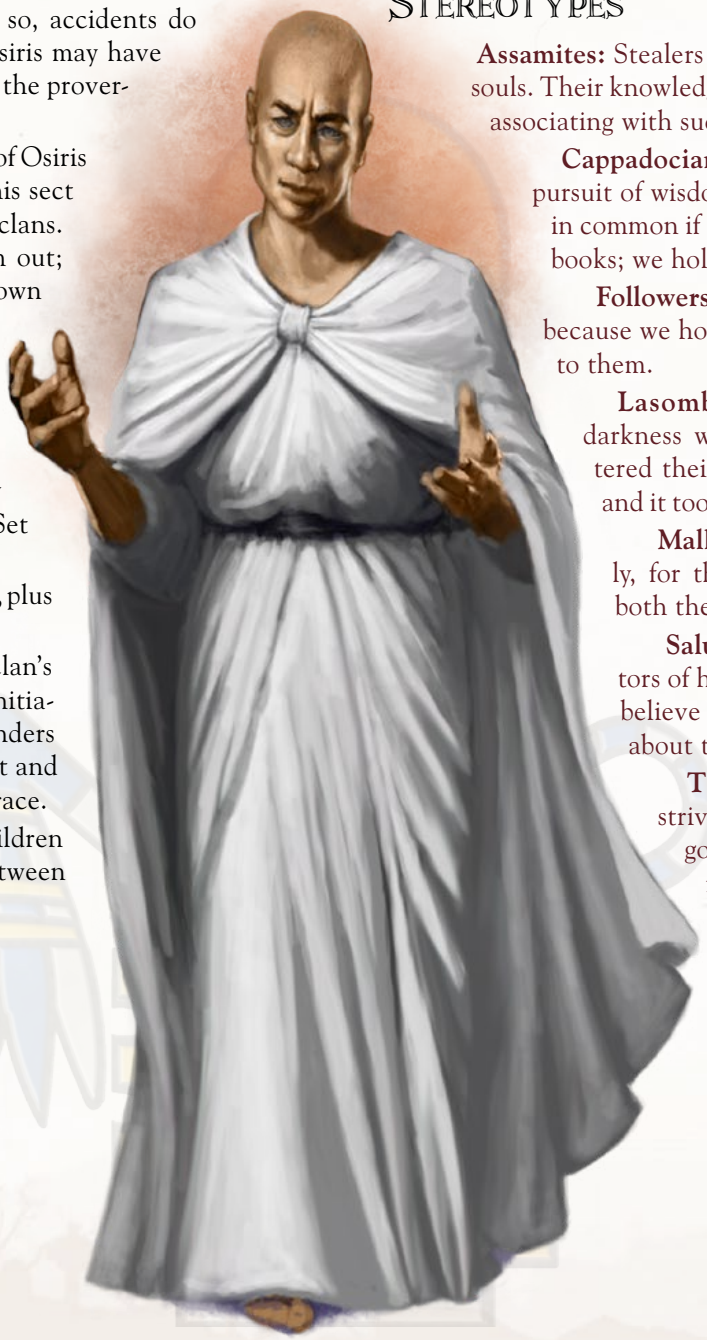
A Child of Osiris is usually very careful in selecting her prey, opting for large men who can be fed from without killing them. Even so, accidents do happen and any Child of Osiris may have swept a body or three under the proverbial rug.

The Embrace: A Child of Osiris cannot Embrace, nor does his sect actively recruit from other clans. Still, others might seek him out; usually a Cainite who has grown desperate with the darkness of her existence and has heard of the Child of Osiris as a Golconda seeker. Such a Penitent might be from any clan, though, possibly predictably, no Follower of Set has ever applied.

Clan Disciplines: Bardo, plus two from original clan.

Weaknesses: Original clan's weakness. In addition, the initiation rite to enter the sect renders a new applicant's blood inert and he is no longer able to Embrace.

Organization: The Children of Osiris are far and few between and as such, they have no real organization. A typical Penitent lives in a communal temple overseen by an Undying King, who can be male or female regardless of the title, as a symbolic representation of Osiris. The temples are theoretically in communication with each other, but, in reality, postal delivery is far from reliable and more messages are lost than delivered. Rumors claim that the oldest temple in Egypt is overseen by the Grand Undying King who speaks for Osiris directly, but an average Western Penitent will never be able to travel there to find out.



Stereotypes

Assamites: Stealers of blood and drinkers of souls. Their knowledge is great, but not worth associating with such demons.

Cappadocian: Peaceful scholars in pursuit of wisdom. We might have a lot in common if they didn't worship their books; we hold to a greater purpose.

Followers of Set: They hate us, because we hold up the mirror of truth to them.

Lasombra: Darkness within, darkness without. They have bartered their souls away to demons, and it took their reflection with it.

Malkavian: Treat them kindly, for they are like children in both their wisdom and madness.

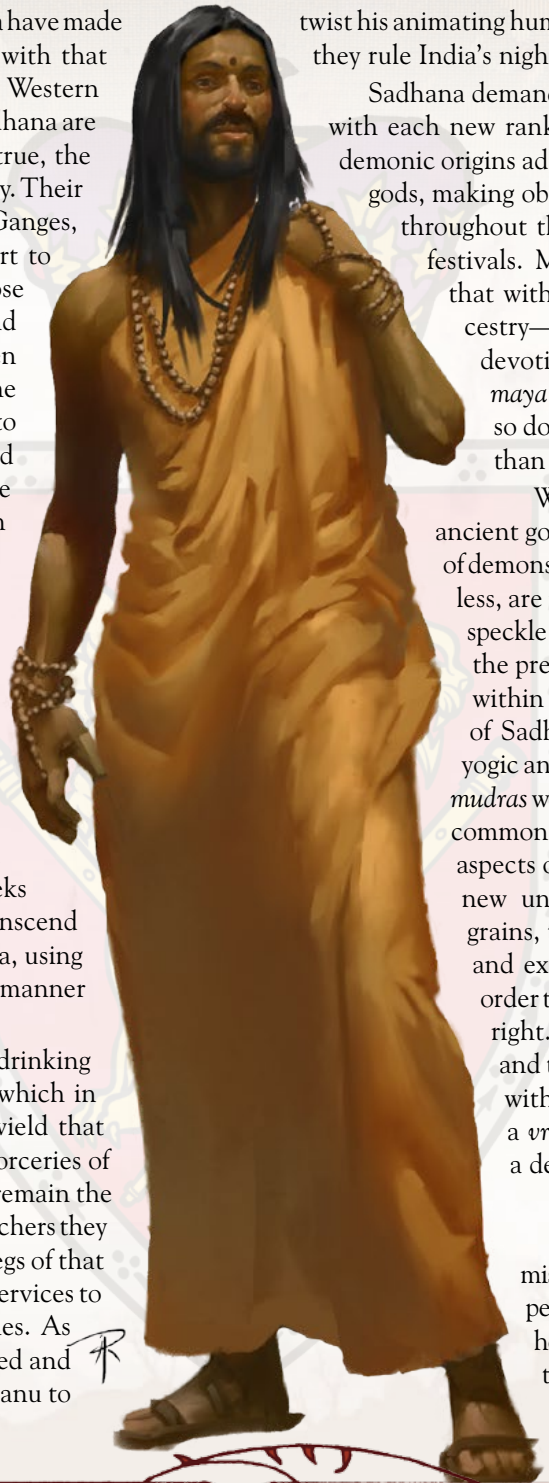
Salubri: Healers and protectors of humanity like we. Do not believe the vile rumors spread about them.

Tzimisce: Like us, they strive to be more, but their goal is not humanity. There is no redemption here.

DANAVA

Whether I am a god or a demon, it does not matter. Holiness still follows in my wake.

Since time out of mind, the Danava have made India their primary home, and with that weight of age comes power. Where Western Cainites hold that the masters of Sadhana are the distant descendants of the Ventrue, the Children of Danu know another story. Their exact origins are as murky as the Ganges, and yet some of their eldest purport to be descended from the blood of those that resided in the most ancient and forgotten of the cities that have fallen to ruin upon India's landscape. Some still claim an unbroken ancestry to the primordial goddess Danu, carried through the blood from sire to childe and on through the ages. Others spin tales of being demons made flesh, *asuras* bound into human form. A second side purports to be *devas*, the divine will of their ancestress and the gods they revere made clear through prayer and the brutalities of Sadhana. These two sides maintain an adversarial role within the bloodline, but both still pay their tithes to the deities that rule India. Each Child of Danu seeks to rip away his mortal form and transcend to something more through Sadhana, using it as a cleansing fire to achieve some manner of enlightenment.



The Danava believe that the drinking of blood imbues them with *prana*, which in turn fuels the Thaumaturgy they wield that has existed for far longer than the sorceries of the Tremere. In death, the Danava remain the same artists, priests, warriors, and teachers they were in life. They maintain some dregs of that mortal status, and provide spiritual services to their respective Cainite communities. As the custodians of Sadhana, the sacred and profane rites that allow a Child of Danu to twist his animating humors into something stranger still, they rule India's nights as priest-kings.

Sadhana demands grueling austerities performed with each new rank gained. Even those that claim demonic origins adhere to the multiplicity of Hindu gods, making oblations and sacrifices as required throughout the yearly cycle of holy days and festivals. Many Children of Danu believe that with the blood of their vaunted ancestry—both kine and Cainite—these devotions allow them to harness the *maya* inherent to the universe, and in so doing become masters of it in more than just name.

Whether they are the children of an ancient goddess or the distant descendants of demons, the gods of their land, nevertheless, are real. Even if a handful of atheists speckle their ranks, it is impossible to deny the presence of something wholly other within them when they are in the throes of Sadhana. They twist and bend into yogic and tantric configurations, utilizing *mudras* with the hands or the entire body as common methods of accessing the various aspects of their Thaumaturgy. With each new undertaking, the Danava consult grains, throw purified butter onto coals, and examine solar and lunar charts in order to divine just when the time will be right. Observing their ritual calendars and the oaths they make to their gods with the utmost seriousness, breaking a *vrata* is beyond the pale, even for a demon.

Sobriquet: Children of Danu

Appearance: A Danava is unmistakably regal. Each and all are permeated with the sweet smell of holy attars, perfumes that hang in the air and infuse their clothing long

after it is removed. Steeped in the blood of India, their style of dress varies like any who can claim ancestry from within its borders. Many affect the saffron robes of *swamijis* during times of fasting and trial, while others adorn themselves in the wealth and clothing befitting those belonging to one of the highest echelons of their society. Many still attire themselves in simplified finery, and all act as their birthrights demand.

Haven: It would be easy to mistake a Danava's haven for a temple. Gods adorned in fresh flowers cover their altars, and the air is often thick with the scent of incense, offerings, and attar oils alike. Even when a Danava seeks the life of an ascetic, she tends to commune with the gods and spirits with ease. Such entities are not strangers to a Danava, but closely regarded allies. Many take up residency in holy places or areas near to them, as well as wealthy, populous districts. What use is there in being a priest, if there is no one to guide?



Character Creation: All Danava have a lordly bearing about them, and as such they are chosen to lead as much as advise. They rely on social acumen and extensive knowledge gleaned from the *Vedas*, and claim good educations from the oral traditions of the Brahmin. Sacred chants and holy scripture fall as easily from the tongue as any command.

The Allies, Retainers, and Resources Backgrounds would serve a Danava well. The Road of Kings or the Road of Heaven bear equal weight.

Clan Disciplines: Dominate, Fortitude, Thaumaturgy

Weakness: Like their cousins to the west, the Danava have particularly refined palates when it comes to those they choose as prey, but animals such as cows or pigs are taboo in the extreme. Danava receive no sustenance from animal blood. Members of the bloodline first ritually offer their victims to their gods as a matter of course, but such observances need not be strict or long lasting. Without a ritual of at least thirty seconds, blood offers half sustenance.

Organization: The Danava adhere to the caste system of their parent country with extreme prejudice. Such structures are holy and correct, to the Children of Danu, and to buck the divine order is unthinkable.

Stereotypes

Brujah: You cannot deny the beauty of the fire that fuels their passions. Nevertheless, some fires must be carefully watched.

Cappadocians: Keep them far, far away.

Gangrel: Some animals deserve to be leashed. Others, to run wild. Decide which it is to be and you will have little trouble.

Giovani: Irreparably stained by the perfume of the dead. How do they manage to live with such filth?

Lasombra: The darkness hides such wonder. So it is with them as well.

Malkavian: Treat them with kindness, for one never knows what wisdom a seer might spout forth.

Ravnos: Every guest is a god. But remember: some gods are better received at the gate, and not the door.

Nosferatu: Their hides are a warning, no matter the honeyed words that might spring forth.

Salubri: Some causes consume entirely, and yet in them perhaps we have found something like siblings.

Setite: There is a holiness in the undulations of snakes.

Toreador: Art is a sacred act, and yet they are as shallow to the last.

Tremere: Their arts are profane where ours are holy.

Ventrue: What can the parent say to the infant, that they might remember? They do not walk with the blood of a goddess in their veins, though they act it.

GARGOYLES

Do you know why my master will emerge victorious? Because she has me.

In 1121, the Tremere created the first Gargoyles to serve as foot soldiers in their war against the Tzimisce. Magically spawned from the bodies of captured Tzimisce, Nosferatu, and Gangrel, these original Gargoyles were practically mindless and almost always short-lived. They possessed no memory of their former lives, while harboring an instinctive hatred for what they once were. They were the perfect shock troops to field against armies of *vozhd* and *szlachta*. On the eve of the Gargoyles' invention, the Tremere were a dying clan, young over-reaching upstarts whose memory was about to be wiped clean from the annals of vampiric history, one footnote among thousands in the long history of Cainites. In the next moment, the war had turned and the Usurpers' place was secure.

Now, in 1242, Clan Tremere has begun to lose control of their creations. The vast majority still serves the Usurpers, guarding their chantries and fighting their battles, but of late more and more have thrown off the chains of servitude, to the eternal chagrin of their former masters. At least one chantry has been destroyed from within by rebellious Gargoyles, and though they'd be hard-pressed to admit it, the Trembling Ones have begun to question the practice of keeping Gargoyles so close to their sanctuaries. Some have chosen to destroy their slaves rather than await the day they are turned upon, while others assume a gentler tack with their servants to avoid their ire. Those who have freed themselves take a dim view of their former masters and band together in great flocks known as Grotesqueries. Together they roam the skies over Tremere territory on a mission equal parts revolution and vengeance. A few have abandoned their old homes entirely, seeking the peacefulness of remoter locations, though those who find themselves alone are generally doomed to a short, miserable existence as they wither in the absence of companionship.



Though the first Gargoyles were unable to create childer, some can now breed true. No longer dependent upon the Tremere to grow their numbers, they are a proper bloodline now. Free Gargoyles in particular are proud and social, and show little restraint in creating new progeny. This new generation of Gargoyles shares less of the burden their sires bore; never having lived under the Tremere yoke, they don't fear or hate the Usurpers

as their elders do. However, a thread of servility still runs through the bloodline, which they must keep in check. Only a third of all Gargoyles can pass on the curse of Caine, and among the progeny they create, only half survive the change, while the other half die within the first few weeks. Those who survive can breed true, just like their parents.

While not well-integrated into Cainite society, some free Gargoyles have found a place for themselves. Some pursue the company of fellow Cainites, while recently-freed Gargoyles typically react to their sudden masterless circumstances by seeking out a new lord to serve, with little care as to who that lord might be. In either case, they can often find a degree of tolerance among other Cainites; while the best they can hope for is contempt and mockery, even a king will suffer a mangy dog if that dog will tear out the throats of his enemies. Unfortunately, most Gargoyles find their options limited to unlives of violence, making their existences brutal and frequently short.



Sobriquet: Grotesques

Appearance: Gargoyle flesh comes in a variety of hues, such as gray, pale ivory, and deep ebony. As they age, it grows thicker and harder, much like stone; sometimes rough and jagged like granite, while other times smooth like polished marble. Many sport a tremendous pair of bat-like wings. Claws and fangs are common among Gargoyles, but the similarities end there. While many emerge from their creation twisted and hideous (hence their nickname), some possess a profound, uncanny beauty.

Haven: Most Gargoyles dwell amid the chantries of Clan Tremere. Free Gargoyles may live in mountain caves, forgotten catacombs, or any other wild or hidden place that will protect them from the sun. They'll feed on nearly anything; those who are chantry-bound usually sustain themselves on animals and whatever castoffs their masters allow. Free Gargoyles prefer lonely travelers along mountain passes or forested trails, though wildlife and livestock are suitable as well. Among those who are capable of procreation, it's almost unheard of to simply kill a mortal for food; they will breed every chance they get, seeking strength in numbers.

Background: In the past, most Gargoyles were created from a blending of Tzimisce, Gangrel, and Nosferatu stock. While many such Gargoyles are still created, for the Usurpers still have need of their service, those born of mortal stock are on the increase, perhaps even holding the majority. Regardless of the method, a Gargoyle's creation is always horrifying and painful. The transformation from mortal to monster wrenches the mind from its previous state, rendering it the proverbial tabula rasa. The body twists and alters itself into its new form over a period of hours. The rarest of all Gargoyles will sometimes remember slivers of their past lives, with bits and pieces surfacing at the most inopportune moments.

Character Creation: Most Gargoyles are creatures of urge and instinct. Physical Attributes are key, as are Talents. Some survive their transitions with portions of their old minds intact; these Gargoyles may possess exceptional Mental or Social Attributes, and Skills and Knowledges far exceeding their kin. Such Gargoyles are regarded as sages and seers, and are often sought out by others of their kind for advice. Servitor Gargoyles must possess a Mentor, usually of Clan Tremere. Free Gargoyles will often have Haven and Herd Backgrounds. Most Gargoyles walk the Road of the Beast. Some are working with their Tremere masters to develop a Road of Service. Some Gargoyles also walk the Road of Heaven as they seek to make sense of the life they've been given.

Bloodline Disciplines: Flight, Fortitude, Potence

Weaknesses: Gargoyles are social creatures, while an individual may operate singly without impairment, should a Gargoyle ever truly find herself alone in the world — without master, mate, childer, or friend — her dice pools are halved until the condition is rectified. Working in conjunction with a complete stranger can alleviate these penalties on a scene-by-scene basis, but only a mutually acknowledged relationship can restore the Gargoyle fully. Additionally, Gargoyles are particularly susceptible to mind control and domination; their Willpower is always considered two less when resisting such powers.

Organization: Gargoyles are inherently social creatures. They prefer to live among other Cainites, but because of the stigma against them, this means they usually remain together, forming large Grotesqueries. In fact, one of the things that keeps many Gargoyles bound so tightly to their Tremere lords is the companionship of their fellow slaves.

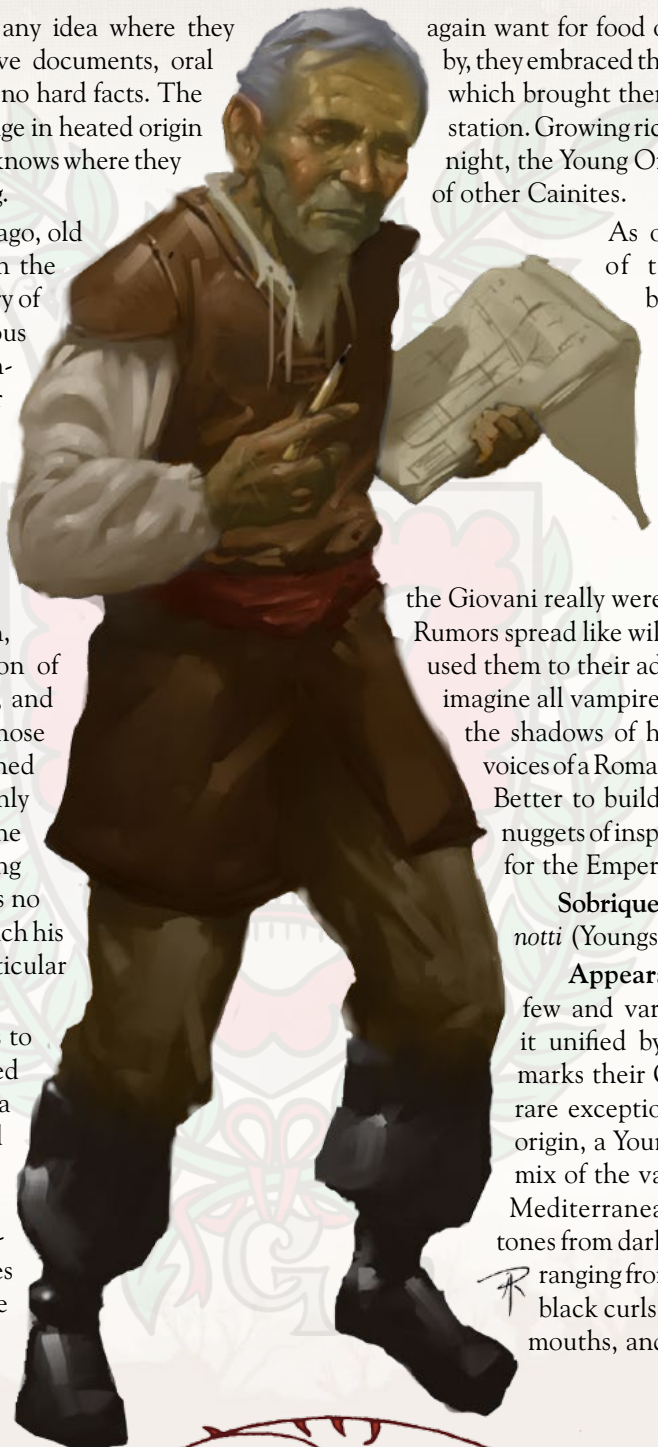
GIOVANI

If you wish you knew what the future holds, you have it backwards. You should hold the future in your hands and shape it to your will.

No other clan out there has any idea where they come from. They might have documents, oral histories, and whispered lore, but no hard facts. The Young Ones have no need to engage in heated origin debates. Every one of the Giovani knows where they came from and where they belong.

No more than two centuries ago, old man Augustus struck a deal with the Devil. He's fond of telling the story of how he grew up during the hideous famine at the turn of the millennium, when mothers ate their own babies and starving children turned to their parents' graves to feast on their rotting meat. The things he saw gave him insight on what lies beyond, and the things he did gave him the skill to interact with it. Soon enough, his talents came to the attention of the Cappadocian death scholars, and the elder Cappadocius himself chose him for eternal life — or as it turned out, the next best thing to what only God can offer. Augustus figured he already suffered enough scorching sunlight in the dry fields, and was no stranger to drinking blood to quench his thirst. As far as deals go, this particular Devil suited him just fine.

The new millennium was his to seize. Soon enough, he gathered his childhood friends, creating a tight knit group of like-minded individuals who shared his vision, his ambition, and finally his blood. They called each other brothers, for what other name defines what they shared? Some chose to strengthen their own mortal families that they might never again want for food or comfort. As time went by, they embraced the rising craft of commerce, which brought them far above their original station. Growing rich and powerful with every night, the Young Ones came to the attention of other Cainites.



As other Cainites took note of this self-styled young brotherhood and tried to understand who they really were, they found nothing but secrets. After all, as a new bloodline of an already mysterious and secretive clan, it was impossible to find clear information about who the Giovani really were and what they could do. Rumors spread like wildfire and the Young Ones used them to their advantage. Cainites love to imagine all vampires as powerful schemers in the shadows of history, so why refute the voices of a Roman family of Necromancers? Better to build on that, and drop some nuggets of inspiring lore about divination for the Emperors.

Sobriquet: The Young Ones, *Giovanotti* (Youngsters)

Appearance: The Giovani are few and varied in appearance, albeit unified by the ashen quality that marks their Cappadocian blood (with rare exceptions). Depending on their origin, a Young One could exhibit any mix of the vastly varied palette of the Mediterranean, which features skin tones from dark olive to light cream, hair ranging from bright red locks to raven black curls, and a wide range of eyes, mouths, and noses.

Havens and Prey: Most Young Ones live with their mortal family. The truth about their unlife is known in varying degrees depending on the closeness of the familial relationships— and it usually comes down to hushed suspicions of leprosy or other skin conditions which should not be mentioned outside of the house. Family is a Giovani's best haven regardless of their physical location. However, their steadily growing wealth means that they usually dwell in large houses with multiple rooms and separated kitchens. Several families take in servants and apprentices.

The medical practice of leeching, coupled with the support structure of a close-knit family, makes it very rare for a Young One to need feeding outside her haven. If that should happen, though, they usually feed away from home to avoid any kind of suspicion.

Backgrounds: The initial group embraced by Augustus planned to Embrace carefully and purposefully to sustain the family while recruiting talent. Therefore, new Embraces come either from the extended family ranks or from ambitious outsiders, making their way in the new social strata.

Character Creation: The Young Ones value exceptional insight and strong resolve. Mental Attributes and Skills are usually primary, but they also value Knowledges. Natures, Demeanors, and Virtues reflect the ambition and interconnection of the family, and most members follow the Road of Humanity. Common Backgrounds include Retainers, Resources, Herds, and Allies. Generation is usually quite low, never going above the Eleventh.

Clan Disciplines: Auspex, Fortitude, Necromancy

Weakness: Like other members of the Cappadocian clan, the Giovani have an ashen quality to their skin which makes humans eerily aware of their otherness. The few bloodline members closest to Augustus himself are perfectly able to appear as if blood was still pumping through their veins, but their Kiss is excruciatingly painful. Some believe the horrors he saw as a mortal man carried through his blood, but this weakness doesn't seem to have a clear pattern or cause.

Organization: The key quality to ensure devotion is gratitude. Therefore, the group of founders (headed by Augustus) promotes a reward pyramid structure, where only those who deserve it the most are lifted from their lot and brought up in status and prestige through the Embrace. This approach means that children from powerful political marriages have been looked over in favor of someone from lower social strata — and as the Giovani's numbers grow, so does internal discontent.

Stereotypes

Nosferatu: As ugly as they are smart. They make excellent allies and formidable enemies.

Ventrue: Having an old-sounding name doesn't mean you're fit to lead.

Lasombra: A lot of ritual and pretenses. If they want to believe they own the Mediterranean, let them. We know how things really are.

Toreador: Fantastic clients. They'd buy anything we sell, as long as they think it's rare and eccentric.

Setites: Try and find the differences with the Toreador if you can. There's only one: they have a plan, which makes them more like us. Not sure how good that is.

Gangrel: Tell your families to avoid the woods at night.

Assamites: Treat them with respect and offer fair deals. I can't guarantee you'll survive the alternative.

Tremere: There's a lot to learn from these folks. Take notes.

Cappadocians: So absorbed by their research and their thoughts that they barely notice us. Exactly as it should be.

Ghosts: Don't feel ashamed if you go to your grandfather for advice. Especially if he can sneak around your rivals sight unseen and remembers their ancestors.

Ghouls: Your family and servants are your strength. No other Clan understand this how we do. All to our advantage.

Lupines: Tell your families to avoid the woods by day.

IMPUNDULU

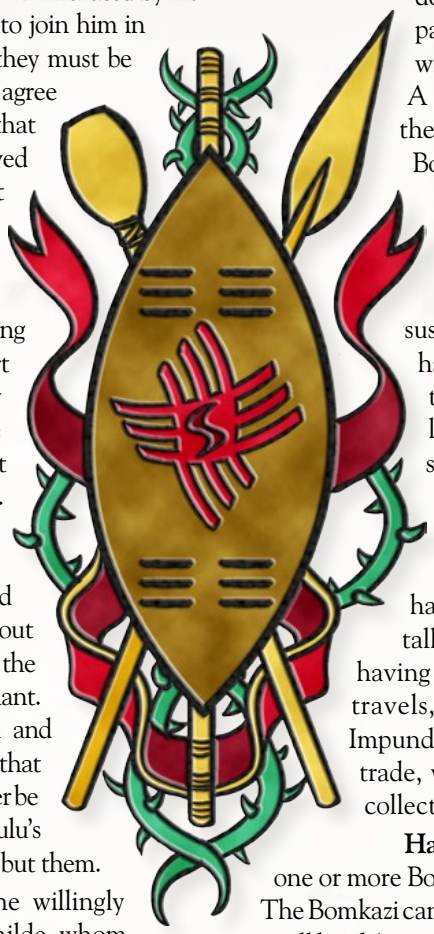
I hold death in my palm. Come, I'll show you.

Impundulu was a powerful necromancer in life, married to an equally powerful life-witch named Bomkazi. One day, Impundulu summoned a spirit that was too strong to contain and the creature killed him. Bomkazi mourned her husband and buried him, but Impundulu rose again the next night, for the spirit had left some of its power in him. Exhilarated by his new power, Impundulu begged Bomkazi to join him in not-death, but she refused, saying that they must be like sun and moon now. Even so, she did agree to stay with him; though she recognized that he had become a monster, Bomkazi still loved Impundulu, and the heart wants what it wants.

As the years passed, Bomkazi began to long for a child, which Impundulu could no longer give her. She considered leaving Impundulu for a mortal man, but her heart was with him. So she sought another way instead. Calling upon her powerful life magic, Bomkazi enacted a great ritual that allowed her and Impundulu to conceive. The result was a beautiful baby girl, but the ritual came with a price. Immediately after Bomkazi's conception, both Impundulu and she sensed that something was different about their child. As the product of life and death, the girl, whom they named Esona, was a revenant. Furthermore, the essence of Impundulu and Bomkazi had mingled to such an extent that Bomkazi and her descendants would forever be immune to the blood bond, while Impundulu's lineage could no longer feed from anyone but them.

When Esona was old enough, she willingly offered to sustain her father's Laibon childe, whom she viewed as her own sibling. From this initial pairing, strong ties grew between Esona's mortal line, which she named Bomkazi in respect of her mother, and Impundulu's lineage.

The Impundulu as a lineage claim the South-East African Cape as their domain, or more accurately, the Bomkazi do. This area is poor and sparsely populated compared to other regions of the continent and most people living here were *forced* to migrate out of Central Africa due to overpopulation. The Bomkazi, however, prefer the relative isolation as it allows them to refine their craft without interference. The Impundulu traveled with them.



The Impundulu and Bomkazi frequently leave their domain to travel along coastal lines and pastoral routes, seeking out other people with knowledge of magic or necromancy. A recent problem in particular has forced them to travel far in search of knowledge. The Bomkazi line is approaching the point where the witches are either so inbred that they suffer for it, or their blood has become so diluted from the original Bomkazi that it no longer serves the Impundulu as sustenance. The Impundulu and Bomkazi have searched within their own ranks for the answer and came up blank, and are looking to trade information with Cainite sorcerers.

Sobriquet: Witchkin, Familiars (derogatory)

Appearance: An elder Impundulu, hailing from the South-East cape, is often tall and dark-skinned. Younger Impundulu, having been embraced during the clan's recent travels, come from a wider heritage. Every Impundulu can be recognizable by the tools of his trade, which he carries in a highly personalized collection of artifacts and attributes.

Haven and Prey: Each Impundulu lives with one or more Bomkazi witches in their residence of choice. The Bomkazi can use their life magic to heal, requiring only a small herd (sometimes just one) for every Impundulu. As an Impundulu can only feed from the Bomkazi and the witches are both unbondable and powerful in their own magic, this is a purely voluntary relationship. In fact, a fledgling Impundulu making the mistake of treating a Bomkazi like a servant or retainer will find himself going hungry until he makes amends and is forgiven. An Impundulu and Bomkazi typically stay together for life, though sometimes a clash of personalities

makes it best for both to move on. In such cases, unless the Impundulu was truly offensive, the Bomkazi will help him find another companion. The relationships between Impundulu and Bomkazi are wide and varied, and they might be like lovers, parents, siblings, or simply friends.

The Embrace: An Impundulu sire might Embrace from two main sources: those who are too sick to live yet not ready to die, and those mortals who work necromantic magic. Hailing from either group, the childe contributes to the lineage's necromantic prowess, as he has been close to death or is skilled in manipulating it. No Bomkazi, even dying, has ever asked to be Embraced.



Clan Disciplines: Necromancy (primarily Cenotaph and Haunting Path), Fortitude, Presence

Weaknesses: An Impundulu only gains sustenance from the Bomkazi. As the witches are independently powerful and their relationship with the Impundulu is voluntary, the Impundulu does well to treat any Bomkazi as an equal ally as opposed to a retainer, with all the complications this might entail.

Organization: Between the Impundulu and his Bomkazi companion, there is little that he is not prepared for. As such, he has no pressing need for a larger organization. Still, both Impundulu and Bomkazi like to get together with their peers to discuss magical workings. Impundulu also gather when a Bomkazi dies to make sure the witch's soul makes it safely to the afterlife. Impundulu no longer guides his clan, for even life witches eventually die and the Laibon refused to feed from Esona or her offspring after Bomkazi passed away.

Stereotypes

Cainites: The concept of High Clans and Low Clans is strange to me. Impundulu become elders based on merit, not birth, and the Bomkazi are our equals by right. Why are these High Clans high and the Low Clans low?

Bonsam: Beware the Bonsam, for they cling to a territory like the dead to memories. If they ask you to leave, take it seriously.

Cappadocians: Like us, they hold death in their grasp. We could learn from them and them from us, if they're open to a trade.

Followers of Set: Sorcerers more concerned with their Serpent God than anything else. Their honeyed words are poison. I wonder what their goal is.

Ramanga: Noble, yet humble. Strong, yet helpful. They communicate as easily with the living as we do with the dead. Only if you're fooled by them, though.

Tremere: Their brethren spurn them as upstarts and traitors. Still, they seem to have powerful magic. We should speak to them, but carefully, lest their reputation holds true.

Tzimisce: These sorcerers have a sinister reputation and I would normally avoid them, but beggars can't be choosers; I will trade knowledge with them.

KIA$YD

My mother said that dreams aren't real. But nightmares are.

The Kiasyd aren't a bloodline at all; they are individually cursed vampires drawn together. When a Cainite tries to embrace a fae-touched human, either by accident or on purpose, the clash of opposing natures usually kills the poor creature. In the very rare event that it doesn't, the vitae burns away any powers and fae-related memories the new fledgling might have had and turns her into a Kiasyd. The Kiasyd is a forlorn creature, instinctively feeling that she does not belong with other Cainites even if she doesn't know why she is so different. Markedly different and often mistaken for Caitiff, she finds herself shunned, if not outright killed, by other Cainites. To add insult to injury, her sire, horrified of having Embraced such an aberration, is usually at the top of the list of persecutors.



A Kiasyd's blood is not inert, however, granting her the power to Embrace and continue her bloodline. Her childer become Kiasyd too, as the strange mix of fae blood and vitae continues to echo through the generations. A Kiasyd with an established lineage usually has it a little better, since she at least has a sire willing to mentor her through her first steps. Still, no Kiasyd's existence is particularly happy, as other Cainites recognize her as different even without a hostile sire fanning the flames of prejudice.

The rare Kiasyd who does manage to carve out an existence for herself usually finds that she has an innate proclivity for both gathering and obscuring information. In a world where knowledge is power, this gives her some standing and might even allow her to gather enough allies and boons to keep hostile Cainites in check.

Sobriquet: Weirdlings, Broken Butterflies (Malkavians)

Appearance: There is no stereotypical Kiasyd, but every single one carries a physical mark that exposes the fae in her. This can be subtle, such as heterochromatic eyes or a sixth finger on each hand, or very obvious, such as being seven feet tall and having blue skin.

Haven and Prey: The Kiasyd is often an outcast who chooses abandoned buildings as her haven, fervently keeping its location a secret, especially from other Cainites who might pose a threat. To compensate for her loneliness, she typically accumulates vast collections of trinkets and books. Since they stem from so many different clans, Kiasyd don't have a favored prey. A Kiasyd with a lineage is usually Embraced for her social and intellectual acumen, so she prefers physically weaker prey in order to avoid complications.

The Embrace: Kiasyd Embraces are painful and tragic. When a Kiasyd Embraces someone, her mix of vitae and fae heritage threatens to tear the poor childe apart, causing a period of physical and emotional anguish that can last for weeks. A childe is generally chosen for her excellent grasp of etiquette and intellectual prowess, in the hopes of making a pleasant companion or helping her sire carve a niche for herself.

When a non-Kiasyd Embraces a fae-touched, the result is even worse, as the clash between fae and vitae kills most fledglings after a short and tortured existence. To add to the new Kiasyd's already poor chances, her sire, recognizing that his childe is decidedly not like him, often turns her out or makes use of her initial weakened

state to dispose of her. The few surviving Kiasyd, for obvious reasons, are a wide and varied bunch that defies generalization.

One Kiasyd by the name of Marconius claims to have been a Cainite before he altered himself using eldritch sorcery. If this is true, it lends further credence to the belief that Kiasyd aren't real Cainites. Of course, he might be lying.

Clan Disciplines: Mytherceria, plus two from original clan

Weaknesses: Due to her mark of the fae, the difficulty of rolls to recognize the Kiasyd as otherworldly decrease by one (more if her mark is particularly obvious). Additionally, her fae heritage makes the Kiasyd vulnerable to cold iron. Not only do weapons made from cold iron inflict aggravated damage to her, but such damage triggers an immediate roll to avoid either frenzy or Rötschreck as befitting her Nature.

Organization: A Kiasyd stands apart from other Cainites. To alleviate her isolation, a Kiasyd might gravitate to others of her kind, but she quickly finds that she cannot abide them either, and most part again on bitter terms. She does not realize it, but the instinctive discomfort she feels toward other Kiasyd is due to their wrecked fae heritage; it is painful for her to be around them, because they are a subconscious reminder of something she lost. This pain afflicts even sire and childe, and Kiasyd tutelage periods are typically short before a childe is released from her sire's responsibility. Given that Kiasyd are exceedingly rare, it's uncommon for even as many as two to be in the same city. In those cases, those pairings are usually sire and childe.



Stereotypes

Cappadocian: Harbingers of death. My sire is one, and she clings to me like a desert wanderer to an oasis.

Lasombra: He mistakes me for one of Marconius' brood and thinks that I somehow owe them. I do not correct him, for he protects me in the belief that I will repay the debt someday.

Malkavian: Mad and shunned as I, he does not judge. I seek out his companionship and wisdom (for both are unique), but remain aware that the mood might turn.

Nosferatu: I am no uglier than he, yet he has found a home. I do not know whether to admire or hate him.

Salubri: His touch softens the pain. Or at least, it did once.

Toreador: She sees truth where it should remain hidden. She is attractive, but I must be careful lest I become a part of her collection.

Tzimisce: She wants to cut me open to see how I work. Ugly, hateful thing.

Ravnos: He is like me, yet not. A distant kin? Perhaps he can help me?

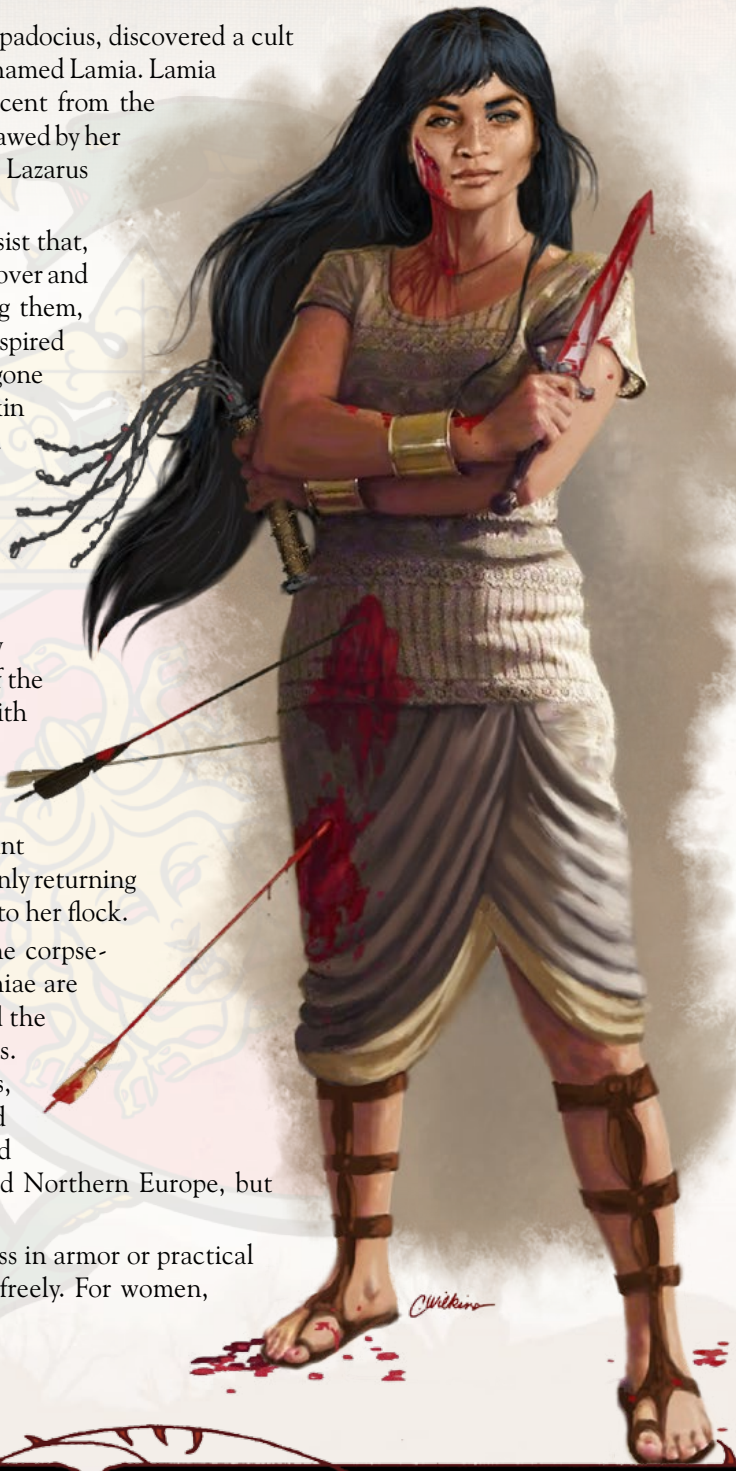
LAMIAE

This is not a place, nor a time for debate. This is a time where you leave, and you abandon your petty quest. If you persist and march on, you will not die a hero's death. You'll beg. You'll pray. You'll receive no answer.

Ages ago, Lazarus, the wandering childe of Cappadocius, discovered a cult of mortals in Egypt who worshipped a woman named Lamia. Lamia was a powerful sorceress who claimed direct descent from the Dark Mother, Lilith. Fascinated by her knowledge, awed by her power, and perhaps even entranced by her beauty, Lazarus Embraced Lamia upon the altar of her temple.

The legend becomes murky here. Rumors persist that, after her Embrace, Lamia gently beckoned Lazarus over and whispered a few words into his ear. Upon hearing them, Lazarus fled the temple. Regardless of what transpired between them before her Embrace, Lazarus has gone into hiding since that day, and his maggot-white skin turns paler still when he hears the name of Lamia.

Lazarus is not the only Cainite to fear the Lilin; they are renowned for their martial prowess and mental discipline. The place of the Lamiae among the Cainites is complex. They do not seek out mortal power or influence, nor do they care for the petty rivalries and factionalism of the Jyhad. They rather prize learning and knowledge, specifically of the occult. Their studies make them well-matched with their Cappadocian clanmates, though they are more likely to learn through ritual, direct experience, and meditation than by a more scholarly approach. It is not uncommon for a Lamia to live as an itinerant scholar or duelist, traveling between domains and only returning home to impart the wisdom earned on her travels to her flock.



Appearance: The Lamiae do not possess the corpse-like pallor of the other Cappadocians. Older Lamiae are generally descended from the people of Egypt and the Holy Land, and are thus as diverse as its peoples. Copts, Arabs, Jews, Kurds, Turks, Nubians, Berbers, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans alike are found in the elder generations. Younger generations tend to also include some members from Western and Northern Europe, but they're comparatively rare.

When not in a ritual space, most Lamiae dress in armor or practical clothing that allows them to move quickly and freely. For women, this often means affecting masculine dress.

Haven: In general, the Lilin take their havens in remote areas mortals are reluctant to visit. Crypts, graveyards, shrines, and abandoned plague-villages are ideal locations for a Lamia to rest. Lamiae who are closely aligned with a local cult will often make their havens in the ritual space of the temple, if one exists.

Background: It is commonly assumed that the Lamiae Embrace women almost exclusively. This is incorrect. Like their female counterparts, male Lamiae are typically Embraced because they are mortal cultists, magicians, or scholars. They must, however, recognize and venerate the feminine aspects of the divine, and consider women to be – at the very least – equal to men. The clan attracts members who find themselves stifled or persecuted under patriarchal norms. Although our modern concepts of gay men, lesbians, transgender persons, or bisexuals do not exist as such in the Dark Medieval, Cainites who might be considered as such by modern eyes are frequently encountered among the Lilin.

Character Creation: Nearly all Lamiae are trained in combat, though many receive this training after the Embrace. Survival, martial prowess, and Stamina are highly valued by the group. Knowledges, particularly involving the occult, are similarly valued.

Though they may have mortals as followers or magi as allies, the Lamiae seldom have Backgrounds that relate to status in Cainite courts outside of their own clan. Even by Cainite standards, the Lamiae who deign to swear fealty to a Prince seldom seem to take their oaths particularly seriously. It is currently fashionable among Cainites for a Prince to keep a Lamia as an enforcer.

Sobriquets: Gorgons, Lilin

Clan Disciplines: Fortitude, Necromancy, Potence. The Lamiae have developed their own branch of necromancy, the Path of the Twilight Garden, which they guard carefully and only teach to those who have come to venerate the Dark Mother.

Weakness: The Lamiae are not touched by death in the way that the Cappadocians are. No, the Lilin say, they are blessed by that great and terrible Mother that lies beyond death. Her merciless and terrible love brings ruin to those who are weak enough to not withstand it.

The bite of the Lamiae brings the Seed of Lilith, a wasting plague that rots away the members of a still-living body until eventually killing mortal victims. The plague causes one lethal damage per night (with a nightly Stamina roll, difficulty 7 to resist) for a fortnight. Any Cainite that consumes Lamia blood will also be carriers of the disease until all Lamia blood is purged from their bodies.

Organization: The Lamiae are organized in small cults throughout Europe, North Africa, and the Holy Land. They will typically be found wherever the feminine divine is worshipped; many shrines to Mary have a cult of Lilith hidden behind them. These groups are typically secretive, tight-knit cells composed of less than a dozen Lilin and their mortal worshippers. It is not uncommon for childe and sire to stay in close contact even long after the Embrace. A few high-ranking representatives of the Lamiae will make the annual pilgrimage to Erciyes with the rest of the Cappadocians, but most Lilin convene instead at the Temple of Lamia.



Stereotypes

Assamite: Your sanctimony won't save you.

Brujah: Delight in the pain. Don't rage against it. You might actually learn something that way, if you even care about learning anymore.

Cappadocians: They will never admit it, but they truly fear the darkness. Why else would they hide behind their cadavers and their musty books?

Followers of Set: There is only one Serpent, little hatchlings, and She is greater than your pathetic little god.

Gangrel: Feed and fuck and breed and suffer. Know the world with the dark animal of your body.

Giovani: They think themselves unnoticed.

Malkavian: Wisdom is to be experienced, not learned. They know this.

Nosferatu: If you have the patience to suffer their quasi-sincere groveling, you may learn much from them.

Ventrue: You were given the night, and this is what you've chosen to do with it?

Baali: Demons are our brothers and sisters, and we do not fear them. We do not serve them, either.

Caitiff: Get up. You will endure, and grow strong.

Lhiannan

There are no 'wars'; there is only the one war — the quiet patience of a tree strangling its competitors over centuries. That is how the ending starts; it waits to win an inch while you adjust your footing.

Old Gangrel tell of a group of betrayers who left the clan to rot ages ago on the battlefields, a mother of a bloodline who turned her back on her people to flee to the west. These elders spit the name Lhiannan when they speak it, recounting their lack of courage and battle acumen. The hatred of the bloodline burns in the elder Gangrel just as deep as the burning fear that what the Lhiannan claim could be true.

Most Cainites, save for a few wild Gangrel and unlucky wanderers, have never encountered a Lhiannan. Those that have seen them all report similar experiences of hostility, distancing themselves from the Cainites by advocating they come from differing progenitors. The Lhiannan claim to originate from an ancient being they call The Crone. They speak of spirits and nature as aspects of power and aggressively rebuke any intrusion into their lands. When Lhiannan are found, they lead solitary unlives in extremely rural areas. All who see them immediately recognize the Lhiannan as inhuman. Even mortals who have seen them claim to know their inherent otherworldly nature.

In more recent years, however, the Lhiannan branch outward. Rumors persist of desperation in their ranks, sightings on the outskirts of small rural villages and towns, and a reluctant need to interact with those they previously destroyed on sight. Some even tell of a group of Lhiannan seeking out others of the bloodline to strengthen their spirits and their numbers. Those who do speak to the Lhiannan hear tales of a dwindling spirit inside of them which could lead to their extinction. Groups of Christian Cainites conclude that the Lhiannan are possessed by a demon that seeks to control them, while others claim they are seeking to diablerize each other to regain their bloodline's power.

Whatever the reason for their recent insurgence, the Lhiannan have become entangled in the War of Princes as they seek out solutions to the problem of their own impending extinction. In most cases, this means becoming embroiled in the interests of the Cainites.

Background: The Lhiannan Embrace by dint of locale, age, and cleverness. The Embrace is rare for them, but when it does occur, they choose mortals, no older than the age of eight with remarkable memory capacity, whom they adopt and tutor until maturity. Lhiannan never Embrace incautiously, every Embrace serves a purpose, as each Lhiannan acts as the living memory of the land which it was birthed from. With every passing year, however, their numbers appear to dwindle; some Noddist scholars claim to have

heard rumors of Lhiannan who are incapable of passing the Curse on to others.

Appearance: Lhiannan look the part of a wild mystic, donned in blood and gore-stained fur cloaks covering leather and wool gowns dyed a stark white, green, or brown. Their flesh is adorned with strange glyphs and woads that hint at the sorcerous practice of Ogham. These creatures wear the skulls of animals as masks and often torcs of finely woven precious metals can be found around their necks. Since the progenitors of the bloodline traveled west long ago, the actual race of the younger Lhiannan can vary, while the eldest tend to be Eastern European. However, all Lhiannan carry with them a supernatural aura of primordial resonance. Even mortals claim they are imbued with something beyond the natural.

Havens: Lhiannan frequently choose the biggest cave, the darkest valleys, or the most sacred spots of their claimed territories as their havens. Burrowing into the dirt itself is also a common option.

Disciplines: Animalism, Presence, Ogham

Sobriquet: Witches, Beasts

Character Creation: Lhiannan focus on the traits necessary to live in the wilds. Childer often have exceptional Wits and Stamina, and favor Animal Ken, Intimidation, Survival, Stealth, and Brawl. Because of their weakness, Lhiannan rarely have the Generation Background at higher levels. They often build cultish Herds out in the wilds, and in many cases maintain their sires as Mentors.

Weakness: The rumors surrounding the Lhiannan and their desperation likely formed from their inherent weakness. Every Lhiannan, from the moment of the Embrace, feels the shard of spirit within her. The sire feels the weakness as she shares her own spirit with her newly-made childe. When a Lhiannan Embraces, her Generation *raises* by one at the conclusion of the Embrace. For example, if a Ninth Generation Lhiannan Embraces a childe, her blood becomes Tenth Generation blood. The newly-Embraced childe also carries Tenth Generation blood. The sire becomes a generational sibling with her new childe. The eldest known Lhiannan wonder how the bloodline propagated in spite of this flaw, but if any have the answer, they're not sharing.

Lhiannan draw strength from nature, and their power diminishes within urban areas. For each week a Lhiannan spends outside of the wild, her dice pools are reduced by one. These penalties are cumulative, but can never reduce a dice pool lower than her unmodified Stamina. The Lhiannan must sleep a full day in the wilds to remove all the penalties upon waking.

Organization: Historically, the Lhiannan have no organization to speak of. Even a sire will push away their childe after a few years. In more recent times, however, the less territorial members of the bloodline have been looking for other Lhiannan. Any organization from this effort has yet to be seen.

Stereotypes

Cainites: We are not them. They know nothing of true power and they do not feel the presence of the spirit as we do.

Lupines: I have heard their howls, but I do not seek them out. The spirits bade me not to.

Gangrel: Beasts without souls. They claim us as their own, but spit on our names. I have yet to see one brave enough to come into my forest. Cowards.

Tremere: They claim knowledge of magic in the blood? Ha! Let them come find me, I will show them that the true magic lays within the spirit inside of me, not the ichor that flows beneath the skin.

Ventrue: They build their palisades and walls high to keep out the dangers of the wild. I have no interest in the hollow heart of the city.

Ravnos: The Sons and Daughters of Caine who wander the beaten paths between cities would do best keeping to the roads. I hear the wilderness can be dangerous.

NAGARAJA

The Cappadocian raja — sorry, prince — has banished you beyond the city walls? His fate is inevitable. Within three nights he shall be as the corpses he so loves, and none of his powers over death will save him. Bring me a mortal you won't miss and let me have any books in his library illuminated with this symbol.

Long ago, a girl scything the grass cut into a five-headed serpent. Blood splashed over her, and she ran home to speak of the miracle-creature. The locals built a temple over the spot, but they returned to find the girl dying from the envenomed blood. Nagaraja recount the tale to all they meet, along with the obvious lessons. Death flows through blood. Power comes from below.



Two thousand years ago, a splinter faction of reincarnating Himalayan willworkers became adept at melding their spirits and bodies with the energies of the Underworld. With the help of an ancient Egyptian necromancer, they mastered necrotic magics, remaking themselves into fierce warriors and immensely powerful undead sorcerers. Striding deep within the dark realms beneath the world, they discovered a great city battered by the dead storms, a place they recognized as the mandala of the apocalypse. The city's ruined libraries gave it a name: *Enoch*.

Yet powerful as they were, enlightenment eluded the Idran; worse still, their enemies among the clans of Caine delved deep into necromancy. With each passing night, the cult's position in the First Necropolis became more tenuous. Desiring a bloodline to serve them and guard a city they deemed holy, the Idran drew undeath itself from the blood of their enemies, transmitting the enlightenment they sought to a group of willing supplicants. They never found holiness, but they did find power.

One of the eldest bloodlines, the Flesh-Eaters remain the undisputed masters of necromancy in the lands east of the Indus, using this unique advantage to bargain with other clans. They have long struggled to carve a place among hoary ancients, even as their curse and insular nature alienates them from higher societies. Even the few who do not guard the First Necropolis keep the secrets of the bloodline, remaining survivors first and foremost. Cosmopolitan in their dealings but zealous in outlook, the Flesh-Eaters walk the newly-reformed Silk Road, sending neonates to seek allies, resources and the lore of Nod while their elders scrutinize Enoch's secrets. Nagaraja treat with the clans as clients and seek out the myriad experiences of the living world, if only to fully grasp the twisting cycle of life and death — and understand the strange nights in which they find themselves.



Sobriquet: Flesh-Eaters

Appearance: Nagaraja tend to come from all walks of life, being mortal mages reborn as a bloodline. They have rows of pointed, irregular teeth. When the death-taint leaves their frame, they grow pale and wan.

Havens: Besides the bastion of Enoch deep within the Underworld, Nagaraja prefer to travel, sticking close to the refuse yards of butchers, charnel grounds, and the dispossessed (who won't be missed). Ascetic in their mortal lives, the Nagaraja have retained these traits in immortality.

Backgrounds: Elder Nagaraja are natives of their Himalayan homeland, but the cult has taken to Embracing candidates from all over the known world, especially Egypt and the Levant. They also retain Allies and Retainers amongst the mortal Idran, having slaved the cult to them long ago. Candidates for the Flesh-Eater Embrace are often drawn from the cult, in fact. The bloodline's weakness usually precludes sustainable Herds without compensatory Allies willing to supply disposable subjects. The vitae they used to magically transmit the curse of vampirism was powerful; even tonight, Nagaraja often possess low Generation.

Character Creation: Nagaraja prize high Willpower and Mental Attributes as primary. Physical Attributes are invariably secondary — they're often death-warriors as well as wizards. Medicine and Occult are ubiquitous, and Melee is common. Their weakness means they rarely walk the Road of Humanity, but the extant beliefs of their cult tie easily into a corrupted form the Path of Devaraja. A small number have even converted to the Road of Paradox. They commonly treat the Vitreous Path of Necromancy (which they created) as primary, learning the Ash Path as secondary.

Clan Disciplines: Auspex, Dominate, Necromancy

Weakness: As the *preta* of myth, the Flesh-Eaters must consume fresh raw meat to maintain their strength, marking them as untouchable and precluding sustenance without murder. This meat must come from living humans or fresh corpses. They suffer from the Ragged Bite and Flesh Eater Flaws (see p.421) with no recompense. Nagaraja teeth come in sharp rows, and can't be retracted, but inflict +2 dice of damage in combat when biting.

Organization: Within their secretive cult, Nagaraja organize themselves into *Shravaka* ("listener") disciples and *Acarya* ("exemplar") mentors. Disciples are often decades- or centuries-old magi, stripped of their magical might by the Embrace but still possessing unsurpassed necromantic knowledge. *Shravaka* are tasked with exploring the world for signs of Gehenna, funneling resources from the living lands beyond the Shroud, and seeking Noddist tomes to fill the shelves of Enoch's libraries. *Acarya* manage the cult and bloodline, sending neonates on missions to destroy their remaining Humanity and embrace the bloodline's divine mandate.

Stereotypes

Cappadocian: We are the masters of the dead, and they are stumbling children. Their Embrace of the young ones proves it.

Danava: Our rivals in a war of magical dominance, but we touch lands they can't even imagine.

Ravnos: The leaders and the rabble of these lands. They are commoner and noble alike.

Salubri: They call us abominations and destroyers, but their eyes are milky blind to their fate. A shame; their desire to shepherd the kine is a pure one.

Followers of Set: Cut them down from afar, lest they recognize their scales on our skin and seek to drive their hooks into our tender flesh.

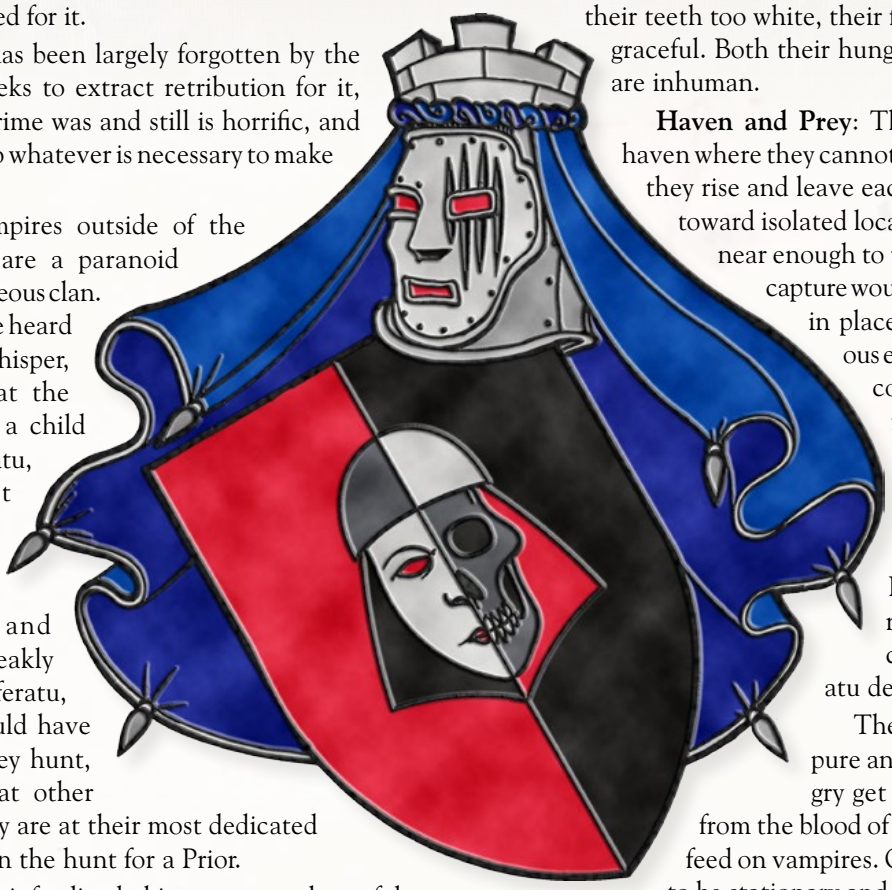
Tremere: Willworkers who have turned towards undeath? Kindred spirits, then.

Niktuku

Keep diggin', ya fools. Keep pushing into the places you don't belong and die. Stay away and maybe I won't hunt you down and eat you.

To the last of them, the Nosferatu are guilty of something. There is a crime that their progenitor committed so terrible, so heinous, that that every last one of his line should be destroyed for it.

That crime has been largely forgotten by the bloodline that seeks to extract retribution for it, regardless. The crime was and still is horrific, and the Hungry will do whatever is necessary to make things right.



To most vampires outside of the Nosferatu, they are a paranoid delusion of the hideous clan. To those who have heard the Nosferatu whisper, it is possible that the Niktuku are not a child clan of the Nosferatu, but an offshoot that should never have been. They are the witches of Baba Yaga, and they hang on weakly alongside the Nosferatu, the clan they could have been instead. They hunt, they kill, they eat other vampires, but they are at their most dedicated and cruel when on the hunt for a Prior.

Because of their feeding habits, most members of the bloodline are diablerists, a state they seem to embrace rather than suffer from. They are all, by design or because of the Amaranth, of relatively lower Generation, even the youngest.

Sobriquet: The Hungry

Appearance: For reasons best known to the bloodline alone, they tend to select the most beautiful youths they can find, grabbing up particularly fetching youths and maids from any village close to the havens. They prefer these youths just at the cusp of adulthood, the blurry line between child and adult. The Hungry possess a great eeriness, though few see them long enough to put a finger on why. They are wide-eyed, their skin too perfect, their teeth too white, their fingers too long and graceful. Both their hunger and their beauty are inhuman.

Haven and Prey: The Hungry will not haven where they cannot see the moon when they rise and leave each night. They tend toward isolated locations in wild places near enough to the kine to feed and capture would-be-fledglings, but in places naturally dangerous enough to avoid most contact. Sheer cliff faces work well for the Hungry. They loathe the underground and will not haven there. Ever. This may be related to, or the cause of, the Nosferatu desire to dig.

Their prey is vampires, pure and simple. The Hungry get so little sustenance from the blood of kine that they must feed on vampires. Of course, they tend to be stationary and rarely venture from their territories in isolation. So where does the blood come from? Nosferatu whisper of kidnappings and Cainites held in perpetual captivity, fed by cults who worship the Hungry. Similarly, they believe that the youngest assassins hunt in cities, bringing blood back in their bodies for their sires.

The Embrace: Beyond their tendencies for whom to Embrace, little is known about what happens at the Embrace, though surely they must be starving for vampire blood at the moment they have turned. That hunger could lead to violence, and so it is likely that all Hungry

To the usurpers and to their filthy cousins. You are meat for the gods, nothing more.

Enjoy the next few hundred years of turmoil and suffering. After that, we will come.

We will reap.

We. Will. Feast.

undergo the blood oath before the Embrace or as part of the process. This ties into the Nosferatu theory that they build small cults in their isolated territories. Being bound at Embrace would also explain the bloodline's single-minded obsession.

Character Creation: While healthy and capable specimens are ideal, sires favor beauty above all else, with a focus on youth and high Appearance scores. Just before and after Embrace, rigorous training starts to prepare the young assassins to hunt, meaning that Talents and Skills quickly eclipse any Knowledges they may have had before the Embrace.

Clan Disciplines: Auspex, Celerity, Potence

Weakness: The Hungry suffer from an inability to gain sustenance from kine blood. For every three blood points they drain, they gain only one to their system. Cainite vitae nourishes them normally.

Additionally, age is difficult and transforming on the bloodline. For every hundred years since their Embrace, the Hungry lose a point from their Appearance Attribute. That dot does not vanish; instead, it moves to any one Physical Attribute that can bear the increase. They grow slowly but decidedly bent, twisted, and deadly, slowly aging grotesques that blame the Nosferatu for their condition.

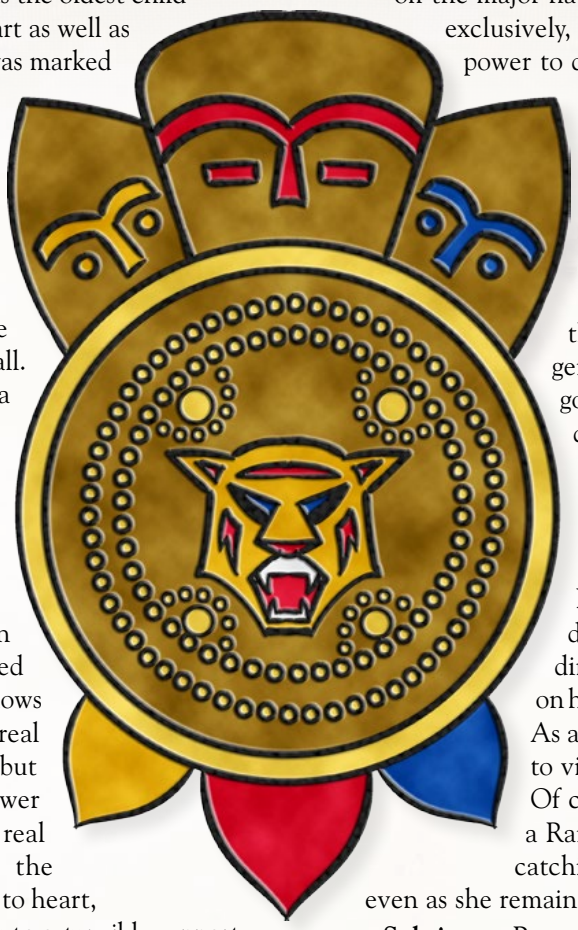
Organization: It is difficult to say if and how the bloodline organizes. There are blessedly few of them and their only interaction with Cainites is to feed or kill. It is possible that they form small cults of humans and young vampires around a central elder, but this is merely supposition.



RAMANGA

My hand is extended in friendship. I only wish to help.

On an island off Africa's south-east coast lived Ramanga and her brother Rafazi. In this time, the ancestors of the Vazimba people, to which Ramanga belonged, were patriarchal. While Ramanga was the oldest child of the king and exceedingly smart as well as ambitious, the younger Rafazi was marked as heir. Unwilling and unable to accept a secondary role, Ramanga made sacrifices to the spirits of her people to bribe them into raising her above Rafazi. When that didn't work, she began sacrificing to increasingly darker spirits until one of them finally answered her call. The spirit offered to lift Ramanga up if she would only sacrifice the sun inside her as payment. Heart already burdened by the unfairness of her situation and envy toward her brother, Ramanga willingly agreed.



During the course of seven nights, the dark spirit initiated Ramanga in its heritage of shadows and illusion, showing her that real power lay not in giving orders, but in making them. Outward power might lie with the king, but real power lay with his advisors, the spirit said. Taking these lessons to heart, Ramanga returned to her people to ostensibly support her brother, even while she adroitly manipulated him to do only her bidding. Cementing her control over Rafazi and his children with the power inherent to her sunless blood, Ramanga directed the future of the kingdom from that night onward. Her influence was even so great, that the Vazimba came to favor queens over kings, though it isn't known if Ramanga deliberately manipulated this development, or if her mere presence instilled a sense of female rulership in the land.

One island wasn't enough to quell Ramanga's ambition. Soon she began teaching others to be like her so they might further spread her influence. Carefully keeping the island off the major naval routes so it would remain hers exclusively, Ramanga nevertheless used her power to draw in occasional traders from as far as the Arabian lands. Through these people and their trade, Ramanga's lineage has spread to the Kingdoms of Ghana and Kanem, as well as Constantinople and the Middle East.

A Ramanga typically maintains the facade of a humble servant, gently guiding people for their own good, while she controls kings and queens like a puppet master. She likes to remain close to her mortal followers, living amongst them as if she belongs. A Ramanga is often the first Laibon in a region to meet with European Cainites and, in typical diplomatic fashion, she might avoid direct clashes and make suggestions on how to best approach things instead. As a result, a Cainite Prince may come to view her as a valuable ally or guide. Of course, a Cainite declining to take a Ramanga's advice might find himself catching a carefully orchestrated sunrise even as she remains clearly blameless.

Sobriquet: Puppeteers**,** Leeches (derogatory)

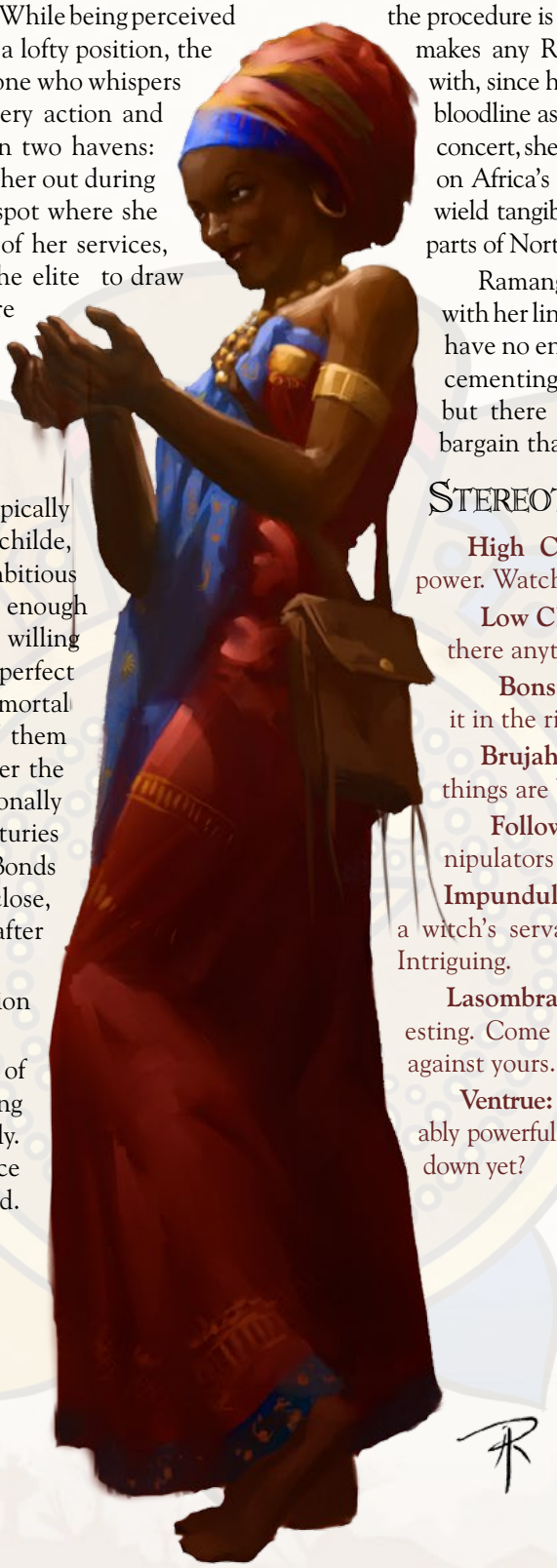
Appearance: The oldest Ramanga hail from the Vazimba people and traders from Muslim and Arabian cultures. Younger Laibon come from all over the African continent and the Middle East. A typical Ramanga is well-dressed and well-groomed, though careful never to outshine her nominal leaders. The Ramanga adopts a docile demeanor amongst outsiders, but she stands proud when dealing with her own kind.

Haven and Prey: A Ramanga lives amongst her chosen group and might even be known (and accepted) by the rulers for what she is. These rulers see her as a supernatural lightning rod who will draw bad omens to herself and thus protect the people. While being perceived as a servant does not appear to be a lofty position, the Ramanga knows better; she is the one who whispers in their ears, controlling their every action and thought. Many Ramanga maintain two havens: one where the rulers know to seek her out during the night, and one in a secluded spot where she spends her day in safety. As part of her services, a Ramanga drinks the blood of the elite to draw out any curses cast on them, so there is rarely need for her to hunt. Even moving into a new territory, she has the skill to quickly set up a new group of people to serve, as it were, and feed from.

The Embrace: A Ramanga is typically very careful about selecting her childe, choosing someone who is an ambitious and skilled manipulator, yet smart enough to stay out of the spotlight. She is willing to invest in the creation of the perfect childe, sometimes manipulating mortal children from birth until one of them shows the qualities she seeks. After the Embrace, a new Ramanga traditionally stays with her sire for several centuries until she has learned all she needs. Bonds between childe and sire remain close, though not always amiable, even after such tutelage is done.

Clan Disciplines: Obtenebration (Aizina), Obfuscate, Presence

Weaknesses: A Ramanga's use of Presence and Aizina, when impacting others, is at +1 difficulty normally. However, if she has a physical piece of the victim, this penalty is negated.



Organization: A Ramanga meets with her kin regularly, in large gatherings meant to discuss new regional developments, trade territories, and so on. Elaborate ceremony ensures that these meetings progress peacefully, postponing rivalries until the procedure is done. This internal collaboration makes any Ramanga a force to be reckoned with, since her goals are usually backed by the bloodline as a single, unified entity. Acting in concert, she and her kin are all but indomitable on Africa's southern and eastern shores and wield tangible power in the Middle East and parts of North Africa.

Ramanga herself is still actively involved with her lineage. At first glance, she seems to have no end goal other than spreading and cementing her control over the continent, but there might have been more to her bargain than merely sacrificing the sun.

Stereotypes

High Clans: Prestige does not equal power. Watch and learn, little Cainite.

Low Clans: Poor downtrodden pets. Is there anything I can do to help?

Bonsam: Such power, if we can point it in the right direction.

Brujah: We meet again. I do so hope things are better for you this time.

Followers of Set: Careful. These manipulators are very nearly our match.

Impundulu: Are they playing at being a witch's servant, or is their servitude real? Intriguing.

Lasombra: Ah. Now things become interesting. Come and play, Cainite. My puppets against yours.

Ventrue: So obvious. So gaudy. Yet undeniably powerful. How have they not been struck down yet?

Salubri
(Healer Caste)

Remember the words of Saulot: we are the white lamb, the greatest bounty of Caine.
It falls to us to safeguard the kine from our kin.

Demon-hunters. Arbiters. Soulstealers. Since Enoch, the Healers have shepherded the race of Caine, uplifting those who stumble. Three eyes gaze from their holy faces to match the three bloodlines of the clan. Between the castes — Healer, Warrior, Watcher — the Healers seek to keep humanity hale and vital. They guard the liminality of Cainite and kine, ensuring that Cainites never draw attention from the sleeping giants they prey upon, and that disease and injury may never threaten the blood-darkened throats of vampires.



Beneath their hoods and wimples, Healer Caste Salubri whisper righteousness in the soft-spoken certitude of zealotry. Saulot was Caine's best-loved grandchilde, say the Noddist tales, so adored and steadfast that he alone remained uncursed by the First. This gives the Salubri great prestige amongst those who pay heed, forming the basis for their mandate to keep outside and above Cainite society and endlessly ensuring vampires and humanity remain symbiotic. Healers tend to mortal herds and bestial Cainites, salving bodies and souls. They stand silent in the courts, scrutinizing the Roads others walk with a mere glance. Shepherds hold counsel with rabbi, bishop, and imam alike. They preserve the lore of Nod and the promise of Raphael.

The Long Night was cruel to the Healers. The mantle of arbiter was dependent on the mythos of Caine, so the Salubri held fast to the religions of Abraham. Yet the fury of the Crusades shook their unity to the core, and their numbers thinned with the Albigensian pogroms. Worse, it was they of all the clans who first tasted their progenitor's madness, fury, and despair ripping through the stolen vitae of their near-mythical Antediluvian. They watched in horror as Saulot's diablerie fueled the rise of the Trembling Ones. The loss of Saulot left the clan riven by disagreement, and their lack of unity led to the loss of the title of clan itself. Without Warriors to stand beside them, the Healers cannot prevent the worst excesses of clans judging themselves above Salubri arrogance. Without Saulot to guide them, the three bloodlines pursue their mandate separately. Without us, they cry to uncaring hearts, what darkness will the Damned embrace?

Sobriquets: Unicorns, Shepherds, Souleaters (derogatory)

Appearance: The far-flung nature of the clan leads to Salubri traveling vast distances from their birthplaces. If they cannot blend in with skin or manner, they attempt to do so with dress, preferring muted colors and a lack of extravagance. The predilection of the clan to develop a third eye necessitates a fondness for wimples, hoods, and headscarves. Healers are often Embraced from religious orders and usually maintain the trappings of their breathing days. No few Healers wear the yellow cross of the heretic with pride, though those with Warrior sympathies might carry the white star of the Hospitallers.

Havens: Healers rely on the grace of human communities to host them; how else would they ensure the

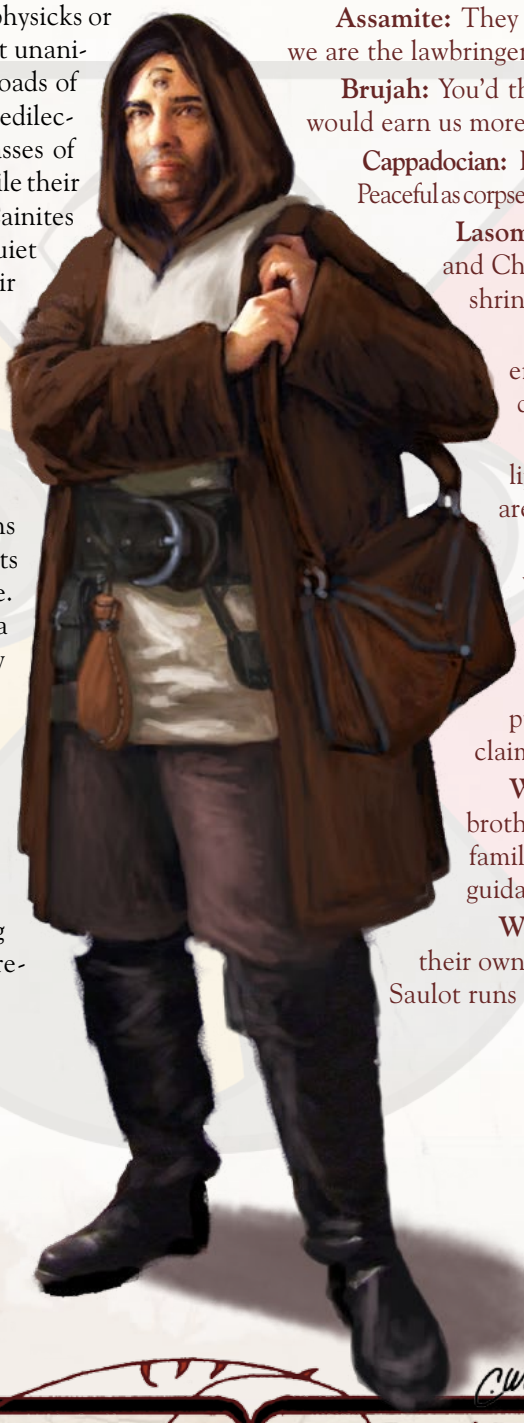
safety and health of the human herds? They have a talent for finding the lairs of the dispossessed — catacombs, crumbling ruins, caves. Shepherds are hosted by monasteries, convents, and heretical cults (particularly Cathars). When they travel, they go ensconced in convoys of pilgrims or Hospitallers, or accompanying Warriors on Precept journeys.

Character Creation: All Salubri castes value Empathy and Willpower. Healers prioritize Mental Attributes as primary with Social as a close secondary; Ability-wise, they focus on Perception, Medicine, and Hearth Wisdom. It's rare for a Healer to have knowledge of arms, but not unknown, as no few are battlefield physicks or students of Warrior Valeren. Almost unanimously, Healers walk the variant Roads of Heaven and Humanity. The clan's predilection for spreading into teeming masses of humanity grants them Contacts, while their ancient associations with powerful Cainites cultivates Allies. Healers create quiet cults of personality surrounding their miracle workings.

Clan Disciplines: Auspex, Presence, Valeren. Shepherds are talented at perceiving hidden things and engendering awe in their miracles.

Weakness: If a Salubri learns but one dot of Valeren, he manifests the Discipline's signature third eye. Salubri Healers must succeed on a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) if they attempt to feed on the unwilling; if they fail, they must find a willing vessel or suffer a two-die penalty on all rolls for the remainder of the night. Victims enthralled by Presence count as willing vessels.

Organization: The Acre Conclave of 1192, an enormous gathering and debate that led to the Healers refusing to seek vengeance for Saulot's diablerie, shattered the clan as a cohesive entity. All three bloodlines have effectively gone their separate ways. Even prior to that, the Healers of the al-Amin — Islamic Salubri — were often at odds with the Judaic and Christian elements of the clan. Montségur is the caste's largest stronghold outside of Cyprus and the Kingdom of Jerusalem, a place where all three bloodlines gather still. No few Healers are attached to the Knights Hospitaller, surrounding themselves with mortal warriors in the absence of their clanmates.



Stereotypes

Assamite: They claim judgment as their right, but we are the lawbringers.

Brujah: You'd think our shared love of philosophy would earn us more respect.

Cappadocian: Perversely fertile, infectious as death. Peaceful as corpses, but dead flesh putrefies the body entire.

Lasombra: As entwined with Caliphate and Church as we. How sad that shadows shrink from the light.

Malkavian: Our poor mad brothers. Soothe them when you can, defend them when you cannot.

Tremere: Our Blood stains their lips. But if we ignore Saulot's desires, are we still Salubri?

Tzimisce: Noble and trustworthy, fast friends against the Usurpers. Long have we worked to salve their ghouls' wounds.

Ventrue: Puppets, their strings pulled by Usurpers. Would that we claimed kingship as our birthright.

Warriors: Our furious younger brothers. Remember always that we are family, but if they continue to refuse our guidance, they deserve their fate.

Watchers: Mysterious cousins with their own familial agenda. Still, the Blood of Saulot runs so thin these nights…

SALUBRI
(WARRIOR CASTE)

Remember the words of Samiel: be like the lion, not like the lamb.
Woe to the conquered: we are fire incarnate, destroying corruption to let healing take hold.

Wanderers. Kin-slayers. Souleaters. Since Enoch, the Warriors have fought the enemies of Caine, slaying those they found wanting. Three eyes gaze from their furious countenances to match the three bloodlines of the clan. Warriors deal with those who cannot be saved: demon-worshippers, degenerate vampires, and those who seek to disturb the delicate symbiosis engendered by the childer of Saulot. Until the sundering of the bloodline, Healers and Warriors walked the night together, eradicating corruption so that health could flourish once more.



Their fury lies with their bloodline's founder. Salubri myths are in agreement: a childe of Saulot and mortal twin to Rayzeel, the vampire who would become Samiel was intemperate and stubborn, drawn always to conflict. He preferred the company of Brujah and Gangrel to his Healer brethren, traveling Nod's wastes to test himself against demons and primordial beasts. Only when the Baali emerged in the vale of Gehenna did Samiel embody his purpose, renaming himself after a warrior angel and working a change in his bloodline. He founded a Code and the Ritual of Blooding, so that Warriors could awaken the steel in the blood of a placid clan. Warriors carry the banner of fury to those they deem anathema, even if they feel the clan has abandoned their bloodline and methods.

The wanderlust of Samiel — called his Precept, even when it manifests in the other castes — touches nearly every Warrior. Cyclopes study the myriad ways of war in dozens of different lands and cultures, either in dusty military libraries or in the gore-muddied fields. They move alongside mortal armies, ensconce themselves in Western Christian military orders, and brood quietly in castles like Limassol. They root out Baali and Setites, contesting their waning strength against the waxing power of Clan Tremere. They wander, and they war.

Like the main clan, the caste's refusal to tolerate weakness or moral imperfection has won them few friends, and the usefulness of their sword arms and Valeren is nothing against the versatility of Thaumaturgy. The Warriors are bloodied but unbowed. The secret to reunifying their clan and defeating the blood sorcerers exists somewhere, and they'll battle the world entire until they find it.

Sobriquets: Cyclopes, Kin-slayers, Souleaters

Appearance: No Warrior is granted the Embrace without having first seen battle. Without exception, Warriors are ready for war. They carry weapons and keep well-maintained armor close at hand as well as bandanas and scarves at the ready to hide the third eye of their clan. So bound are they with the Knights Templar that many young Cyclopes wear the red cross, even if they do not share the Christian faith.

Havens: The battlefield with sword in hand, the saddle, the training yard — these places are home to the Warrior. Their tendency towards wanderlust leads Souleaters to prefer mobile havens and traveling caravans.

Character Creation: Physical Attributes are invariably primary, especially Strength and Stamina. Swordsmanship is prized amongst the Salubri, and no deliberately-Embraced Warrior has less than two dots in a Combat Ability. Multiple Languages are strikingly common. Retainers act as squires and fighting men. Enough belong to the Knights Templar that high Resources isn't uncommon, allowing the Salubri to provide interest-free loans to cash-poor Cainites of righteous disposition. Warriors walk the Path of Chivalry or the Road of Vengeance, following their Code. In these decadent nights, however, some Warriors have turned to the Path of the Devil, raging against the system that has doomed them.

Clan Disciplines: Auspex, Fortitude, Valeren. Warriors are capable of enduring terrific amounts of punishment, and those who spent time as ghouled squires often have a knowledge of Potence as well.

Weakness: If a Salubri learns but one dot of Valeren, she manifests the Discipline's signature third eye. Salubri Warriors must test their strength and establish martial dominance; they must succeed on a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) if they attempt to feed on someone whom they have not vanquished in a fight, or suffer a two-die penalty on all rolls for the rest of the night. This may be defined as a duel to the death, or a simple brawl to Incapacitated. A few Warrior Herds comprise of companions who've been beaten down in the training yard.

Organization: Every Salubri sire mentors and trains the fledgling Warrior — tradition holds for a period of seven years, but in these nights they're lucky to see seven months. When not traveling with their sires or a reconciled Healer, many Warriors eke out an unlife stalking from domain to domain, battlefield to battlefield, functioning as ad hoc scourges. Other Cainite knightly orders readily accept Salubri Warriors as members, and it's whispered that the enigmatic Order of the Bitter Ashes was founded by the last childe of Samiel and her Knights Templar childe.



Stereotypes

Assamite: Our kin in blood and battle, and strong sword arms against the Baali. Their mandate is as ours, yet I see the same hunger as the Usurpers in their eyes.

Brujah: You'd think our shared love of strength would earn us more respect.

Gangrel: We're both fighters. We hunt the wolves. They run with them. Remember the difference.

Lamiae: Warriors who stem from scholars. Am I wrong to see us as companions born and boon? If only they would accept our mandate…

Setite: The black snakes of our family. Trample them underfoot and never eat their fruit.

Tremere: Our path back to clanhood is clear. The bloodstained mantle must be ripped from an ashen corpse. *Deus vult!*

True Brujah: Their passions are not tempered, but deadened. There are lessons to be learned in this, but not from them.

Ventrue: Stoic soldiers, honorable yet inflexible. Righteousness lies in intent and action both, not one or the other.

Healers: Our elder siblings are brave enough when saving lives, but not enough in staving off death. We cannot be Salubri and let a wound fester.

Watchers: I've never met one of our cousins, myself. Now, where did I put those maps?

SALUBRI
(WATCHER CASTE)

Remember the lessons of Zao-zei and Zao-xue: knowledge is the greatest treasure, and there is no treasure you do not deserve by right of wisdom.

Scholars. Thieves. Breathstealers. Since Enoch, the Watchers have safeguarded the race of Caine, sabotaging all supernatural rivals who might threaten their dominance. Legend holds that Zao-lat, a trickster from the West, came to the Middle Kingdom to steal enlightenment from the greatest philosopher amongst Ten Thousand Demons. Once the Ten Thousand Immortals in ages past, the demons fell into sin during what they believed to be a mere turn along an eternal wheel of the cosmos. For his arrogance, he was expelled. He left a hated legacy behind: Zao-zei, a temple thief, and Zao-xue, a monkish scholar. Their descendants — collectively known as the Wu Zao, along with the few Healers and Warriors east of the Yangtze River — say that Zao-lat foresaw the dark times ahead and sought to learn every aspect of the night's dangers, only to be treated with distrust and hatred. He left the Wu Zao to remain hidden, continue his search for knowledge, and safeguard the clans from those who would challenge their right to exist and seek redemption.



Since then, the Watchers — the caste moniker they adopted when they first established contact with the main clan during the era of the Roman Silk Road — have remained a splinter of an already small clan, all but unknown to their cousin castes, standing sentinel against the monsters who encroach upon Caine's midnight hegemony. They commune with Lupines and spirits of blood and murder, hold court with the hungry dead, and steal treasures from the chantries of wizards so that the night may be Zao-lat's to own. They pursue their vigil in these troubled nights, stalking the streets of cities such as Kashi while remaining hidden under the noses of Wan Kuei and Tremere alike. The Watchers masquerade as members of other clans, stride as outsiders in the strange places of the world, and whisper warnings to princes of threats that none others could consider or conceive. As the Golden Horde crawls across the world, the Watchers and Wu Zao unite once more.

But Zao-lat's commandments remain unchanged, and so Watchers raid tombs in search of heretical lore, storm the citadels of knightly orders who possess knowledge of Cainite existence, and clasp jade amulets close to their dead hearts. They watch, and they act.

Even long exposure to the Salubri mandate hasn't caused the Watchers to adopt the Caine mythos as fact. If questioned directly, they remain mirthfully secular and pragmatic, just as Zao-lat taught them. Even in death — they too felt him perish — Zao-lat is their progenitor not by blood right, but by wisdom. Zao-lat's teachings are immortal; they will not lose themselves as the other castes have. They know that darkness comes, and that change lies in the fires. If they cannot stop the turning of the wheel, they will ensure Caine's brood survives it.

Sobriquet: If enough is known about them for a nickname to be passed around, the Watchers have failed as a caste.

Appearance: Watchers blend with the other castes, and thus tend to strike a balance between the two styles, scholarly yet martial. While the Wu Zao themselves are often Embraced from Han or Uyghur stock, Western Watchers may come from virtually any culture in the known world.

Havens: When they're not emulating the habits of other castes or clans, Watchers prefer tombs and monasteries to all else. Even their greatest thieves are scholarly at heart, and even the most scholarly among them knows it's not stealing if you need it.

Character Creation: Watchers emulate the twins, thieves and scholars cooperating to uncover the necessary knowledge to survive the Fifth Age. Social Attributes are often primary, with Physical or Mental being secondary, depending on which twin they hold dear. Academics, Legerdemain, Stealth, and Subterfuge are all useful to the caste. Like their cousins, Watchers are often of Tenth Generation or lower, and thus possess commensurate Backgrounds. Contacts are also common. As a whole, the bloodline clings to the Road of Humanity, but no few walk the Road of Paradox, which suits their duties well.

Clan Disciplines: Auspex, Obfuscate, Valeren. Watchers keep to the shadows, scrutinizing every detail from hidden safety. Their Valeren allows them to instantly defuse tense situations and travel far without fearing discomfort, but they often learn the other two Paths in their duties.

Weakness: If a Salubri learns but one dot of Valeren, they manifest the Discipline's signature third eye. Ironically, Watchers can be remarkably short-sighted, having a tendency to fixate on their preferred small details and ignore the larger conceptual picture. Watchers must choose a field of study narrow enough for a Knowledge specialty, such as the Ten Thousand Demons, a specific mortal culture, or the esoterics of Necromancy. Watchers must succeed on a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) to pass up an opportunity (as defined by the Storyteller) to acquire or study knowledge of their field, or lose two dice from all pools for the remainder of the night.

Organization: Watchers work in pairs. Often, this is with another of their caste, Embraced from the same sire. The majority of the caste lies east of the Yangtze River, where they're known as the Wu Zao, cursed by the Wan Kuei as thieves of treasure and mockeries of enlightenment. The Western Watchers keep to the sire-childe mentor relationship as the rest of the clan, even if they're pretending to be something they're not.



Stereotypes

High Clans: They know better than most the price of power and the necessity of doing what needs to be done, but never forget how they forsook us.

Low Clans: Neglected and abused, yet they often jockey for power and yearn to be on High. Hope makes them strong, yet renders them exploitable.

Anda: They style themselves as a Golden Horde. We name them Dark Harbingers. Still, they stir up so many fascinating things in their wake.

Assamite: We're two sides of the same three coins. Together, we are the wages of sin.

Giovani: Can the Cappadocians truly be so blind? Did they not pay heed to what happened to us?

Ravnos: There's honor among thieves, and glory amongst rakshasha. Strive to win both.

Tremere: We must *never* tell the others we foresaw this. If they learn that, they might discover the other secrets Zao-lat wished us to hide.

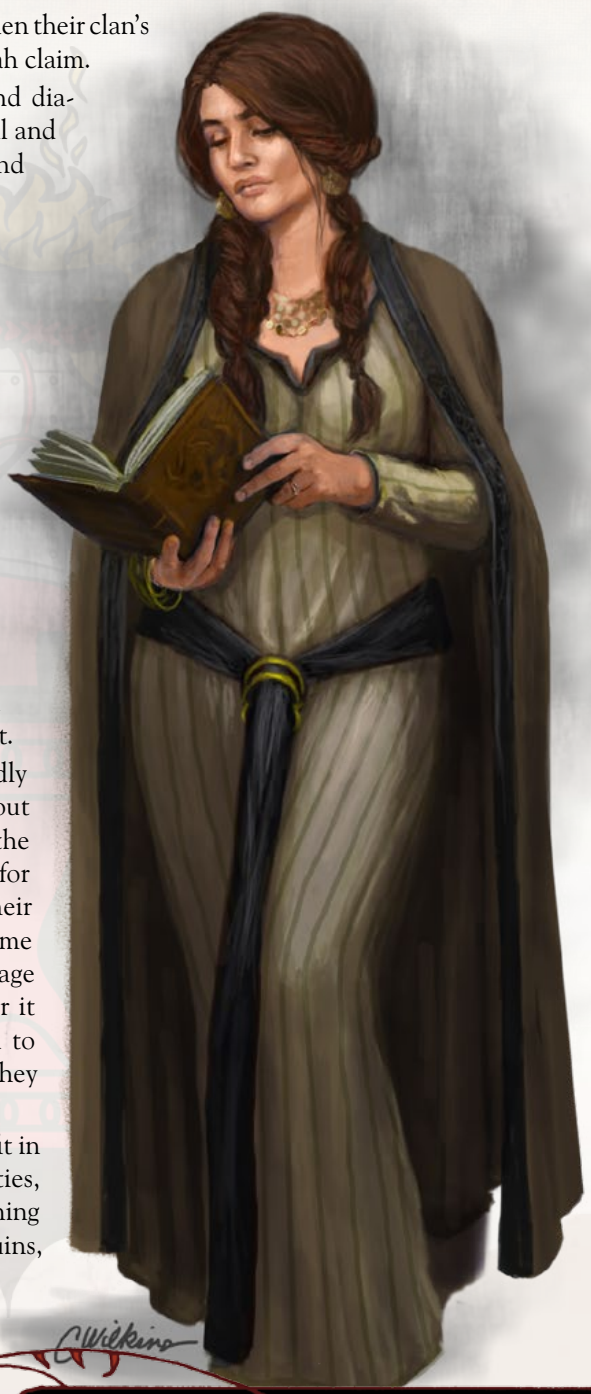
Wan Kuei: Our greatest rivals and our greatest challenge. Destiny lies in crushing them beneath the wheel.

True Brujah

The rabble don't understand. They think that passion will set them free, that they will be the masters of it. They are wrong. Passion serves no master. It seizes the reins of a man's mind, overriding it with grandiose and illogical plans. The calm mind, the orderly mind – these offer control. These offer stability. In time, these "Brujah" will either be brought to this conclusion, or they will be brought to dust.

The Brujah the other Cainites know are liars, having stolen their clan's identity from its rightful owners. Or so the True Brujah claim.

As they tell it, their Antediluvian was betrayed and diablerized by his own childe. The clan split, with the logical and dispassionate vampires on one side, and the furious and passionate on the other. Having abandoned the clan's signature Discipline of Temporis and having to settle for the crudity of Celerity, the rebel followers were both jealous and fearful of their loyal brethren. The thieves called for peace, claiming that both halves of the clan would stand as equals. However, they Embraced much more frequently than the loyal vampires, drowning them out by both numbers and volume. The loyal vampires – the "True Brujah" – were forced into the shadows, forgotten and marginalized.



In rebuttal, the Brujah scoff and say that even if that story is true, then the Antediluvian simply wasn't strong enough to keep power. They benefitted the clan by keeping it strong and relevant and not permitting it to fade into obscurity like the so-called "True Brujah." If their predecessors didn't wipe the bloodline out, it was due to pity, not fear. In their minds, the bloodline is out of touch and no longer relevant.

Because of this contention, the True Brujah doggedly uncover clues to their past. Some methodically tease out hidden messages in ancient texts, discovering clues to the First City. Others seek out ruins or ancient sites, searching for hints to their past or, better yet, a slumbering member of their bloodline who might remember events seen firsthand. Some few take this to the extreme, traveling to ancient Carthage to find some remnants of the truth. Regardless, whether it takes years, decades, or centuries, they are determined to oust the rabble Brujah. If they have nothing but time, they are determined to make the best use of it.

Description: True Brujah tend to wear clothes that fit in with their current situation. When studying in universities, monasteries, or other learned places, they wear similar clothing to the resident scholars. Out in the wild digging through ruins, they tend toward hardy, durable clothing.

Sobriquet: Scholars (among themselves), Sages

Haven: True Brujah often lair either near areas of scholarly activity or close to places of historical significance depending on the owner's proclivities. However, as they seek the truth to their past, a member of this bloodline might locate a haven nearly anywhere, so long as it is advantageous for that time. No matter where her haven is, visitors to a True Brujah's place of rest are struck by how timeless the haven feels. Statuary, documents, art, and more might be on display as befits the owner's studies. Depending on the True Brujah's mastery of Temporis, some or all of these items may be protected from the ravages of time, so the Scholar might uncover any secrets as their leisure.



Backgrounds: True Brujah rarely Embrace, and only do so when it is of clear benefit to them. While the bloodline as a whole knows that their small numbers hinder their cause, they refuse to Embrace out of anything other than cold logic. To do otherwise is to walk the path of what they call the "rabble" Brujah, which is anathema to them.

When a Scholar decides to Embrace, a prospective childe's capacity for rational thought, application of logic, and noteworthy skill in academics all attracts a True Brujah's notice. Gender, nationality, religion, or other factors are irrelevant to the sire, save one: No True Brujah will Embrace a mortal who lacks the ability to keep their emotions under control.

Character Creation: Mental Attributes and Knowledges are almost always Primary. True Brujah who infiltrate ancient ruins often have respectable Physical Attributes as well. Regardless of focus, Academics and Occult are used frequently. Most True Brujah also teach their progeny how to defend themselves should it become necessary.

Clan Disciplines: Potence, Presence, Temporis

Weakness: True Brujah become dispassionate soon after their Embrace (if they weren't already) and this only gets worse as the years take their toll. The difficulty of all Conscience and Conviction rolls are increased by two (maximum 9). Purchasing ratings in Conscience, Conviction, and Roads cost double the normal experience costs.

Stereotypes

Assamites: Fearful assassins with hidden knowledge of revenge. Perhaps there is much we can learn from them.

Brujah: You stole our clan identity. Remember, history has a way of repeating itself. Trust me.

Followers of Set: Always selling something. Don't let them know our goals, lest the wrong ear offer the right price.

Gangrel: Excellent travel companions. They speak little and listen much. Try to bargain with one for their secret for sleeping in the earth.

Lasombra: It is bad enough we've been hidden in darkness for so long. We won't be their puppets as well.

Malkavians: They claim their madness comes from seeing insights into the world. I see nothing but bread and circuses. What are they really up to?

Nosferatu: They possess skills many so-called "High Clans" overlook. If we can ally with them, perhaps they can help us find what we seek. Just never believe you're alone afterward.

Salubri: Our only cousins to know the same loss we have. If you find one, shelter him.

Toreador: Beauty is fleeting. It won't stand the test of time as well as a legacy.

Tremere: If the rumors behind this clan's genesis are true, the parallels are concerning.

Ventrue: They may ennoble themselves all they wish. Their corruption runs deep, and is visible to those who know how to look.



The bishop slammed the book down on the scriptorium table before the young monk.

"What," he asked, "is the meaning of this?"

The youth should have flinched, but he did not. He lifted his eyes to meet the bishop's with such an expression of tranquility that it became all the more enraging.

"It is the book of prayers," he answered, "commissioned for Lord Gonsalvo of Orense on the occasion of…"

"I know what it is! What I mean is this." The bishop picked up the offending work and turned the pages quickly. "I want to know why you included an illustration of Lord Gonsalvo committing an unnatural act with an ass. Or this — of his daughter, for whom this book was intended, showered by the ejaculations of what I assume is a Saracen."

The scribe straightened up to look more closely at the page. "An ape," he said. "It was meant to be an ape. Do you think it looks like a Saracen, my lord? I am very sorry. It was hastily done."

In the blink of an eye, the bishop's hand was around his throat, and a moment later, he hurtled through the air to strike the stone wall on the far side of the room. The candles in the scriptorium snuffed themselves out one by one as a darkness deeper than any starless night gathered around the bishop.

"Insolent whelp," he hissed. "Do you think I won't pry the truth from your soul?"

"If you want the truth, Pelegrin," came a voice from the darkness, "ask me."

The cowled monk who emerged into the light of the last flickering candle was scarcely older than the scribe who lay crumpled against the wall. He had the beginnings of a beard, but it lent little of an impression of maturity on a man with a frame as delicate as his.

"You're trespassing in my domain," he continued, "and you've injured one of my servants. Explain yourself."

"I should have known it was you, Isidoro," said the bishop. He gave the younger man's coarse robe a dismissive glance. "Always the ragged one."

Isidoro shrugged. "I've worn many clothes in many lives. In great Carthage, I wore —"

"Spare me the stories of 'great Carthage.' You're no more than a century old, and the sire who filled your head with these tales was barely older than that. Are you behind these obscene images?"

"'Obscene?' Howso? The pictures depict Lord Gonsalvo as a man closer to the humility of Our Lord and Savior than a common man would be to his own wife. They warn his daughter that, in her innocence, she might be deceived by the Ape of God into accepting the so-called sacraments of the northern heretics."

"You know perfectly well that's a lie, Isidoro," growled Pelegrin. "We have plans for Lord Gonsalvo and his family, plans that have been in motion for decades. We are not going to allow you to ruin them by offending his honor this way."

The monk waved a slender hand as if to swat away a slow-moving fly. "I know what your plans are," he replied. "I also think they're foolish. Worse, they'll upset the progress that my brothers and sisters have made in Orense, so you should withdraw. Go back to your palace and leave the true work of leading to us."

The bishop bristled at the insult. "Do you think your claim to this place as your domain is going to keep me from tearing you apart, Isidoro?"

Isidoro smiled. "No. I don't have that much faith in your honor, my lord bishop. What I do have faith in is my servants here in the monastery, who know who you are and how to kill you. They'll burn you to ash and — if you're very lucky — sell some of your bones to Lord Gonsalvo as relics."

The next morning, Bishop Pelegrin's heavily-draped wagon rolled through the monastery gates, escorted by his guards and followed by an entourage of servants. Those who accompanied the train talked lightly among themselves about the warm weather, the hospitality of the monks, and the generosity of the abbot. It was safe to talk while the bishop secluded himself for his daily contemplations.

"Is it true?" one asked. "Did Brother Isidoro really give our lord bishop a relic of Saint Anthony?"

The scribe who rode beside him, the hair of his bowed head still darkened with drying blood, offered a gentle smile. "Indeed," he said, "but this time, only a hand."

Chapter Three: The Roads We Walk

Our superiority is not one of divine right; divinity is but a distraction. Divinity is a distraction, and religion is a tool.

For some, religion is a tool to find purpose and guidance. For ours, religion is a tool to filter our wishes to the flock with deniability and detachment. We say, "It's not our desire, childe, it's the Lord's. I will support your choices. The Lord, however, is not so forgiving."

-Cardinal Serenity, Walking the Road of Kings, Volume 7

Every vampire holds a Beast within her soul. This Beast selfishly seeks immediate gratification and basic survival needs before all other things. To an animal, this might be useful. But to the complex, cerebral creatures called Cainites, this is often distracting or dangerous. After all, a hungry Cainite at the Prince's court cannot simply grab the nearest mortal and slake her thirst. The Beast is neither intelligent nor patient enough to care about the social (and physical) risks of such an action. Why should it? After all, the Beast believes it controls the apex predator in any given environment. The Beast cares not for the Silence of the Blood, nor any of Caine's other Traditions. The Beast cares only about what feels right in the moment. Eat it. Fuck it. Kill it. Find shelter. Sleep. Repeat.

To hold back this monster inside, vampires walk Roads of Enlightenment. Roads are equal parts secret society, religion, philosophy, morality, and excuse. Vampires must drink blood to survive. This much, most would not argue. But Roads of Enlightenment tell the Cainite that other, more targeted behaviors are not only acceptable in spite of human morality, but encouraged or even exalted. For example, if a vampire believes she's evolving past the human condition into a whole different monster beyond even a Cainite, what's a few dozen lives in the name of experimentation?

A View of a Road

Vampires need Roads, lest they fall to true monstrosity. But what is a Road? They look the part of their mortal counterparts: small, medieval churches. Sometimes, this means congregating in a Cainite's basement. Often, this means maintaining a neutral meeting ground. For some, this can be informal as a tent kept for services, while for others, it can mean elaborate underground cathedrals. A given Road's particular values will dictate what constitutes a proper congregation. For example, followers of the Road of the Beast might find a countryside clearing on which to meet, whereas practitioners of the Road of Kings may gather during a mortal noble's salon, blending and commanding the flock in secret.

Every Road organizes differently. To some Roads, the very idea of formal organization stands as an affront to their precepts. To others, ritual and hierarchy are akin to religious experiences. Even from domain to domain, a Road's organization may differ dramatically. This is often due to raw numbers; if a Road only has a small handful of adherents, organization looks closer to a coterie, while

sprawling cities with a dozen or more practitioners of a Road might have a formal head, a council of advisors, and other assigned roles for lay membership. As a rule of thumb, a city with numerous members on a Road will expect more of its flock.

Walking a Road

By necessity, Roads are challenging to walk. Rigor and zeal help to push back the Beast. Piety to the Road's precepts helps a vampire find meaning and purpose in a life that's distinctly different than human existence in the Dark Medieval World. This isn't to say that all succeed; many Cainites fall to their Beasts and become truly monstrous for a short while before being put down by "civilized" vampires.

Upon Embrace, a vampire must adopt a Road to stave off the Beast. Before the formal choice and adoption, vampires default to the Road of Humanity. Over time, a vampire may choose to walk a different Road. Adopting a Road is a risky affair, and one not to be taken lightly. In many cases a childe will walk his sire's Road, but this isn't always true. A Road is an important decision, and most wise sires favor choosing childer for criteria that lend themselves to their Road of choice, sowing the seeds, then letting the childe make the decision for himself.

Initiates

Characters who have just adopted a Road are called initiates. While the character may academically understand the basic guiding philosophies of her Road, she doesn't fundamentally *feel* those philosophies yet. At this phase in the vampire's development, she may find certain tasks more difficult thanks to her internal struggle. Her *aura* (see p.113) is one reflecting uncertainty and conflict with those precepts; she's yet to come to terms with what they actually mean in her unlife. This breeds an uphill battle, a challenge for her to face. She pushes forward on her Road not because her Road works for her, but because she has faith that she can make it work with her in time.

In game terms, an Initiate has one to three dots in her Road.

Adherents

An Adherent to a Road has walked long enough to feel the fundamental truths of his philosophy. He's had chances to test his beliefs against real world scenarios, and has found strength in his convictions. This truth and knowledge rings powerfully in the Cainite, reaffirming his existence. Most of his actions can be defined by how they relate to his Road's tenets. His Road becomes a lens through which he can view all things.

In game terms, an Adherent has four to seven dots in his Road. Most Cainites are Adherents in their Roads. Even the eldest, most powerful Cainites trend toward this level, as the most dedicated adherents withdraw from Cainite society to pursue their Roads.

Mentors

For a Road to persist across centuries, it requires teachers to perpetuate the knowledge, the faith, and the understanding of its ideals. At a certain point, most Roads encourage accomplished Adherents to step up and become Mentors to another character. Even among the most individualistic and competitive Roads, it serves a member to teach her inferiors, as that tutelage may afford a bit of respect, and less scrutiny when the student assesses threats to his own rise to power.

In game terms, a character taught by a Mentor with more dots in the Road can raise her Road score with one fewer experience points per dot between their scores, to a minimum of half normal cost. For example, a character on Road of the Beast at five dots would normally have to spend twelve points for her sixth dot. With a Mentor with eight dots in the Road, she'd only need to spend nine points, since there's a difference of three dots.

Paragons

Paragons are not just teachers; they stand as ideals for what a Road represents. Her *aura* holds a sense of majesty; her words carry immense authority in her field. She's experienced a great many things, and has mastered her relationship to her Beast. If her Road preaches of Golconda, she may have insight into what it is.

In game terms, a Paragon has eight or more dots in her Road. The few Cainites who become Paragons tend to withdraw from the night-to-night affairs of the general vampiric populace, as pursuit of the Road becomes an all-consuming effort.

Apostates

Apostates have abandoned their way, and often joined another Road. At the very least, they've sinned against the very idea of the Road they abandoned. Depending on the Road, other adherents view an Apostate with varying degrees of scorn or disdain. For example, Road of Humanity members usually look at an Apostate as a monstrosity, a failure, "just another Cainite." After all, Road of Humanity is the default everyone is Embraced with, and to join another Road means abandoning the last

vestiges of one's human self. A Road of Heaven follower may look to an Apostate as a heretic that must be put down for his blasphemy. A member of the Road of Kings sees a weakling, and another wretch to put under the heel.

In game terms, an Apostate generally means a character who has changed Roads. Alternatively, it can be used to refer to a character known to have transgressed against a level one precept on the Road's hierarchy of sins.

Excommunicates

Excommunicates have been removed by the Road's status quo. The character has been deemed a sinner beyond redemption, and is no longer welcome on the path. This is a rare occurrence, and one not taken lightly. Most Roads have rituals and observances, protocol and methods for excommunicating a member. Some, on the other hand, simply kill their failures.

In game terms, a recognized Paragon can excommunicate an Initiate character from his Road. An Adherent requires a consensus of three Paragons to excommunicate. Paragons cannot functionally be excommunicated; generally a Paragon who has sinned sufficiently to warrant excommunication is simply put down by the Road at large. An excommunicated character can remain on her Road indefinitely, but suffers a +2 difficulty on all Conscience/Conviction rolls while she remains on the Road. In addition, double any aura penalties.

Changing Roads

Throughout a character's existence, she may seek to change her Road. This is a risky proposition, since it pushes the character close to the Beast as she "resets" her entire way of thinking. The character must have a mentor on the desired Road in order to take the step, and the process is detailed below.

Functionally speaking, characters start on the Road of Humanity upon the Embrace. A character who has changed his Road becomes an Apostate. Some Roads allow this without pressure or backlash. Others do not accept splitters.

Step One: Diminish Virtues

Compare the character's current Road with her desired Road. She likely must change at least one Virtue, be it Self-Control to Instinct, Conscience to Conviction, or in vice versa. To change a Virtue, the character must shed the current Virtue. This requires she sin against her current Road (and her current Road rating), and sacrifice her Virtue dots instead of her Road rating (see Sins Against the Road, p. 114). She cannot change her Virtue, and thus adopt a new Road, until she reaches a single dot in her old Virtue. Note that Virtues that don't need to change can be left alone. For example, if a character transitions from a Road using Self-Control to another using Self-Control, she doesn't need to drop her Self-Control to change Roads.

Note that this means a character with a new Road will likely have at least one Virtue at a single dot.

Step Two: Wander Astray

Next, she must shed her current adherence. She must abandon levels in her current Road through sins against the Road (see Sins Against the Road, p. 114). It's not until she's at a single dot of her current Road that she can adopt another.

Step Three: Moment of Truth

Lastly, the character must take a leap into her new Road. She must experience a Moment of Truth (see p. 115) for her new Road. As she experiences the change, her Beast attempts to take control of her body, stripping her of her Roads completely and leaving her an irredeemable monster.

In game terms, this first dot is free. However, when making the change, the character must fight off her Beast. This requires an extended Willpower roll. The character spends a point of Willpower for each roll, and rolls her Willpower dots. The difficulty is 10- her total combined Virtue dots remaining. She needs a total of ten successes to adopt the new Road. If she fails a single roll, she can continue. But if she runs out of Willpower, she falls to zero dots in her current Road and becomes lost to the Beast. A botch on any of these rolls costs her an additional point of Willpower per botch rolled.

Road Ratings

Roads are rated by dot level, from zero to ten dots. A rating of ten dots reflects an absolute paragon of her Road's ideals. A rating of zero dots reflects a vampire that's fallen completely from her Road.

A character may never roll more dice to resist Rötschreck, frenzy, or any other denial of her Beast than she has Road dots. She's similarly limited in Virtues; she cannot roll more dice for a Virtue than she has dots in her Road. A character's Road rating affects her aura, which in turn adds or subtracts difficulty from certain rolls.

A Note on Homogeneity

It's worth noting here that vampires are individuals. Roads are governing beliefs and philosophies, not unlike mortal religions in the real world. Every single practitioner interprets and practices in her own way. Sure, stereotypes and commonalities exist among the Roads. However, followers are (usually) not mindless zealots. They have identities. They have unique interests and goals. Some barely even believe in what they practice. Sound familiar? When portraying a member of a Road, don't think of the character as a Road follower first; think of them as an individual, and ask yourself how the character views the world through the lens of that Road.

Characters with higher Road ratings have come to terms with themselves, and thus have less inner turmoil. As result, they rise earlier in the evening. There are no hard numbers on this, but a character with seven or more dots in her Road will rise just before the sun sets, and a character with four or fewer will rise up to an hour after. If a character is forced to act during the day, all dice pools have a maximum of her Road rating.

Lastly, all vampires are predators. Characters with higher Road ratings have more control of their façades and can pass easily among the flock. Characters with lower Road ratings wear their predation on their sleeve. Apply all aura modifiers (p. 114) to any social interactions with humans as well as the normal aura effect.

Road Features

On the following pages, you'll find examples of the most common Roads characters walk in **V20 Dark Ages**. Here are the various traits and features of each:

Ethics

These Ethics build the foundation, the backbone of the Road. All adherents to the Road generally recognize these precepts. If a character cannot at least nominally acknowledge these ideas, her Road will be a hard one.

Initiation

This section addresses how most members enter the Road. While these guidelines can be somewhat detailed, they're not hard rules. Every given domain's practitioners organize differently, adopting their own local rituals and customs. It's also worth noting that in some cities, a certain Road may be considered heretical or otherwise outlawed, so their customs reflect a certain amount of prudence.

Organization

Then we explain a bit about how your average domain's Road practitioners organize, if such an average exists. Organization varies widely, mostly dependent on populations and popularity of that Road in the given domain.

Aura

A practitioner of a Road possesses a certain *aura*, a personal bearing, a palpable force of presence that embodies the Road's ethos. For characters high on their Roads, this gives them a reduced difficulty on rolls due to their confidence and grace in these situations. For characters low on their Roads, their struggle manifests as a personal challenge they must overcome, and thus they suffer a difficulty increase.

Every Road manifests its aura differently, and indeed every practitioner is subtly unique in this expression. When choosing your character's Road, think about how that aura comes into play, what it looks like, what it feels like. Consider how it might shift and change as the ratings change in play.

Aura modifiers definitely apply to relevant Social rolls. However, with Storyteller discretion, a character's aura might affect any roll with which her character's bearing should give an advantage or disadvantage. For example, a character on the Road of Kings might get her aura modifier on Willpower rolls to resist forced subordination. As a Storyteller, favor allowing dramatically appropriate benefits from auras. After all, maintaining a high Road score can be a challenge; the player most certainly earned the benefits.

Aura modifiers also apply to all social interactions with mortals, as a vampire with a lower Road rating becomes unstable and ferocious, which upsets humans and inspires fight-or-flight instincts.

Consult the chart on the following page for aura modifiers.



Road Rating	Aura Modifier
10	-2 difficulty
8-9	-1 difficulty
4-7	no modifier
2-3	+1 difficulty
1	+2 difficulty

Virtues

Roads define themselves through numerous criteria. The most immediately noticeable differentiation is the divide in Virtues. Every Road ascribes to either Conscience or Conviction, as well as either Instinct or Self-Control.

Human and ghoul characters have Conscience and Self-Control by default. You can find more about these traits on p. 183.

Paths

No Road is a monolith. Even the fiercest, most zealous Roads spawn divergent thinking. A Path reflects one of these branches in philosophy. While Paths share most of their ethics with the mainstream Road, some of their particular values or sins can be different, or just differently emphasized.

When choosing a Road, a character can choose a Path. Changing from a Road to one of its Paths can be done at any time the character has a Moment of Truth. Use the same extended Willpower roll as if the character was switching to another Road (see p.112), but only five successes are required. Additionally, failure results in the loss of a dot in the Road. A botch results in two lost dots. This means a character is unlikely to lose himself to the Beast entirely when switching to a new Path.

Sins Against the Road

Included in each Road description is a list of sins to the Road's philosophy. Violating these tenets may risk the vampire's personal stake in the Road.

These lists feature one or more sins at each level from one to ten. While all the sins on the list are considered violations of the Road, a character only risks her Road rating

if violating a sin at her dot rating or lower. For example, a character with Road of Kings at seven dots risks her Road rating when she commits a level four sin or a level seven sin, but a level eight or higher sin is beyond her level of piety.

When a character sins at or below her level, roll her Conscience or Conviction. The base difficulty is 6, but increases by 1 for every level of difference between the sin and the character's current Road rating. For example, a character with six dots in her Road who commits a level 4 sin rolls at difficulty 8. A failure means the character loses a dot of her Road. Alternatively, she can lose a dot of Conscience, Conviction, Instinct, or Self-Control. This is required to adopt a new Road, since you cannot change a Virtue without first reducing it to a single dot.

In story terms, success means the character rationalizes their sin, contemplates it, and it does not mar her philosophical bulwark. Failure means she slips further toward monstrosity, as her Road's fabric unravels.

Note that the hierarchy of sins is a guideline. Any time a character violates what her player or the Storyteller feels is an appropriate tenet of her faith, she can risk losing a dot of her Road. As well, if a player wishes, she can reduce her Road rating without rolling if she feels her character has not been living up to her Road's ideals.

Moments of Truth

A Moment of Truth is an experience the character undergoes which tests and ultimately reaffirms her attachment to her Road. It's a moment of trial, tribulation, epiphany, or fundamental lesson. Through these moments, a character can advance her Road rating or change Roads completely.

If a character experiences a Moment of Truth and raises her Road rating in the same story, the Road dot costs half the normal number of experience points. This occurs after any reduction from having an experienced mentor. Round down any fractions, to a minimum of one experience point.

Here are some sample Moment of Truth catalysts:

Major Sin: If a character commits a level 1-3 sin on her Road's hierarchy of sins, particularly if she makes the resulting roll to resist losing a Road dot, she can be inspired to advance in her Road. This comes through a realization of some deeper truth in her beliefs.

Frenzy: If a character frenzies without risking a dot of her Road, she can undergo a Moment of Truth. This comes about as she better understands her Beast and how to reconcile her relationship to it.

Study With Mentor: If the character studies with a valid mentor (with more dots in the Road or Path than the character) for a number of months equal to her current Road dots, she can be eligible for a Moment of Truth.

Penance: If the character loses a dot of her Road, or otherwise commits a grievous sin against the Road (or even just the local organization of her Road; remember that Roads are social phenomena), she can show penance and find meaning and purpose in rejoining the Road with renewed vigor.

Significant Story Event: At Storyteller discretion, any significant event that reaffirms the character's journey along her Road can act as a Moment of Truth.

Golconda

To most, Golconda is a myth. To some, it's an unattainable goal. To others still, it's a purpose for existence. Many Roads preach of Golconda, of some higher state, of some pinnacle of being where the paragon coexists with her Beast and becomes a more perfect vampire as result. This means something different to each Road. However, what one Road teaches of Golconda could likely be immensely heretical to other Roads. This means that only a brave (or ignorant) Cainite advertises her trek toward Golconda. For one seeking a path to enlightenment, this can grow very frustrating, as the likely wellsprings of knowledge all remain silent on the matter, pretending to know nothing.

Golconda may exist. It may not exist. Cainite scholars all have heard stories; their sires knew a vampire whose childe met a vampire who once met a creature in Golconda. These stories share very little in common. Their one defining feature is that none can be verified.

The Road of Beast

Via Bestiae

Society determines who lives and who dies. Human culture is a structure by which human beings decide what is murder, what is justice, and what is just an unfortunate but necessary evil. Society decides who starves in the winter, who doesn't have the medicine to have a healthy baby, and who gets to spend all day playing chess and reading books while others struggle to make ends meet. By being

a part of society, you become an explicit co-conspirator to murder and slavery, and potentially consent to your own death if society deems you somehow unworthy.

Cainites on the Road of Beast dismiss the most basic premise of society: the culture, the people, and those living among each other do not have inherent right, as a group, to judge each other. Or perhaps this manifests most selfishly in that society can do what it wants, but for the Apostate, society can make no claims of authority. To the Apostate, each monster creates her own rule and her own rights, and exists on her own terms. Any attempts to tie her down or force her to acknowledge an authority greater than her own is tantamount to attempting to murder her soul.

Sobriquet: Apostates

Ethics of the Beast:

- You have survived death, and now preservation of the self is the truest goal you can seek.
- The Beast exists to help you survive, not as some manifestation of evil.
- You have fought for everything you have, and have right to everything you've fought for.
- You cannot be led; you can listen to experiences gained by others, but no one determines the conditions of your existence but you.
- Civilization is a cushion that softens you and makes you weak. Exist beside it, but never in it.

Initiation: It is a common (if mistaken) assumption that those wild and alien vampires who drift from place to place come very naturally to the Road of the Beast. While this happens, it is rare. Most often, those vampires who come to the Road of the Beast come to it by manipulation or education. Often, the difference between those two ways onto the Road is hard to distinguish.

Sometimes, out of a sense of kinship from one outsider to another, a vampire on the Road will provide wisdom or guidance onto the Road. More frequently, a vampire on the Road will spot a vampire who otherwise cannot hang on to society and drags them into the metaphorical woods. They might sabotage the vampire's life, driving him further and further from the comforts of civilian life until he has no choice but to embrace the Apostate life. From the outside, these lessons might appear cruel, as the Apostate destroys everything in the young vampire's life. To the Apostate, though, this is the greatest act of kindness. Liberating anyone from the yoke of society and freeing them to be the predator that's in their nature, no matter what it takes, is never cruel. It is for a blessed purpose.

Organization: It is antithetical to the Apostate to acknowledge any structure or authority beyond what she has created herself. There is nothing above the Apostate. Neither god nor vampire can tell her the best way to live. She exists only on her own terms and any compromises she makes are out of enlightened self-interest, not in pursuit of dogma or prestige. Still, at times, a group of Apostates may work and live together via a series of endless challenges for leadership or some kind of grudging neutral balance where no one is technically in charge. Some Apostates allow for a tense respect between teacher and student on the Road, though no one is likely to call the relationship out in such a way.

Rituals and Observances: Ritual suggests dogma, and in general, the Apostate rejects both holistically. There is at least one exception though, and that is in a sort of ritualistic relationship to the hunt. No matter

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST WHO YOU ARE

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Risking your own life	Survival is paramount.
9	Acknowledging a leader	There is no "us", only "me."
8	Killing for pleasure	Never waste.
7	Choosing to live in order over chaos	Civilization softens you.
6	Cruelty for pleasure	Cruelty is wasted energy.
5	Doing something for nothing	Charity doesn't feed the Beast.
4	Failing to kill when survival is on the line	If it comes down to you or them, it must be you.
3	Not protecting what is yours	Make it yours, keep it yours.
2	Having no things that are yours	Mark your territory, mark your people, mark your herd.
1	Refusing to feed when hungry	There is no balance when the Beast is denied.

how the Apostate comes to the Road, it is universally understood that the Beast sees the hunt as sacred, and in this, there is no questioning the Beast. There are uniform rules in which the hunt must be honored and treated as sacrosanct, but it should be clear that the hunt is separate from any other activity. Some Apostates prepare in silent prayer or meditation before going to hunt. Some wear personally precious fetishes or adornments to hunt. For some, a complicated series of songs, dance, physical demonstrations, and physical or metaphorical sacrifices precedes the hunt. To some Apostates, ritual to separate the hunt from her nightly activities is not just proper, but necessary. Some Apostates believe that hunting belongs to the Beast, and a liminal space where the Beast takes over without a full frenzy is necessary to hunt correctly.

Aura: Menace. The Beast is welcome in the Apostate's skin, and it shows not only in the penetration of her stare, but in the flickering reflection of her soul. The Beast, in many ways, is her spirit, and its dangerous lust for survival at all costs paints savage shadows and blood all over her aura.

Virtues: Conviction and Instinct

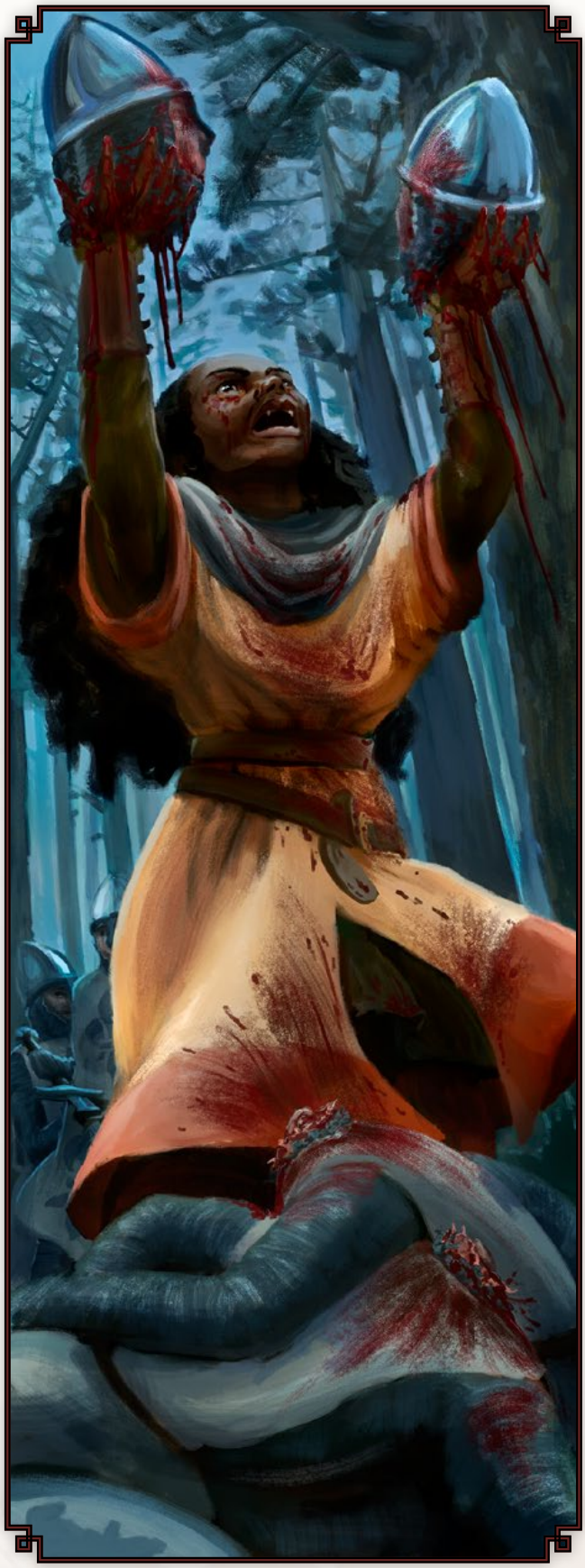
Path of the Hunter

If the Road of the Beast is about survival, a Cainite on the Path of the Hunter has honed her desire for survival to one single focus.

The Hunt is life.

The Hunter begins to think of her next hunt the second she rises at night. She falls asleep planning hunts to come. She might socialize with other monsters; she might even mingle with the kine in her periphery. She may find solace in the mental stillness of the animals she keeps as companions. But no matter what else she may do, she is always planning the next hunt.

The definition and methodology of planning varies from hunter to hunter and is a topic of hot debate when hunters cross paths. Some see the night as an endless opportunity to set traps and let prey come to them. Some see the ideal planning to involve absurd levels of physical prowess and talent. Some see the wisdom in playing some Cainite social games, if only because they can be leveraged to make her hunts go that much smoother and prevent poachers from invading her territory. Those hunters who do involve themselves with Cainite society tend to excel at it, because they have such clear focus of purpose.



Hierarchy of Sins Against the Hunt

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
8	Ignoring potential threats to your hunt.	Others will try to limit your hunting rights. Do not let them.
7	Acting without a plan	A careless Hunter is a failure before she starts.
2	Hunting without ritual preparation	The Hunt is the only sacred thing.

Hierarchy of Sins Against Journeys

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
3	Failing to explore	You cannot know what lies around the corner if you don't go looking.
2	Acknowledging ties to a land or people	Reject their titles and their attempts to domesticate you.

Hierarchy of Sins Against Liberation

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
8	Failing to expose someone to a hard truth	Liberation belongs to everyone.
6	Taking comfort in the city instead of dismantling it	If it makes your life easier, it makes you weaker. Destroy it.
1	Empowering tyranny	You create liberation, if they want it or not.

Additional Ethics of the Hunter:

- Anything that is not the hunt, or meant to advance to hunt, is a distraction.
- Short-sightedness is the hunter's only real enemy.
- Going hungry is the mark of a poor hunter.
- You are a predator, and part of the hunt, but not the only part of it.

Virtues: Conviction and Instinct

Path of Journeys

What is the point of survival if you have only an eternity of playing it safe and no real stories to tell? Those on the Path of Journeys do not allow their unique condition to limit their existence to feeding and fighting. Instead, they see immortality as one endless adventure. Those who stay in one place, clinging to one way of existence and one faith might as well be dead. The vampire on Path of Journeys is an explorer who can't help but turn the next corner, open another door, or crest just one more hill.

Most on the Path express it by abandoning one city, one region, and one culture after another in an endless quest to see what else is out there, and importantly, what else she can endure. Some vampires on this Path find smaller ways to express the endless journey. In ancient cities like Rome, for example, it's possible to spend centuries exploring the ancient tunnels and catacombs.

Additional Ethics of Journeys:

- Stagnation is worse than death.
- Survival is a thing that must be tested, not simply accepted as important.
- The moment you are used to a place and its people, it is time to move on.

Virtues: Conviction and Self-Control

Path of Liberation

Civilization isn't just a lie. It's a trap. Humanity, and more importantly, all of Caine's get should be free as they were in Nod, not tied up and trapped in endless cities built on lies and suffocating tyranny. If you have a leader, you have a murder, and anything short of regicide is simply slow suicide.

But seeing the cities and Princes for what they are, simply isn't enough. To be truly righteous, to feed the Beast and return the world to a state that makes sense, it is going to take violence, destruction, and liberation of all hearts and minds.

Sometimes this means ingenious plans to overthrow and murder Princes. Sometimes that means kidnapping every whelp in the city to "liberate" them from the shackles of the cities of lies in which they live. Sometimes it means mass and illegal Embraces or shattering the Silence of Blood. The city is built on falsehoods. The vampire on this Path must pull down the city brick by brick, if necessary.

Additional Ethics of Liberation:

- The Vampire was in its truest state in Nod before the First City.
- Humanity was meant to live free, not in cities built to kennel them.
- Liberation is the only thing that matters, and any act that frees a mind is worthwhile.

Virtues: Conviction and Instinct

The Road of Heaven

Via Caeli

Many Cainites feel the mark of Caine as a curse and rail against fate and the injustice. However, others cling to the belief that divine purpose guides the hand of fate, and that even great evil can serve a greater purpose. Vampires who walk the Road of Heaven devote themselves to understanding that purpose through subservience to a higher power.

Known as the Faithful, most Cainites on the Road of Heaven cling to the faiths that they held in mortal life. Outwardly, the Road of Heaven appears as the most fragmented and chaotic of roads; medieval Europe teems with religions, and many older Cainites retain faiths that no longer have mortal adherents. Differences between Faithful tend to be entrenched, with different Paths often representing distinct religious traditions.

These differing religious traditions inform how Cainites on the Road of Heaven make sense of their Embrace. Christian Cainites liken themselves to Job, seeing themselves as subjects of a cosmic test of character. Muslim Cainites see the Embrace as a call to destroy the servants of Shaitan. Jewish Cainites find the Embrace an invigorating call to scholarship, a new avenue for insight into the nature of God. Druidic Cainites reason that serving the Great Balance requires darkness as well as light. And a servant of the old Roman Gods believes that she had somehow offended one of them and must strive to regain that god's favor.

However they practice their faith, every Cainite on the Road of Heaven believes in the existence of a higher power and its dominion over all things. The mark of Caine is part of a divine plan, and only through submission to divine will can the Beast be contained.

Sobriquet: Faithful

That Old-Time Religion

While those who walk the Road of Heaven do their best to adhere to the faiths they once held as mortals, many acknowledge the logistical challenges their vampiric condition poses to their respective faiths. For example, if adherents to Abrahamic variants of the Road of Heaven cleaved strictly to their own religious texts, the taboo of drinking blood would require them to starve in the name of piety. In addition, periods of prayer during the day go unobserved due to the nature of vampiric slumber. This leads many on the Road of Heaven to strive to follow the spirit of their religion's teachings rather than the exact proscriptions. With the mortal schisms that plague larger faiths, however, more lax adherence can lead to accusations of mere mortal heresy. Imagine the uproar that would ensue when the accusers discover the reasons behind said heresy.

Ethics: The Road of Heaven is a bit different from other Roads in that there is no base Road. Adherents of the Road agree to a core set of beliefs:

- The existence of a higher power and its dominion over all things.
- Vampiric existence as part of a divine plan.
- The Embrace is a call to direct service of the divine.
- Serving divine will over individual will.
- Following divine law and rejecting evil is the only way to shackle the Beast.
- Each Faithful must choose their own Path, which determines more specific ethics and morality that they adhere to.

Organization: The organization of the Faithful breaks down largely along the lines of Path and faith traditions. Many Faithful prefer to gather for worship in communities of like faith, particularly followers of the Abrahamic faiths. Jewish Cainites place great importance on forming and maintaining communities of faith and tend to limit unnecessary contact with Cainites of other faiths. Muslim and Christian Cainites also tend to form large local congregations of faith. Christian communities tend to be more fragmented, as disagreements over doctrine and appropriate practice cause frequent rifts among some congregations.

Some Cainites, however, feel their faith is best practiced in secret, in sacred groves and caves, out in nature where faith is between oneself and the spirits of nature. A few even prefer

to gather with groups of Cainites of mixed faith, discussing and debating the merits and flaws of the different faiths.

Aura: Holiness. The Faithful receive bonuses whenever they are in situations where being seen as holy would lend them social advantage.

Virtues: Conscience and Self-Control

Paths

The Abrahamic religions — Christianity, Judaism, and Islam — are nominally the most similar in their approaches to using the Road of Heaven to master the Beast. However, despite a core common set of ethics and common commitment to the monotheistic worship of the God of Abraham, each faith chooses to emphasize very different practices in their daily worship practices.

Medieval Christians are very focused on maintaining sexual purity and spreading the Gospel of Christ through proselytizing. Medieval Islam is focused on care for the weak and vulnerable and commitment to practicing humility and piety. And medieval Judaism is committed to maintaining and protecting communities of Jewish faithful, submitting to God as interpreted by rabbinical authority, and maintaining ritual purity. As such, the Paths for each faith are very different.

The Path of Christ (Christianity)

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Failing to denounce corruption and sin	All that evil needs to triumph is the inaction of the righteous.
9	Acting out of pride, avarice, lust, or other sinful impulse	The road to the Beast is paved in sin.
8	Bearing false witness	A lying tongue is hateful in the eyes of the Lord.
7	Causing harm to a pious person	God protects the innocent.
6	Feeding from an innocent without permission	Corruption of the innocent is a grave sin.
5	Blasphemy or heresy in word or act	Blasphemy is a sin against God.
4	Murder of innocents	Thou shalt not kill, sayeth the Lord.
3	Worshiping false idols	Thou shalt not have any other god before me.
2	Aiding demons or supernatural evil	It is the duty of the righteous to smite the wicked.
1	Failing to spread the Gospel of Christ	It is the duty of all Christians to spread the good news of our Lord

Derech Chaim – The Path of Life (Judaism)

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Failing to maintain a state of ritual purity	And ye shall be holy men unto me.
9	Unnecessary contact with non-Jews	The people must be protected.
8	Failing to find a rabbinical authority to make rulings for you, and obey those rulings	In whatever place there is a profanation of God's name, they do not show respect to their rabbi.
7	Failing to obey the laws and customs of the local Jewish community	The spiritual needs of the individual can only be met through community.
6	Failing to maintain a connection to a local Jewish community	Jews cannot exist in isolation.
5	Drinking impermissible blood	For the life of the flesh is in the blood.
4	Worshipping idols	Hear, O Israel, God is One.
3	Committing sexual violence	It is worse to wrong a fellow person than it is to wrong God.
2	Murder	Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.
1	Endangering the Jewish community	You shall not stand by the blood of your fellow.

The Path of the Prophet (Islam)

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Failing to honor your elders	Say not to them a word of contempt but address them in terms of honor.
9	Failing to care for the defenseless	All power is a gift from God.
8	Being dishonest or unfair in your dealings with others	Give full measure for measure and weigh with a balance that is straight.
7	Breaking a promise	Every covenant will be inquired into on the Day of Reckoning.
6	Boastfulness or arrogance	Successful are those who humble themselves in prayers.
5	Feeding from a non-Muslim	He hath forbidden that which has been immolated to any other god.
4	Killing unjustly	Nor take life – which Allah has made sacred – for unjust cause.
3	Acknowledging any god but Allah (and Muhammad is His Prophet)	Take not with Allah another object of worship.
2	Breaking the unity of Islam	You Muslims are the best nation brought out for Mankind.
1	Failing to submit to the will of Allah as revealed through his Prophet and revelation	God alone possesses all power and glory.

The Road of Humanity

Via Humanitas

It is only natural, followers of the Road of Humanity believe, for a Cainite to remain who she was before she died. Cainite are creatures not so very different from the people they once were, and trying to reinvent ourselves is either a lie or a dangerous folly. The Cainite may either pretend that the evil they do does not bother them, which is a lie, or they can truly reject what they were and become the Beast. To those on the Road of Humanity, there is no worse end than falling to the Beast. In this way of thinking, all Roads are, in fact, just aspects of the Road of Humanity. They are all lies or descent away from the peace that is holding onto humanity and possibly (on some Paths) exceeding it. This, they claim, is the truth, because without outside intervention, all Cainites naturally start on this Road, and it takes serious teaching or serious abuse in order to get a Cainite onto another Road. To be human, they argue, is to be naturally on the Road of Humanity, and to be anything but human is to lose yourself. This is the true death of the soul, since we cannot know what happens to a Cainite when they die, but we can see that they, or who they were, are gone just as soon as they finally fall to the Beast entirely.

The ethics that we knew in life are vital to remain who we are because, those on the Road believe, they are universal. They are things that any person simply understands regardless of race, creed, or social standing. We all know that killing is wrong. We all know that when you steal, you are asserting your wants over someone else's needs, and have therefore violated their boundaries and liberties. We all, inherently, understand that when we abuse others, we are depleting our own souls on some level, and that way lies soul-death. It is the simplest premise, they say, the most universal, the most important. There is the human and there is the Beast, and to be one is the only way to avoid become the other, and becoming the other comes from abandoning the one.

Sobriquet: Prodigals

Ethics of Humanity:

- Remaining human is a requirement to escape soul-death.
- Humanity is a universal experience that all Cainites can understand.
- Violating the boundaries and well-being of another depletes the soul.



- We were all human, and that gives us value despite accidents of birth or upbringing.
- Thought and compassion separate us from the Beast.

Initiation: Most Cainites come to the Road on their own soon after the Embrace, dreading what they have become. In taking stock of who and what they are, those on this Road settle that more than enough of their human self remains to know it is the right way to be. When they can hold steady in their morality, they can force the Beast back down, and through grief and forgiveness for what sins they have already committed, they can resist future sins. Humanity can be taught, either to those who lacked moral fiber in life or those who have lost their way since the Embrace. Those who come to the Road through teachers still tend to suggest that it feels the most natural to them, even though it can be extremely difficult to hold on to.

Organization: In a world of monsters who have embraced their monstrosity, remaining human and humane can be a lonely path. Prodigals tend to be rejected or else driven off by those who have taken to much more monstrous Roads. Generally, the strongest relations a Cainite on this Road has are to the sire or teacher who guided them to it, at least so long as that mentor remains on the Road. Rarely, a particularly compassionate or stalwart Cainite who has endured many challenges to her humanity may draw a small cult around her. Others on the Road look to her to strengthen their resolve against the Beast or some secret or wisdom to get them through the long nights.

Rituals and Observances: Because remaining human is such a personal journey, there are very few universally practiced traditions for the Prodigals. Those things done to honor this journey tend to be passed from teacher to student without a lot of attention drawn to them as rituals. For some, acts of charity and humble giving of the self are rituals, though not named as such. Many Prodigals celebrate their birthday as well as the night of their death, but only rarely do so openly or publicly. Fasting is a common response to penitent Prodigals after a transgression, though there is hot debate over the wisdom of tempting the Beast.

Aura: The Cainite walking the Road of Humanity strives to emulate her past state wherever possible. In matters of empathy and mutual understanding with mortals, her Aura will influence the outcome.

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST THE SOUL

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Selfish thoughts	If it can be thought, it can be done.
9	Minor selfish acts	Putting oneself first lets the Beast in.
8	Injury to another	Accidental or not, there is still blood on your hands.
7	Theft	Only an animal takes without thought of consequence
6	Accidental violation of another	Humanity is a shared condition, his suffering is your own.
5	Wanton destruction	Are you a person or an animal?
4	Impassioned violation of another	Passion behind violence is the whispering of the Beast.
3	Planned violation of another	To be so cold is to reject the warmth of humanity.
2	Casual violation of another	Even wild animals know better.
1	The most monstrous, vile acts	Are you a person or a monster?

Virtues: Conscience and Self-Control

Path of Breath

To be human is to act human. This is the simplest philosophy that any Cainite or kine has ever come across when they first began to reflect on what humanity means and what it is. To be a human you must do as a human does, be among those who are human, think and breathe and do as those around you do. For the Cainite, though, this simple idea must be taken a step further. In fact, to be human may mean to be better than man, or at least, be more mindful of those casual cruelties humanity might be forgiven for, but causes a Cainite to suffer due to the Beast.

To do this, a Cainite cannot extract herself from humanity and lead a cloistered, thoughtful existence. Philosophizing, those on this path believe, is not the same thing as doing, and so to breathe as humankind does, you must do and be and see.

To take it a necessary step forward, Cainites on this Path believe that they must honor humanity's foibles while abstaining from them, and shoulder humanity's burdens with their terrible strength to make their existence valid. Simply not stealing is not enough to these Cainites. Instead, you must enrich a downtrodden child's life to give your Embrace purpose. Simply not killing is not enough on the Path of Breath. Instead, you must save a life and show that you are more than just a monster. Sin is unforgivable, but it is just as unforgivable to not act when you have the strength to do so. Other Cainites may see those on this path as self-righteous meddlers who impose their ethics on imperfect humans who cannot possibly resist Cainite might. To the Cainites on the Path, while that may be a balance to be struck, it is not a conflict. If a Cainite was not meant to better the kine (according to their understanding of "better"), why would they be able to do it? Why would they feel such a profound sense of peace and hope in the act if it was a wrong thing to do? Being selfless without becoming self-righteous is the struggle of many on the Path of Breath, but not all.

Additional Ethics of Breath:

- Not shouldering your cousin's burden is as bad as burdening them in the first place.
- Accepting that your nature is evil makes it true.
- Isolation leaves you alone with the Beast, so that it may overpower you easier.
- The company of Cainites is less preferable to the company of kine.

Virtues: Conscience and Self-Control

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST BREATH

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing
10	Allowing yourself to think or act as a vampire
7	Knowingly letting a human suffer
1	Spending a night without human contact

Path of Community

On your own, you are a monster, and only when you surround yourself with humanity can you retain your humanity. Society is a Cainite's natural habitat, and the herd is their natural responsibility. While some Cainites would squander the herd, or treat their keep like animals in cages, that is no way to remain the noble being you were born to be.

With the need that the Cainite has, it is natural for any creed to see the wisdom of cultivating a herd of kine they can feed from, be that a series of lovers, a cult, and so on. The Cainite on the Path of Community take this a step further, however, and see a wisdom and purpose in not just creating a herd, but raising it up. The betterment of the kine around them becomes the betterment of the Cainite, and this responsibility is a sacred trust inherent to the Cainite's blood and ability. Why have the abilities they do if they weren't meant to guide humanity at large to a better way of being? Selfishly, one could assume that a Cainite on this Path keeps his kine healthy to assure he has a regular supply of clean blood or a good stock for drawing ghouls and childer from. While those things may be true, they hardly remain the main motivation for those who walk this Path for very long. The act of building something has many rewards, and for these Cainites, those rewards become spiritual.

Among any of the Paths a Cainite might follow, the Path of Community often becomes a coterie-wide philosophy, as having such a Cainite in your midst shows obvious rewards to the rest of the brood. As a result, a small coterie can quickly become the secret guardians of a larger community than a single Cainite might think possible.

While few Cainites on this Path throw what they do in their kine's faces, it isn't uncommon for their wards to be dedicated and loyal to their benefactor, even without knowing exactly who she might be. This group loyalty may manifest as a loyalty to the built community, to some traditions tied to the Cainite, to the Cainite's human retainers, or the site where the Cainite sleeps without any of the members truly understanding the significance of these spots. A smart Cainite takes advantage of this, and seeds these expressions of gratitude to her benefit. After all, to keep the Cainite safe is to keep the community safe, and vice versa.

Additional Ethics of Community:

- The needs of the many are equal to the needs of the Cainite.
- Growth is vital to a community's health and well-being.
- A people who know who or what benefits them may rebel against it, so secrecy is best.

Virtues: Conscience and Self-Control

Hierarchy of Sins Against Community

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing
7	Accidental destruction of public property
4	Theft
1	Genocide or any action that ends a community's ability to grow and thrive

Path of Illumination

It is not often that a vampire devotes herself entirely to seeking not just balance with the Beast, but her own inner light. Seeking out the goodness and spiritual brilliance in the vampire soul seems to many a fool's errand. To say that a vampire has the potential for light, for brilliance, then you must reject the very concept that vampires are Damned entirely. And that is just what those on the Path of Illumination have done.

They are few and far between, and not just because their preaching is heretical in most cities. More importantly, those on the Path of Illumination believe that the end to vampiric suffering cannot be found in any one specific place. Travel and communion with many different places and people is necessary to gather a holistic and complete image of what real holiness looks like. No one dogma has all the answers, and so those on this Path travel with an understanding that the journey itself is the destination.

Members of this Path know, of course, that their teachings are antithetical to what is taught sire to childe in Christendom, and many a member has lost a mentor or student to the tyranny of fear. When found, they are often driven out of the city or region, or killed outright, which is why members of the Path are very careful about who they share their ideals with. On occasion, though, the Path draws in more iconoclastic vampires who believe that surrendering to the light is the only way to effectively battle the darkness inherent in the War of Princes and that a full understanding of the Path's doctrine will rob the old Princes of their power.

Additional Ethics of Illumination:

- They fear you because finding the truth means the end of their authority.
- Rest once you have escaped the weakness of vampirism.
- You have holiness inside of you, and it can balance the Beast.

Virtues: Conscience and Self-Control

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST ILLUMINATION

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing
10	Staying any place that is not furthering you along your journey
7	Any act that will prevent a Cainite from following the journey you have begun.
1	Letting true darkness in, to squelch the light. Accepting Evil.

The Road of Kings

Via Regalis

Followers of the Road of Kings trace their origins back to the days of Caine, believing that they spring from his oath to God that it is "better to rule in darkness than to humble [himself] falsely in the light." As such, some believe they are mandated by God to rule over mankind. Others do not see their origin as such a clear mandate by God, but rather a power granted by their vampiric state which they must clearly use to take control of the lesser beings around them.

Most Cainites can see very clearly that they are naturally capable of bending the will of mortals to their own. Luminaries, those who follow the Road of Kings, see this as not only a capability, but as their right as Cainites. Beyond that, those who follow this Road believe that they are kings, rulers of not only mortal society, but of themselves and those around them. Luminaries are concerned with nobility, chivalry, and seizing holdings just as any mortal nobility would. In fact, the Luminaries often war with each other over Cainite domains using lesser vampires and mortals as pawns in their games.

Many people believe that the followers of the Road of Kings are simply grasping for temporal power, using whatever means necessary to gain their goals. This could not be further from the truth. Luminaries understand that the true height of leadership is not only control over material wealth, but also the minds and hearts of those they rule. They hold themselves to a strict code of honor and ethics, and practice diplomacy and patience to gain their just rewards.

The first lesson a Luminary learns is how to control his own Beast, knowing that this is the greatest weakness as a vampire. For if one cannot be his own master, how can he hope to be a master of others? An uncontrolled Beast could tempt a ruler down a dark path that leads to betrayal and ruin. Control over those passions could give one the edge needed to crush his enemies and defend his lands. As such, Luminaries strive to bring their Beasts to heel, thereby learning the bitter truths for dealing with the most difficult of subordinates.

This initial tenet leads to a more complicated code in which Luminaries learn to master lesser beings while respecting those that follow them. In addition, they are expected to defer to those of higher station while aspiring to move up within the ranks. They must exhibit extreme control over a delicate balance of command, aspiration, and respect. Luminaries know that a leader is only as powerful as the constituency under him and as stable as his allies and those above him.

Sobriquet: Luminaries

Ethics of Kings:

- To rule others, you must first become your own master, taming the Beast within.
- Your word is your honor and your life. Do not break it.
- There are only two roles in the world: master and servant.
- Power does not hand itself to you. You must seize it and hold it.

Initiation: Initiates of the Road are chosen by their mentors, serving as apprentices and training until they earn the right to follow the Road on their own. Some are chosen specifically to be groomed for the Road, even Embraced by their liege for the purpose. Others work to join, striving to impress a possible patron with outstanding deeds. Either way, the initiate serves her mentor for some time, training in the beginning stages of the Road. Some remain in service, working their way up, and others leave quickly, their own aspirations driving them to greater heights.

Organization: The Road of Kings boasts a highly organized structure with each Luminary being sworn to the service of those above him, and his lesser sworn to him in turn in an elaborate chain of vassal and lord. The highest ranked Luminary is called a Lord, and in most domains is the prince, provided the prince walks the Road of Kings. Below him comes an entire structure of lesser nobles, such as dukes, barons, marquesses, knights and the like, followed by lesser followers of the Road to the basic initiates. The names and structures of the Luminary's noble lines vary by geographical location, but all follow the vassalage chain faithfully.

Rituals and Observances: One of the most sacred rituals to the adherents on the Road of Kings is oath

Hierarchy of Sins Against Kingship

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Forgoing your duty	Those who do not maintain responsibilities often lose them.
9	Treating a peer with disrespect	Respect must be given to earn it from others.
8	Placing personal desires over duty	A leader must do what is best for the many, not the one.
7	Treating an inferior as an equal	Everyone should know their place, including you.
6	Killing without purpose	Displays of power should inspire fear or respect.
5	Showing weakness in front of inferiors	A leader must be strong at all times.
4	Failing to answer a challenge to your honor	Honor and reputation are everything.
3	Treating your superior with disrespect	Superiors must be given the respect they are due.
2	Breaking your word or oath	Your word is your honor. If you have no honor, you have no worth.
1	Giving in to your Beast, such as frenzy	If you cannot control yourself, how can you control others?

swearing. From start to finish, oaths rule the life of a Luminary, and all other observances revolve around the oath. Oath ceremonies can be elaborate functions with Luminaries from all over coming to witness the oath, or they can be simple affairs between a new initiate and his mentor. Any time a Luminary gains a new liege, gains a new rank through promotion or conquest, or renews his vows to his current liege is call for an oath swearing ceremony. Few other rituals are as widely practiced beyond the oath swearing. Some Luminaries practice courtly affairs common to their region and others observe religious rites as a form of leading by example, though these practices are not widely adopted.

Aura: Command. Luminaries are self-possessed and confident in their right to rule. Others can feel their commanding presence like a chain placed around the neck.

Virtues: Conviction and Self-Control

Path of Chivalry

In many European countries, the code of chivalry has spread quickly, and has captured the imagination of many young vampires, unless they are the Mongols. These Paladins honor the code of chivalry, placing their sworn oath and duty above everything, including their own personal goals. They strive to be honorable in all acts, deferring to their betters and showing courtesy to their inferiors.

This is a newer path of the Road of Kings which emphasizes loyalty, service, and duty over personal power and gain. While the Paladins may be Cainites, they have a personal responsibility to protect and nurture those weaker than themselves. Many Paladins go so far as to take their role as leader of mankind to the point of self-sacrifice for the good of humanity. Despite their seeming weakness of heart, Paladins are quick to point out that controlling those who love you is easier than controlling those who revile you. Not all Paladins are so ruthless, but they are all so completely devoted to their code that their followers can't help but to love them. Woe to the vampire that tries to take advantage of this supposed weakness, though. All Paladins are quick to protect their flock with brutal force if necessary.

Additional Ethics of Chivalry:

- Your honor and duty are the most important aspects of your life.
- You are mandated to aid and protect your inferiors.
- You stand for justice, and you should not let unjust acts go unpunished.

Virtues: Conscience and Self-Control

Path of Devaraja

In southeast India and Malaysia, several religions believe their king is not just mandated by God, but is himself a god, infused with the divine upon taking the throne. This divinity is not bestowed lightly, or always through blood inheritance, but instead the divine infuses power into its chosen upon ascendancy. The idea of godhood appeals to all Cainites.

Followers of this path do not believe in some divine ability to rule. Instead, they believe that they must earn the right to rule and rise to divinity in the eyes their peo-

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST CHIVALRY

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Neglecting your duty for any reason	Duty must come first.
9	Dishonorable acts (deceit, murder, etc.)	Your honor is the most important thing.
8	Treating another with disrespect	Respect must be given to earn it from others.
7	Behaving in an unjust manner	It is your duty to uphold justice.
6	Failing to come to the aid of another	It is your duty to protect the weak.
5	Treating your superior with disrespect	Superiors must be given the respect they are due.
4	Placing personal desires over duty	Selfish thoughts have no place in a Paladin's heart.
3	Failing to answer a challenge to your honor	Honor and reputation are everything.
2	Breaking your word	Your word is your honor. If you have no honor, you have no worth.
1	Breaking a sworn oath	Oaths of fealty are what make civilized society.

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST DEVARAJA

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Failing to recognize the divine	Your power comes from the divine will.
9	Forgoing your duty	Those who do not maintain responsibilities often lose them.
8	Treating another with disrespect	Respect must be given to earn it from others.
7	Treating an inferior as an equal	You are a god; you must not forget this.
6	Placing personal desires over duty	A leader must do what is best for the many, not the one.
5	Failing to seize power when the chance arises	You must prove to the divine that you deserve its blessing.
4	Failing to answer a challenge to your honor.	True gods smite their detractors.
3	Killing without purpose	It is your divine duty to protect your worshippers, not kill them.
2	Breaking your word or oath	Your word is your honor. If you have no honor, you have no worth.
1	Giving into your Beast, such as frenzy	If you cannot control yourself, how can you accept the divine?

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST DAENA

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Neglecting your duty for any reason	Duty must come first.
9	Breaking the law	You must uphold the law at all costs.
8	Treating another with disrespect	Respect must be given to earn it from others.
7	Behaving in an unjust manner	It is your duty to uphold justice.
6	Killing without purpose	Displays of power should inspire fear or respect.
5	Failing to come to the aid of another	To gain power, you must first gather goodwill.
4	Treating your superior with disrespect	Superiors must be given the respect they are due.
3	Failing to uphold the law	It is your duty to uphold the law not matter the price.
2	Breaking your word or oath	Your word is your honor. If you have no honor, you have no worth.
1	Giving into your Beast, such as frenzy	If you cannot control yourself, how can you control others?

ple. The Divines do not create subjects and inferiors, but instead followers and worshipers. Most Divines on the Path of Devaraja feel they must earn the power to rule, walking among the people and rising up above them as their gods when the time comes. For a Divine, the highest station is to become a god-king ruling his land with benevolence towards his worshippers and granting them miracles.

Additional Ethics of Devaraja:

- You must act as a god would, smiting your enemies and granting succor to your followers.
- You must give homage to the divine to gain its blessing.
- Never turn away a follower. Worshippers come from all walks of life.

Virtues: Conviction and Self-Control

Path of Daena

Though Islam spread to the Middle Eastern countries several centuries ago, many people still hold to Zoroastrian beliefs. Several older, powerful vampires resisted Islamic conversion and hold to the older faith. Of these, many follow the Path of Daena, a very rare branching of the Road of Kings that teaches virtuous acts and adhering to law and duty brings great personal power. The Behdin believe they must be active participants in the world to get anything done, and by acting in accordance with law and duty, they will reap just rewards.

Followers of this path take the code of law very seriously. Laws provide structure for a civil society; break the law, and society itself breaks down. A leader cannot expect productivity without law. The Behdin often attempt to take the higher road and act as goodly as possible, though the law is much more important in their eyes. They will uphold the law to the best of their ability, going so far as to sacrifice themselves in the process. Other Cainites are wary of the Behdin, knowing that their loyalty to the law is dangerous to cross.

Of course, the ultimate goal of the Behdin is to not only uphold the law, but to become the law. Ultimately, those who rule make the laws, and in the end the Behdin feel they know best which laws create a civil society. While they will fulfill the laws they live under while rising in the ranks, they seek to change the laws to better serve society when they have the power to do so.

Additional Ethics of Daena:

- The law is supreme. Uphold it at all costs.
- Your duty is your honor and your life. Never forsake it.
- Always act with kindness, as good deeds will be repaid tenfold.

Virtues: Conviction and Self-Control

The Road of Lilith

Derech Lilit

Lilith is a complicated figure with a questionable history that may or may not predate Judaism, Christianity, the *Book of Nod*, and Caine himself, even according to Noddist lore. She speaks to the universal concepts of woman-as-mother, mother-as-survivor, and woman-as-catalyst both for all life as well as all evil. What's more, she is probably real, though what she is and what that means is difficult to fathom. She is (or was) real, but that reality and the many faces attached toher name are impossible to fully reconcile.

The oldest and most dedicated worshipers of Lilith claim their lineage traces back to her and her potent demonic magics stolen from the gods and brought to Earth. They reject the influence or the importance of Caine as the All-Father and point to historical texts as well as folktale cycles that suggest a pre-Abrahamic time when not all vampires were thought to be from one same progenitor. Alternatively, they look to times when there was something like the Caine myth, but Caine was a woman, or a pair of divine twins, or an angel, and so on. Many claim that their blood is the blood of demons, and that they were never totally human, even before the Embrace. Some even claim to have spontaneously become vampires without need of a sire, though none have proven (or attempted to prove) this to be true.

Because her history (and how it coincides with Cainite history) is so conflicted, many of her worshipers have distilled these various stories down to core concepts that seem to apply universally to the many faces of the Dark Mother. They teach that the children of Lilith are forces of raw creation. Creation hurts, and any pain survived is a lesson that must be studied and celebrated. Those who create with pure abandon and celebrate the wet and fleshy acts of creation will invariably be betrayed by those too afraid or otherwise unable to create. This last point is especially important to the growing cult among the Bahari who converted from Cainite beliefs and feel a need to connect the Lilith of the Road to the Lilith mentioned in Noddist apocrypha.

Sobriquet: Witches, Bahari, Lilins, Ki-sikil-lil-la-ke

Ethics of Lilith:

- Creation is vital, the act of creation is sacred, and like our Mother, you must create often and with daring and cunning.
- Seduce Angels.

- Creation is suffering, and the greater the creations, the greater the suffering. That suffering is valuable.
- Life teaches through suffering. Be a teacher.
- Creation is always an act of love and devotion. Be a lover.
- Rather than learn, some will seek to destroy you and take what you have created for their own. Be a torturer.
- Draw in the needy, those who have suffered enough to understand. Welcome them with passion and wisdom.
- Cultivate a garden. Plant seeds and feed them with your blood and milk.

Initiation: There are two ways to become a part of the Road of Lilith: by blood or by bleeding. Some souls, the Bahari claim, are marked as "other" by ancient demonic or celestial heritage. The Bahari claim that the auras of these special people possess small marks that only certain Bahari rites can reveal. The Bahari watch these people throughout their lives to see if they should ever enter a state of such intense suffering that they begin to see the truth, or create something so powerful that their ability to create should be preserved forever. Those without these marks are often called to Lilith's faith by personal tragedy, shattering suffering, or a deep intellectual curiosity for the lessons only pain can teach. These people are marked by similar Bahari rites so that any Bahari can see these marks and observe them for the right time to approach.

Organization: As a rule, there is no formal organization among the Bahari. Limitations, like the binding of Lilith's hair, chafe members of this Road, and few are willing to create overarching hierarchies. Cults form, share myths and lessons they have earned, hurt each other, love each other, then break apart and reform elsewhere with other Bahari. Some cults with slightly variant philosophies are growing in popularity, but this is not widespread yet. People who are recognized as having learned great lessons (at great expense) or created great wonders may be greeted as "mother," "grandmother," "father," and so on, but this is not a universally accepted practice.

Rituals and Observances: The Bahari recognize planting and harvest time as significant, and they will often align acts of creation (and the occasionally necessary act of destruction) with these seasons. Further, Bahari will gather and ritually make love and physically wound and test each other's limits. These ritualized sadistic acts are pale microcosms of the ultimate tests that life deals the celebrants, and is never meant to replace real learning.

Aura: Carved and bleeding. A Bahari's aura manifests as any other vampire's might, though chunks and swirls may



HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST WHO YOU ARE

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Feeding immediately when hungry	There is a lesson in every denial, and there is control in self-denial.
9	Joining a system created by those with no wisdom	Live outside their lies.
8	Ignoring one of Lilith's faces	Wherever you go, the Dark Mother has left messages for you. Read their myths and show them where Lilith lives.
7	Rejecting the suffering of others or dismissing it	Teach whenever the opportunity presents itself, even if you think the lessons learned would be beneath you.
6	Cruelty for its own sake	As a teacher, you must craft your lessons. Petty abuses are beneath you. The pain you inflict must be divine.
5	Stealing great learning and claiming it as your own	If you did not discover the wisdom yourself, you have no rights claiming it or authority based on it.
4	Destroying a thinking being	They can neither learn from you nor teach you if they have been destroyed.
3	Not seeking out the teachings of Lilith	Turn over the leaf, split the wood, and find her secrets wherever they hide.
2	Getting between someone and a valuable lesson	Better to pull the stars from the heavens than to rob someone of moments of true gnosis.
1	Shunning pain	The harder it is, the more rewarding the growth.

appear carved out of the whole. If one concentrates, they might think they see symbols in these shifting carvings, but can catch none of them. Further, the aura seems to bleed or drip, making the "carvings" appear more like wounds. Acts of creation and mentorship receive the character's aura modifier.

Virtues: Conviction and Instincts

Path of Thorns

To those on the Path of Thorns, Lilith is a fantastic philosophical concept and her dogma makes sense on a purely academic level. She may be real, but that matters less than the grand experiment her philosophy suggests. They take their study of the faith very seriously, but ground it in the real world. Emotional hardships are fine and good, but the practical expression of physical pain can be studied and quantified, and that is far more interesting than subjective concepts of growth and torment. Hidden in the flesh is wisdom. Hidden in the mud is wisdom. Wisdom can be written down and taught as well as it can be tattooed on bare sensitive skin.

The strangeness in the path comes from its relationship with alchemy. From alchemical research, the path rejects the idea that Caine or Lilith alone created vampires (and the truth), but rather were a unified force of creation. They also see the Second and Third Generations are a completely failed experiment, and that the Antediluvians should be destroyed simply to encourage the Mother/Father to start again from scratch.

The Path is one of the more organized cults among the Bahari. They gather in secret once or twice a year in as great a number as they can manage. These meetings, or Sabbaths, are opportunities for the practitioners to test their physical and intellectual limits by exposing themselves to suffering, fire, and even sunlight to test their theories and prove their force of will.

Additional Ethics of Thorns:

- Wisdom alone does not suffice. Intelligence is also required.
- Creation should be built on careful study. Raw creation is never as good as carefully crafted beauty or horror.
- Do not seek students. They should come to you, destroyed and begging.

Virtues: Conviction and Instinct

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST THORNS

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing
9	Joining any community of fools.
5	Accepting a student (formal or informal) the first time they come to you.
2	Putting the learning of another before your own.

Path of Veils

Lilith may have many faces, but none are so important in these dark nights as the face of the rebellious mother of monsters. The woman who toppled God's bedchamber because she would be his equal. The one betrayed by Caine, who had her garden destroyed by the wretched offspring of the betrayer.

These followers, often Embraced first into Cainite society, reject Caine and all that he stood for. They reject the heavy Judeo-Christian influences in the common *Book of Nod* and seek to slowly disrupt the entire system built on these lies. Lilith is a symbol of defiance and liberty, and those who follow the Path of Veils demand the same.

Additional Ethics of Veils:

- The Children of Caine will be punished for what they did in the Garden.
- Show no mercy for those too ignorant to know the true story of Caine and our Dark Mother.
- Destroy those who disseminate the lie, but make all efforts to never be caught in the act. Burn their books of lies.
- You may forgive those who draped veils across the faces of Lilith's murdered children, as she forgives them.

Virtues: Conviction and Instinct

Hierarchy of Sins Against Veils

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing
9	Accepting and abiding any law of Caine or God.
8	Failing to destroy the works of Noddist-liars.
4	Snuffing the spark of a candle that desires to burn brighter.

Path of Making

For those on the Path of Making, none of the stories of Lilith are as interesting or important as those stories where she stole the seed of angels (or was given it) and made a flood of monsters and demons over the vastness of Nod. They are fascinated by the incubi and succubi and how they blended with the children of Seth and the children of Caine. These Bahari seek out the lineages of Lilith to study what can be proven unique about these resilient humans with divine heritage. More than that, they seek to make monsters, as their Mother did.

How they make monsters is a highly personal expression, and while they may exchange rotes and share religious rituals, each follower keeps her monster-making personal and unique. It is possible some practice Infernalism to make their children, while others carefully breed the lineages of humans with the most potential for the divine offspring, and still others steal the traditions of necromancers and witches in the hopes of using those to create their own beasts by magical means.

Additional Ethics of Making:

- Find and foster the greatest grandchildren of Lilith.
- Teach them about the beauty of suffering she endured so that they might exist. Show them.
- Make as she did. There is no difference between horrible and divine. Power and uniqueness as expressions of creative force is all that matters.
- Destroying monsters and demons is no different from murdering infants and fawns, if not worse. Infants will only grow to be people. Monsters can become gods.

Virtues: Conviction and Instinct

Hierarchy of Sins Against Making

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing
10	Rejecting the advances of demons with seed in hand.
7	Abandoning a thing because it is ugly or frightening.
5	Not taking a secret of making and creating from savages who don't know the divine purpose behind it.
1	Rejecting the advances of angels with seed in hand.

The Road Of Metamorphosis

Via Mutationis

Infants become children, children become men, and men become vampires. What do vampires become? Such is the question at the heart of the Road of Metamorphosis, and given this conceit, it's not surprising that the vast majority of Cainites who walk it are Tzimisce , whose powers

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST TRANSMOGRIFICATION

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Failing to ride out a frenzy	While you can glean knowledge from the Beast, you must not allow your baser impulses to control you.
9	Offering unsolicited knowledge to another	Most are not on your path, but do not presume to take away their choice.
8	Allowing pleasure or emotion to distract you	Hedonism deters greater ends.
7	Asking another for knowledge	No one can teach you apotheosis. You must discover its secrets yourself.
6	Denying yourself sustenance	Hunger is the most basic distraction.
5	Succumbing to conventional morality when knowledge could be gained	Without transgressing, you will never find what is hidden from sight.
4	Placing others above your quest for knowledge	Those who wish to chain themselves to this world will hold you back as well.
3	Failure to experiment due to compassion, discomfort, or personal risk	We may flounder in the dark, and it may be unpleasant, but it is our only way forward.
2	Loving another	Love puts itself above all things, even Metamorphosis. Do not allow this.
1	Neglecting to alter one's own body	If the forms we have were suited for ascension, we would already have ascended.



of Vicissitude make them uniquely qualified to explore the notion of vampiric evolution. Theirs is a lonely journey to godhood; having already transcended life and death, true ascendancy is merely a step away. But that final step is hidden, daunting, even frightening; someone has to be the first take it, and that someone will be a Seeker.

The Road of Metamorphosis is a solitary journey. While its followers value knowledge above all, they seek to discover it on their own terms, free of a mentor's biases or shortcomings. They see the needs and desires of others as an unnecessary distraction from their own evolution, or even worse, a pollution of their own perfect understanding. Passions and morality are restrictive, and if the Seekers share any quality at all, it's that they seek to transcend restrictions.

There are as many ways to follow this Road as there are voices in the world. The path forward is unknown; only by trying and failing and trying again will it be revealed. Seekers prize creativity and imagination, for these fuel the constant experimentation required of Metamorphosis. Stagnation and conservatism are repellant, a sign that one has grown too comfortable in one's current state.

Sobriquet: Metamorphosists, Seekers

The Ethics of Metamorphosis:

- Discovering knowledge for oneself is the truest, purest form of understanding and the key to Metamorphosis.
- Seek to understand life and death, for it is the cycle that bars transcendence.
- Indulge the Beast and deny it; like all things, it must be understood.
- Experiment endlessly, especially upon your own body, to reveal every secret at hand.
- Do not divorce yourself from the world, for it is what you seek to understand, but do not allow yourself to be dragged down by its entanglements.

Initiation: The Road of Metamorphosis has no formal initiation. While its adherents certainly proselytize about its many virtues, it is in keeping with their tenet of self-discovery that new members "find" their way here on their own.

Organization: As might be expected, no formal organization exists for the Road of Metamorphosis. Occasionally its members will gather in groups of various size, convening in locales designated as Black Churches. Such occasions are strange indeed. Ostensibly, these gatherings occur more for the sake of scientific observation than any sharing of community or knowledge between participants, both of which would be violations of the Road's ethics. That said, they nonetheless serve all three purposes. There, the collected creativity and experimentation of its membership is on display, an overwhelming panorama of otherworldliness that would shred the minds and faith of mortals or even many vampires.

Aura: Inhumanity. Seekers are decidedly alien, having worked so very hard to cast aside their own humanity. Modifiers apply anytime another's fear, anxiety, or discomfort might impact a roll.

Virtues: Conviction and Instinct

Paths: Among this Road's minor paths are the Path of Flesh and the Path of Spirit. The adherents of the former seek the perfect physical manifestation, where "perfect" means a reflection of their already perfect inner self. The Path of Spirit regard the flesh as nearly inconsequential, a tool to aid them in the refinement of their souls.

The Road of Sin

Via Peccati

The appellation of Sinner is a deeply ironic one, for Cainites on the Road of Sin see no power as above themselves. How can one sin against God, when one does not acknowledge His authority? Sinners, those who walk the Via Peccati, claim this rebellious spirit began with Caine's rejection of forgiveness and acceptance of his curse, but the Road truly began in a decadent Rome in the days before the Third Punic War. It was forged in the fires of Grecian and Zoroastrian wisdom, the ideas of a soul's inner liberty that cannot be abrogated by any force, internal or external. The keys to unlocking this freedom were found not in denying the soul's myriad pleasures, but in embracing them. Some believe a visionary Brujah or Ravnos was responsible for first articulating the labyrinthian paths of desire; others claim it was a Baali, the Damned amongst the Damned, who pieced together the whispered temptations of demons but ended up freeing himself.

Other Cainites look at the Sinners and see slaves to the Beast and gluttonous hedonists, dulling their superhuman senses with glorious arrays of tastes, sights and smells. They see wicked tempters, corrupting individuals of virtue and drawing victims to lives of excess and ignominy. They see rank neonates so far lost that they refuse to submit to the Blood Oath.

Sinners dispute none of these charges save one: they would die before they called themselves slaves. Sinners can take orders, cooperate and aid others; they are selfish, not solipsistic. Indeed, a true Sinner is mastered by only herself. In turn, they master the Beast by indulging it, feeding it, and acknowledging monstrous urges as part

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST YOURSELF

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Acknowledging any authority over your own	You are beyond submission.
9	Failing to indulge a new desire	No pleasure should be denied you.
8	Failing to ride the wave of frenzy	The Beast tires with exercise, strengthens with denial.
7	Forfeiting long-term pleasures for short-term ones	Do not exchange floods of desire for a draught.
6	Putting the needs of others ahead of your own pleasure	Your need outweighs everything else.
5	Swearing an oath	Be bound by none, least of all yourself.
4	Refusing to act against those who attempt to bind you	The truest chains are self-imposed, but false ones can bind just as well.
3	Refusing to feed or kill when necessary	No life is worth more than your own.
2	Encouraging the tenets or virtues of another Road	All other Roads lead to gilded cages and liberated Beasts.
1	Refusing to act in your own best interests	Only fools sacrifice themselves.

of themselves. More than that, they ruthlessly pursue self-mastery, walking a Road of self-definition outside of external strictures or morals. While Scions try to become kings and Faithful try to become holy, Sinners never try to become anything other than themselves. And they are Damned. Whatever else the world thinks of them, Via Peccati's temptations of pleasure and power cannot be denied.

It doesn't truly matter what the chosen indulgence is. Some inundate the senses with music and art, others practice the ephemeral hunt of seduction, while still others lead unlives of endlessly cruel amusements exploring the limits of pain - for themselves and for others. Yet all Sinners find that cooperating with the Beast is the best method to quiet it. The Road is not innately evil; indeed, cannot an urge for charity be sated, even amongst vampires? Is not altruism a pursuit of pleasure in kindness? However, Via Peccati is fundamentally self-centered, ever selfish, never selfless. Nothing may be permitted to lessen the self.

Sobriquet: Sinners

Ethics of Sin:

- You are Damned already; there is nothing forbidden to you.
- The Beast belongs to you, but you do not belong to it.
- Act without hesitation. The laws of neither man nor God bind you.
- Your heart holds your hunger and your freedom. Find the courage to embrace both.

Initiation: Much of Sin is taught from an elder Sinner, called the Tempter, to a student, called the Novice, in a deeply personal relationship mirroring that of sire to childe. The first steps on the Road often come before the Novice is even a vampire, and involve breaking the strictures and confines of foreign moralities. The Embrace is the next step, dark hunger and primal urges uncoiling from the neonate's tattered soul. Tempters teach the nascent Novice not to shy from urges, but to follow and satisfy every desire. This learning process is also reciprocal, as a Novice's reaction to Sin's teachings can deeply inflame the desires of the Tempter. Though the earliest steps can see deep cruelties applied to the Sinner, these pains are never needless. The relationship between Tempter and Novice oft becomes perversely warm and caring as the adherent walks further along the Road. Even after they've been acknowledged as full travelers of the Road, Novices tend to travel with their Tempters, having long since come to desire their company.

Organization: With a heavy emphasis on personal freedom and individual desire, a regimented Road would be antithetical to the needs of Sinners. Loosely organized at best, what little structure the Road does possess is built around facilitating the teacher-student relationship that best spreads the teachings of Sin. The ashen priests of Via Peccati are known as praeceptors, gathering students and cults around them and unleashing souls with their truths. Great Sinners are granted respect, but never more than they've earned.

Rituals and Observances: Treasuring individuality and personal freedom, the Road observes few formal observances and rituals aside from the mentor-student relationship. The festival of Saturnalia is the exception; the December liberties, where free speech is common and accepted, are too intoxicating to ignore. The association with the ancient Roman sun god also tickles Sinners who appreciate irony. No pleasures are denied groups of Sinners who meet during the day, and the most advanced Sinner takes on the title of Lord of Misrule, directing his lessers in exquisite temptation.

Aura: Temptation. The Sinners are free and their Road full of promise, and they are adept at recognizing the desires of others. Their aura modifier affects rolls to cajole and entice.

Virtues: Conviction and Instinct

Path of Pleasure

The Path of Pleasure hearkens back to the original Via Desideratio, the Road as codified in Rome by Tanitbaal-Sahar. The Cainite visionary's work, On Hunger and Its Satisfaction, laid out the tenets of the Road later deemed Sinful. The discovery of a complete early draft in 10th-century Tyre led to the development of this Path, a refocusing of the Road entire to pure hedonism. Sinners walking the Path of Pleasure do not seek to define themselves by desires so much as inundate the Beast in sensation that they may remain untroubled. The Path of Pleasure emphasizes physical and mental pleasures over the self-mastery (and ultimately, emotional pleasure) of the mainline Road.

While main road Sinners are capable of delaying their lusts, Voluptuaries believe a Beast delayed is a Beast denied. They toil only to array themselves in an endless stream of engorgement, so that their Beast may be eternally glutted on blood and satisfaction. Other Cainites and even other Sinners look down on the Voluptuaries, seeing them as nothing more than fools frittering away eternity.

Additional Ethics of Pleasure:

- Tame the Beast with the pleasure it desires, for it does not think, but feel.
- Shame and inhibition are blasphemies against the orgasmic sacrament.
- Avoid things which bring you no pleasure, for the Beast grows restless without being fed.

Virtues: Conviction and Instinct

Path of the Devil

In al-Andalus, Islam's particular insistence of submission to Allah sat poorly with those who had followed the Road of Sin. Indeed, the idea of submission to any deity sat poorly with them, but the emphasis of Path of the Devil is a newly articulated one, with a doubly ironic name atop the original Road. Codified by a long dialogue between English Brujah and Gangrel residing in the taifas, the Path of the Devil is growing increasingly popular amongst neonates and those of higher Generations. The Adversaries hold that the very concept of submission and enslavement is anathema to them, and that none possess the right to condemn another. To compel obedience, to brandish the lie of torment, is to deprive another of the little pleasures they may eke out while their hearts still beat. The Adversaries stalk the slave markets of Caffa and the cathedrals of Acre alike, seeking to annihilate institutions which enslave others body and soul. They value introspection and long-term thinking; the ultimate pleasure of freedom is hollow unless it's enjoyed by all.

Additional Ethics of Rebellion:

- You are the master of yourself; authority comes from consent of the ruled, not from tyranny.
- Free will is your ultimate weapon and your greatest treasure; never let it be taken from you.
- Chains challenge the rights of the free by their mere existence; your existence is the answer to this challenge.

Virtues: Conviction and Self-Control

Hierarchy of Sins Against Pleasure

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Being shamed by your actions	Shame is disapproval in the eyes of others; your actions can only please yourself.
9	Failing to indulge your desires	Satiation keeps the Beast at bay.
8	Failing to ride the wave of frenzy	The red rages are but another pleasure to experience.
7	Any display of modesty	Modesty is morality imposed from without. Never submit to it.
6	Putting the needs of others ahead of your own interests	Your desires come before their need.
5	Swearing an oath	A wild heart must never be chained.
4	Associating with those who bring you no pleasure	The Beast rages when denied; never give license to its fury.
3	Refusing to feed or kill when necessary	These are your greatest and purest joys.
2	Encouraging virtue or agents of virtue	Why exert effort to aid those who would chain you?
1	Refusing to act in your own best interests	Your desires are all that truly matters.

Hierarchy of Sins Against Rebellion

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Acknowledging the laws of God or Man	Never give credence to those who would enslave others.
9	Failing to indulge a new desire	Passion is the fire of the soul.
8	Failing to ride the wave of frenzy	The Beast may only be understood after struggle.
7	Refusing to aid a lost soul in need	The weak cannot understand their nature, and must be taught by the strong.
6	Refusing a pleasure that injures none	Seeking to pleasure yourself is the fondest pursuit.
5	Swearing an oath	Forced servitude cannot be helped, and is to be pitied; self-enforced servitude is hideous, and is to be resisted.
4	Refusing to act against those who choose to bind you	Punish those who attempt to control you.
3	Refusing to feed or kill when necessary	Never feel shame for doing what must be done.
2	Pursuing material gain at the expense of higher concerns	Enrich your soul before you fill your coffers.
1	Encouraging false virtue or agents of false virtue	Constrictions of laws enslave the mind and strangle the soul.

Hierarchy of Sins Against Damnation

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Acknowledging any laws but that of Hell	Divinity and mundanity have no meaning for the Damned.
9	Failing to indulge your desires	Pleasure strengthens you, which strengthens your masters.
8	Failing to ride the wave of frenzy	The Beast is the clarion call of your soul.
7	Refusing to feed or kill when necessary	Beautiful is the blood that darkens the soil.
6	Avoiding injury to others for any reason	Blood spilled is your gift to the world, your greatest pleasure.
5	Any display of mercy or pity	Mercy is for the weak, and Damnation makes you strong.
4	Failing to act on behalf of Hell	You serve Hell, even when it does not serve you.
3	Any altruistic behavior	You owe others nothing.
2	Acting against the minions of Hell	We are all as drones in the hive of the Pit.
1	Encouraging virtue or agents of virtue	Nothing pure may withstand you, even the purity of Sin.

Path of Screams

The Path of Screams is an ancient one; so ancient, in fact, that its precursor long predates the Road of Sin. The hereditary morality of the Baali bloodline arose from subservience to their dark masters — some of the Pit, others bound to the earth, and still others in the depths of the Abyss. The temptations and subservience espoused by Via Hyron, the Road of the Hive, held little influence over Tanitbaal-Sahur when the tenets of the Road were whipped and smashed into his soul in Carthage. Failing to follow the Road and desperate to find a way to quell his raging Beast, the Baali ancillae ventured to Rome, where he read the works of the greatest Stoics and shared company and philosophy with the Persians who inhabited the slums of the city. When he eventually walked the road the temptations promised, he found that it led back into himself, and wrote the text that would become the foundation for the Road of Sin.

The Baali who came to reeducate him found themselves seduced by their broodmate's newfound radiant attitude of calm and temptation. Rather than free themselves, they took the idea of pleasure in subservience and fused their philosophies into a crooked and winding Path that twists against the Road that spawned it. In these nights, more Baali and infernalists are Screamers than not, replacing the repetitive and ultimately redundant codes that came before. In order to satisfy their darkest desires, the Screamers have turned against the very core

Storytelling the Road of Sin

Despite their name, Sinners can exist comfortably within a group. If a player asks to play a Sinner, it's important to emphasize the relationships and bonds their character forms with other Cainites. Even when they're ostensibly out for themselves, Sinners deeply value the pleasure of long and fruitful friendships. They may also accept orders, exercise the powers of a political office, or fight for a cause they believe in, so long as they see more long-term benefit from doing so. It's really that complex and that simple: the moment a Sinner judges that a relationship is costing them more satisfaction than it's giving them, they're gone.

of the Road: that of self-determination. They have chosen to serve in Hell rather than reign over only themselves.

Additional Ethics of Damnation

- You are Damned; the greatest pleasure is found in service of Hell.
- Virtue is a great and grand lie, but the truth pleases both you and your masters.
- Your Beast is as a great vibration, carried up from Hell; listen to its will and desires and find the voice of those you follow.

Virtues: Conviction and Instinct

Other Paths

The **Path of the Eightfold Wheel** takes its name from Druidic paganism and its focus on honoring the gods and spirits of nature through devotion to nature and the spirits, serving balance in all things, and a rotating calendar of astronomically based festivals. While many Cainites who walk this path are of the Druidic faith, other Cainites who follow shamanistic pagan traditions walk this path as well.

The **Path of Watchful Gods** is less practiced than it used to be. Its adherents mainly consist of followers of the old Greek and Roman faiths, though practitioners of more modern pagan traditions walk this path as well. Vampires on this path devote themselves to serving the gods through making regular sacrifices, honoring and protecting that which the gods deem sacred, and adhering to strict codes of honor.

The Christianization of Europe: A Successful Propaganda Campaign

Currently, the Catholic Church engages in a number of campaigns to Christianize Europe. In Iberia, the Reconquista against the remaining Muslims there is in full swing. In Lithuania and Latvia, Teutonic Knights engage in sustained military campaigns against the locals to drive out pagan influence and see Lithuania convert to Christianity. Also, by this point in time, much of what is now Scandinavia and Germany has converted to Christianity. Or at least, that's what the Church would like people to think.

Hierarchy of Sins Against the Eightfold Wheel

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Failing to spend time alone in the silence of nature	It is through nature that the gods are revealed to us.
9	Betraying a secret	The Druids teach us that we must be blind where secrets are concerned.
8	Failing to care for the sick and the weak	One cannot be strong without concern for others.
7	Letting pride come before justice	One must be strong toward the strong and weak toward the strengthless.
6	Failing to honor the spirits of nature	The spirits aid and guide us.
5	Failing to honor the gods	The gods created the world that sustains us.
4	Breaking a promise	A promise is a sacred bond.
3	Acting to upset the balance of nature	For the righteous must seek balance in all things.
2	Failure to conduct yourself with honor	The gods honor those who live with honor.
1	Failure to seek self-knowledge	Never permit self-deception to obscure knowledge of the self.

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST THE WATCHFUL GODS

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Failing to make regular sacrifices	Regular sacrifices give the gods strength.
9	Lying	Do not dishonor yourself in the eyes of the gods with false words.
8	Offending the gods or spirits with violence	Do not disrespect the spirits with violence, for they are quick to take offense and their memory is long.
7	Failing to act honorably	The gods reward honor and punish dishonor.
6	Stealing from offerings or sacrifices	Give the gods the first fruits of your labor and do not grudge them their portion.
5	Not honoring priests	Priests are the servants of order and balance favored by the gods.
4	Killing a sacred animal	Honor that which the gods have decreed sacred.
3	Defiling sacred places	Defiling a temple is like cursing the gods themselves.
2	Damaging the image of the gods	One should strive always to honor the gods in thought and deed.
1	Reviling a god or the gods	The gods are the source of all life and goodness.

History is recorded by the victors; the truth is never as clear cut as it appears. While the Church will eventually succeed in its campaigns to wipe out most pagan traditions in Europe, their practice is still alive and well. Germanic and Scandinavian pagans have nominally converted to Christianity, but their worship is definitely not Christian as they still practice the old ways and keep the old festivals. Many still keep the old gods in their hearts, converting in name only to satisfy Christian overlords.

The state of affairs in Britain and Ireland is quite similar, although in some isolated regions of Wales, the Druids still worship openly, having no fear of the Christian King of England. Likewise, Christianity has not managed more than a tenuous toehold in Eastern Europe, where the locals contest the crusades of the Teutonic Knights. Eventually, the Catholic Church will prevail, but it will be an empty victory. The Christian military forces will prevail and the locals will convert, but it will be in name only. In secret, they will continue to practice their traditions into modern nights.

Alas, they are the exception that proves the rule. The lack of a written tradition will see most pagan religions disappear entirely, with the only record of their existence written by the people who worked to destroy them in the first place.

The Pagan Traditions of Europe

The pagan traditions of Europe were incredibly diverse and had a wide variety of practices. Still, their reverence for nature was their biggest commonality. All of the pagan traditions had a regard for nature. They saw certain places in the wilderness as sacred and conducted worship in those places. The other commonality they share is a high regard for personal conduct as it relates to community, hence the high emphasis on codes of honor and shame.

A Few Choice Faiths

This is intended to provide a very general overview of the most commonly practiced faiths of the time. Of course, it would be impossible to catalogue all the religions of Europe here. It is worth noting that the Mongols were a major presence in Europe at the time and were themselves very religiously diverse. Religions commonly practiced in the Mongol Empire were Tengriism (an animistic shamanistic religion), Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity.

Older characters could also practice faiths no longer in active practice in medieval Europe, such as worship of the ancient Greek, Roman, or Egyptian Gods. For example, Zoroastrianism persisted into the 8th century and would still have young adherents, by Cainites standards.

It is impossible to overstate how truly diverse medieval European religious practice was, despite our modern perception that medieval Europe was dominated by the Catholic Church.

Pagan traditions also had their differences. Counter to what Christian historians recorded, not all pagans practiced human sacrifice. Germanic and Norse pagans did, Lithuanian and Latvian pagans did not, and the evidence for human sacrifice by the Druids is still inconclusive. Similarly, the practice of ancestor worship is common to some pagan traditions, such as Norse and Lithuanian practices, but not all.

Some pagan traditions believed in reincarnation, namely Lithuanian pagans and Druids, while the Norse pagans believed in an afterlife of the soul. Pagan festivals also shared some commonalities, such as solstice and equinox festivals. But other festivals varied from tradition to tradition, such as those dedicated to honoring local spirits or agrarian deities.

Minor Roads

The following Roads are practiced by rare groups, factions, or bloodlines. They're not widely recognized, or practiced in all regions.

The Road of Bones

Via Ossium

Despite the eternal nature of the Cainites, surprisingly few records of their history exist. Those who do remember the great moments of Cainite history have undoubtedly twisted their remembrances to suit their own agenda, and the eldest of all slip into torpor and incoherence as they age.

For most vampires, investigations into the nature of vampirism tend toward practical purposes, such as cultivations of Disciplines and blood magic. Those Cainites who pursue pure philosophical research into the origins and nature of the vampire may follow the Road of Bones.

The Road of Bones is dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge above all else. Followers wish to unlock the secrets of life, death, and the Cainite condition through a variety of means.

Necromancy is a common tool for investigating the threshold between life and death, as are vivisection and necropsy. The vampire is caught between the living and the dead, after all, and understanding what that means requires introspection and assessment. Others take a historical approach, attempting to deduce the nature of vampirism by unlocking the secrets of their origin. The Necronomists scour the landscape of the Dark Medieval, searching for fragments of the *Book of Nod* and other historical artifacts in hopes of learning the truth.



HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST KNOWLEDGE

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Refusing to share knowledge with a worthy recipient	Scholarship is improved with informed review.
9	Wanton destruction and cruelty	Beasts and idiots will discover nothing but the stake.
8	Refusing to kill when useful or necessary	Let no mortal squeamishness impede your quest.
7	Being swayed by emotion	Study emotion as an expression of the soul, but do not let it guide your hand.
6	Succumbing to frenzy	A raging Beast is a poor observer.
5	Pursuing power, prestige, or mortal attachments instead of knowledge	These things are means to an end and nothing more.
4	Allowing compassion or pity to influence you	Affecting compassion may be useful to manipulate your enemies, but don't let it enter your heart.
3	Needlessly preventing a death	All flesh is dust.
2	Showing fear of death	Be not afraid of the truth.
1	Destroying irreplaceable sources of knowledge	Destroying an artifact destroys an entire world.

The Cappadocians are foremost among the natural historians of the Cainites. Some Tzimisce and a smattering of Malkavians and particularly morbid Toreador follow this Road as well, though their approaches tend toward the curation of knowledge rather than the direct and often gory pursuit of knowledge.

Sobriquet: Necronomists

The Ethics of Bones:

- Study the mysteries of life, death, and undeath.
- Explore the nature of the soul, but do not be enslaved by its passions.
- Protect knowledge from those who would destroy or distort it.

Initiation: As the members of the Road are almost exclusively Cappadocians, no formal initiation rites exist. Non-Cappadocians are subject to more scrutiny and elders of the Road will likely demand that they present them with worthy scholarship or discoveries before they will share their libraries.

Organization: The largest informal meeting of the followers of the Road occurs at the Cappadocian conference at Erciyes. Others on the Road communicate through informal networks of scholarship typically revolving around monasteries or other places of learning.

Aura: Silence. The stillness of the grave and the hush of quiet study surround followers of this road. Their aura modifier applies to all Stealth rolls.

Virtues: Conviction and Self-Control

Paths: Followers of the Road of Bones might find that they prefer one method of inquiry to another. An archaeologically- or historically-inclined follower may follow the Path of the Scholar, which seeks to unearth the secrets of the past. An enterprising necromancer is more likely to follow the Path of Death and the Soul. The Underworld holds many secrets, after all, and the dead remember many things that even the Cainites have forgotten.

The Road Of Yasa

Via Yasaq

Yasa is the Mongol code of conduct, a set of laws that all must observe, as first laid down by Chinghis Khan and upheld now by his sons. The Anda have derived their own code from these precepts, focusing on honor, respect, and loyalty, particularly to one's family, and most especially to those to whom they have sworn spiritual kinship. While not all Anda walk the Road of Yasa, the vast majority of those who follow the Horde do.

While the Road of Yasa holds honor in high regard, the Mongol concept of honor is quite different than that of western knights and the Path of Chivalry. In battle, for example, the Mongols will do anything to win; spies, stealth, deceit, ambush, and confusion are all valid tactics, and none are considered to impinge upon honor. On the other hand, knowingly placing oneself at a disadvantage might be dishonorable because it does not show your enemy proper respect.

Sobriquet: Bloodbrothers

The Ethics Of Yasa:

- Honor your family as you would honor yourself.
- The family you choose is the strongest and most important family.

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST THE YASA

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Ignoring an insult	You have earned the respect of others.
9	Insulting another undeservedly	You must show respect to those who have earned it.
8	Lying to one who has proved themselves honest	Honesty demands honesty.
7	Abusing your herd	The herd is not just for one.
6	Showing mercy to one who has not submitted	The weak must accept you as their master.
5	Losing a battle due to pride	Defeat your enemy now. Assuage your ego later.
4	Harming family, anda, herd, or allies while in frenzy	A warrior's essential quality is discipline.
3	Disobeying the order of your noyan	Obedience is the foundation of honor.
2	Betraying your family	You will never know a stronger bond than that of blood.
1	Betraying your Bloodbrothers	The family of choice is the strongest.

- Demand respect from others.
- Show respect to those who deserve it.
- Do not stain your honor with petty behavior or pride.

Initiation: Before one may set foot upon this Road, an Anda must receive an invitation from one already familiar with it. She may go to a Bloodbrother and express a desire to join their ranks, or she may find herself approached unexpectedly about doing so. If the latter happens, it means she has impressed someone with her virtuous behavior. On the occasion of the former, she will have to demonstrate the qualities of honor, loyalty, and obedience before she undergoes an initiation. The decision to induct a new member is never made alone; the sponsor will gather as many Anda as possible and convene a kurlitai, during which he espouses to the others the virtues of the new recruit. If satisfied, the sponsor, and perhaps others, will present themselves to the new member, where they will co-mingle blood, becoming true Anda Bloodbrothers.

Organization: Bloodbrothers have little in the way of organization; they follow their Mongol families, performing their duties as normal. When possible, they prefer to remain near other Bloodbrothers, for the bonds between them are strong. When they are far from each other, they keep their ears close to the ground, listening for any potential news of their kin. Should one Bloodbrother ever discover another to be in need, she will go to his aid at the first possible moment. Any reunion between two or more Anda eventually gives way to raucous, joyful celebration.

Aura: Trust. Those above you trust you will do your duty obediently. Those beneath you trust you will treat them fairly. Enemies trust you will respect them by doing everything in your power to defeat them. The aura modifier affects Leadership rolls applied against subordinates, and Intimidation rolls against enemies.

Virtues: Conviction and Self-Control

Paths: Only one way to walk the Road of Yasa exists. No alternate paths diverge from it.



The poets, painters, and musicians gathered at the Consistori were mediocre, Bernat decided. A disappointment, but not a surprise; the Occitan provinces were always full of themselves without good reason. The highlight of the evening was called "Midwinter in Broceliande." A youth from the village, clad only in a crown of white lilies, was drained dry of his blood by some aspiring courtier or another dressed as a forest faerie, while other masked courtiers danced around them. He turned his cow-eyed gaze to heaven and moaned in prayerful ecstasy as the Kiss took him, though Bernat decided it was more likely that he was chosen for his slender physique and prodigious member than any true piety. The youth broke wind rather loudly as he died, and Bernat thought it a fitting end to a tedious performance.

After the performance, he made his way to Prince Columbina.

"My lady," he said, bowing to her. "A most excellent performance." He smiled, showing his teeth as if he thought it might make the lie convincing.

She laughed. "It was awful. But it was Ponç's great masterpiece, so I indulged him. Rulership is a terrible burden."

Bernat inclined his head. "You bear it well, Your Grace," he said, glancing around. "Are there any more refined entertainments we might pass the hours with?"

Columbina's dark eyes sparkled. "Would you like to meet my new bodyguard?" she asked. "She's quite extraordinary."

"Oh, yes, Lady Aranxha," replied Bernat. "I heard a marvelous poem about her duel with Ambrogino Giovani."

"Come along," said Columbina, grasping Bernat's hand in her delicate, white palm. She led him out of the main hall and into the courtyard. The night was clear and the moon was full, bathing the courtyard in silver light. Lavender flowers grew among the flagstones, filling the air with their sweet scents. A woman stood alone, gazing at the stars.

For the second time that evening, Bernat was disappointed.

She was not, as the poem described, "as beautiful as she was deadly," unless her martial prowess had been greatly exaggerated. She dressed in a simple tunic and leggings. Her hairline (with a widow's peak, no less) and her thick eyebrows were unplucked. Her nose had been broken and clumsily reset. Though her belly was pleasantly round and her limbs were thick and shapely, her vulgar dress and her leathery, tanned skin were decidedly ugly. How unfortunate, Bernat mused, to be Embraced in such a state when a bit of grooming and pampering might have allowed her to be beautiful – or at least presentable – forever.

"My lady," Bernat greeted Aranxha, bowing deeply but without averting his gaze.

Aranxha gazed at him coolly, her wide pale eyes like silver mirrors. She glanced briefly over at her Prince, who shook her head almost imperceptibly.

"Bernat of Andorra," said Columbina.

"My lord," Aranxha responded curtly.

"Your reputation precedes you, madam," said Bernat.

Aranxha blinked slowly, her expression blank and confused.

Bernat cleared his throat for effect (an old mortal habit and one that he ought to rid himself of, he reflected) and began to recite the song. "Upon the flagstones of Toulouse / The silver maiden danced / The Young One's blood across her breast / Her heart a—"

"Oh. That," Aranxha cut him off. "A failure of mine."

"A failure?" Bernat blurted out, annoyed. He doubted the Gorgon had ever heard a finer baritone than his, and yet she interrupted him without any pretense at deference.

"Yes. I tried to teach Ambrogino a lesson," she replied. "I don't think it took."

Columbina laughed and stroked Aranxha's cheek. Aranxha grabbed her wrist and pulled Columbina to her side, her hands kneading the flesh of the prince's hips.

"I do wonder what you consider a success, then," said Bernat.

Aranxha pondered for a moment. "A decade ago," she said, "I fought a lupine in Navarre. His claws and fangs bit deep into my skin, but I bit deeper. I ripped his vitals from his body and, covered in blood and shit and bile, I pulled his heart from his chest and drank from his heart's blood. I devoured him, body and soul, and for a fortnight I raged through the woods like a beast, copulating with animals and killing as I pleased with mindless fury and insatiable appetite of a rabid wolf. I learned much from him."

Aranxha turned her gaze to Bernat once more. "Do they have any poems about that, Master Bernat?"

Bernat could only stare slack-jawed at the pair. After a moment, he shook his head, still somewhat dazed at the brutal response.

"Then come with us," said Prince Columbina, tracing her fingertips down Bernat's arm to his wrist, her sharp nails poised above his artery. Her dark eyes gleamed with heady, earthy, and sinister promise. "We will show you."

Chapter Four: Character Creation

From whence do I come? I come from the mud. I come from Adam. I come from God. I come from exile. I come from Lilith. I come from all these things in turn, but again, I come from all these things simultaneously. My truest dilemma is honoring from which I came most from.

-Found in the Library of Elpis the Cappadocian

What is a story without its characters? What is a world without those to witness experience, and shape it? Your character, a product of the Dark Medieval World but apart from it due to the Embrace, stands witness to what unfolds, chronicling this time and pushing through it. The knowledge you will live beyond what this dark time has to offer looms before you, like a surrogate sun. But first, you must survive.

Create a character, an individual with a history, desires, regrets, and more before thrusting them onto the stage your Storyteller has set for you. Keep them within the parameters your Storyteller has set, and explore the depths of humanity (and lack thereof) within the Cainite community.

On the more technical side of character creation, quantifiable aspects of your character will be recorded on your character sheet. We've provided an example on page 151; a cursory glance will provide you with the basic overview of what your character may be able to do. Keep it by your side as you read this chapter for quick reference.

Essentials of Life and Unlife

At the core, vampirism is the same. A living person is killed, Embraced, and turned into a creature that lusts for the crucial elixir needed in order to maintain her unlife. However, each individual has a history and personality prior to becoming a Beast-addled Cainite, which will influence the rest of the story you choose to tell. Once completed, these three sentences will tell much of your character's history, state of being and what lies before you in the Dark Ages.

Determine these three aspects of your character. Here, we provide examples.

In Life I Was...

You were alive once. You lived your life marching towards death; working, eating, praying, and sleeping. Chances are you were poor and lived in a place surrounded by farmland and forests. If you didn't till the earth, you had a trade or a craft. Diseases, both agricultural and human, were devastating. Family and religion offered some small comfort. You had beliefs about Heaven and Hell and the afterlife. A social structure lofted men and women above you because of their lineage and clergy rose in power towards the heavens, elevated by faith. Soldiers marched to lands you would never see or even read about to soak the earth with blood and fill the air with oaths. This was your world. Small. Cruel. A shining dagger covered in dirt and gore, aimed always for your heart.

Character Sheet Traits

Name: Your character's name. Your cultural background may or may not warrant you a surname of some fashion.

Player: Your name.

Chronicle: A title picked by the Storyteller, it sets the tone for the series of stories the characters are participating in (e.g. A Dark Page Turns).

Nature: The one-word Archetype which represents your character's true self. The list of Archetypes follows later in this chapter.

Demeanor: The one word Archetype representing how your character presents herself to the world.

Clan: One of the 13 clans, bloodlines descended from the Antediluvians, Caine's childer. A vast majority of vampires belong to a clan, supplying a choice of starting Disciplines and providing a special supernatural weakness associated with the lineage. Other characters are part of the various Bloodlines.

Generation: A measurement of how far removed your character is from Caine, the first vampire. The lower your Generation, the closer you are to Caine and the greater the potential within your undead body. All characters start at Twelfth Generation, unless you buy the Generation Background.

Attributes: Traits that measure your character's inherent Physical, Social, and Mental capacity.

Abilities: Traits that measure what your character has learned. They are divided into Talents (innate proficiency), Skills (learned proficiency), and Knowledges (academic and learned lore).

Road: The name of the moral code you have chosen to follow. Roads offer parameters a vampire may work within to keep their Beast under control, guiding their behavior. The higher the Road score, the closer you are to that touchstone. The Road you choose also determines to which Virtues your character ascribes.

Advantages: These traits sharpen the edges of your character, bringing details to your character which make then stand out from the others. You receive five dots in Backgrounds. You may choose four dots of your character's clan Disciplines. Lastly, choose seven dots between your Virtues. Depending on your character's Road, she may have Self-Control or Instinct, Conscience or Conviction, and Courage.

Aura: Tied to Road and its rating. See p. 113.

Willpower: Your character's mental reserves that allow you to push yourself farther than you are typically able to go.

Blood Pool: The reserve of blood your character has. Blood points can be spent to perform certain types of actions. Your character's maximum blood is determined by her Generation.

Health: Your physical well-being. Broken bones and missing limbs still limit what a vampire will be able to do. Record injuries and refer to page 344 to see how your actions are affected.

Weakness: Each clan and bloodline possesses a weakness. Note this weakness, as it will come up in play.

My Sire Chose Me Because....

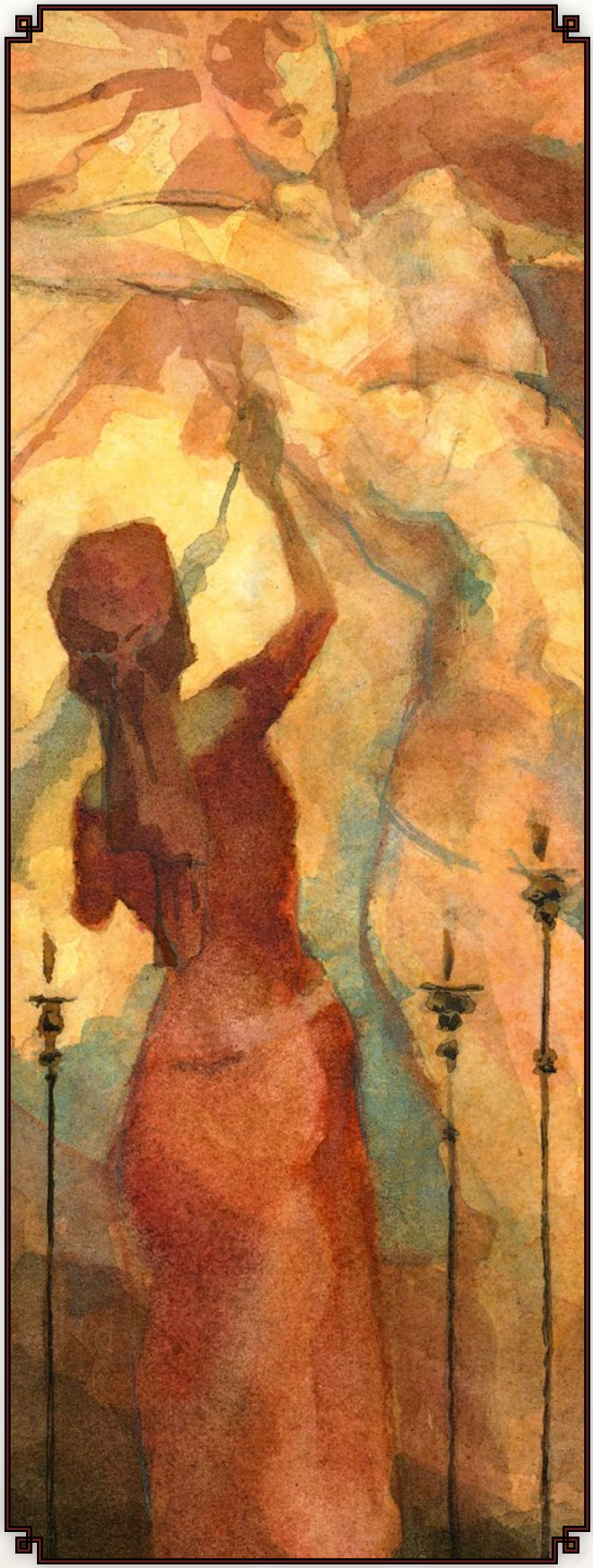
Even in your frail, pathetic state, your sire saw something worth preserving, someone to Embrace. Reasons for siring are as varied as vampires themselves, and are influenced by many things. A sire's personal desires, clan initiatives, faction strategies and more are combined and honed to a fine edge. The target for that edge is you.

Motives for siring will influence the relationship between sire and childe, but the childe rarely asks to be Embraced. Whether in a moment of desperation or after years of quiet calculation, the Embrace is given, never taken, in hopes of preserving something about you and stretching it out over the ages. Position? Loyalty? Companionship? Zeal? Your sire claws away death, replacing it with unlife. She reaches for what she desires from you with cold, covetous hands.

Now I Spend My Nights...

In **V20 Dark Ages**, the story of your unlife begins not where death slips away, but where your new place among the Cainites has led you. You have been reared by your sire (if they chose to do so; most do) and know how to conduct yourself among other Cainites. Those who would claim responsibility for your actions are stepping back and allowing you to fully discover the world on your own.

As soon as you step out into the night, you must explain why you are there. Evening is a time for rest for most humans, a time to shut the doors and close the



windows. In the dark of the night, humans bring fire to light their ways or slink suspiciously about their business. You must supply a credible explanation for why you are seen during the evening and only after the sun goes down. An oath made to friends long gone, a superstition, or a strange disease can all sit in for the truth as to why nightfall beckons you forward.

As the nights roll on, you must find something to alleviate the tedium, lest the Beast begins to stir. Undeath, both in its stretch of time and contacts, affords you time to attempt and accomplish many things. Perhaps you continue with a permutation of your human life, or pursue new endeavors, using newfound Abilities to enhance your machinations. Or you may decide to abandon the world of light and the living altogether, devoting yourself to the War of Princes and taking a place among the movers and shakers of domain, region and clan. Every vampire will find themselves caught up in it at some point. Why not leap in before you are thrust in?

I Am, We Are; Domain and Coterie

Wolves have their packs. Owls have their parliaments. Vampires have their coteries. A single character can carry a tale for a spell but a cast of characters can inhabit an epic. In addition, several vampires banded together bring many talents to the table and provide protection for one another. Quite simply, they can accomplish more together. They may not like it, but it is a fact.

Making Contacts

When creating your character history, create it out loud. Perhaps a fellow player's character holds similar interests or background, or with a little work, you can weave your two stories together before it has even begun. Finding connections between your characters will make working together feel more natural during the chronicle. Relationships, for ill or good, also add more depth to your character.

Since the Last Sunset

Not only has your character been a vampire for some time, but your coterie has existed, entrenching itself in the land, setting its boundaries, and observing the rites and rules afforded a group of vampires who have come together to claim a territory. Forming the coterie can be played out in the Prelude, a prologue which reveals how you came to the character expressed on your Character Sheet and in the company of your fellow players.

The Nature of Our Cause

People gather for many reasons. Vampires form coteries for many reasons as well. Be sure to discuss the intentions which fueled your group to come together. Not everyone may be in the coterie for the same reason.

But I Don't Know

Many players come into a game with an idea, the Storyteller's prompts fueling a well fleshed out biography in moments. Some come simply wanting to play and draw a blank as soon as their eyes hit the top half of the character sheet. If this is you, don't worry. Not every detail needs to be hammered out from the start. Work with your Storyteller and find out what information will be important to the first session or so. Give your Storyteller something to work with which is appealing to you. What is needed will be found.

Some may have been told to join by their sire while others wish to take advantage of the others' skills for a more clandestine reason.

The Coterie of Mutual Survival

A group of vampires who can work together through common clan, similar age, or some combination stake a claim on a piece of land and those who dwell there. They do just that, leaving each other to their own devices for the most part. The members of the coterie can be as warm or aloof as the coterie necessitates or desires.

The Coterie of Influence

Many vampires come together to pool their influence in a sphere of mortal society. A coterie with many talents at its disposal and a full night to plan can organize properly, easily keeping track of what is being said and done. They protect their interests by swaying the human mob which makes up what they seek to control. The chaos of the Cainite world is both a shield and an obstacle to overcome. Let them fight and quarrel. While their backs are turned, every ship leaving Napoli's harbor is slipping into our grasp.

The Coterie of Lineage

Bloodline stands in for family in this coterie, with vampires made by the same sire or group of sires inheriting a territory to hold and maintain. Brooded together, this coterie is often assigned a purpose by those responsible for their Embrace, though the coterie itself may report a different agenda altogether to outsiders who ask. Sharing the same sire may give this coterie strength and solidarity as siblings in undeath. The patriarchal practices of mortals may spill over onto this type of coterie, with sires sending their childer to live in the broods of allies for training, resulting in mixed-clan coteries.

The Coterie of the Disaffected

Some vampires, once released from bonds of their sires, try to strike out on their own, severing ties between themselves and the society of Cainites they were brought into. Operating as openly as they dare, these coteries drift on the tumultuous ocean that is the War of Princes, occasionally dragged down to the depths or destroyed by sudden storms. Other coteries consist of vampires trying to prove themselves to vampire society after their sires have lost favor, doing anything in their power to remain in good standing with those with more influence.

The Coterie of the Wayfarers

Many roads cross the Dark Medieval World, and many vampires make use of them. Innumerable reasons tempt individuals to a dangerous and nomadic lifestyle. Holy war shifts armies from battlefield to battlefield. Shrines beckon pilgrims. And of course, there is money to be made. All the treasures of Europe, Africa, and Asia lie in wait. All a vampire has to do is get there. Of course, one must convince others that it would be worth their while to come to a moonlit market, or have unquestioning servants to vend during the daylight hours.

This list is by no means exhaustive and players aren't required to pick one of the aforementioned coteries. Oftentimes, people join groups for their own reasons, and your vampires may find their own common reason for banding together. Share ideas among your group and with the Storyteller to flesh out the group dynamic and dependencies between players.

The Dark Medieval World

Just as in the modern world, certain dichotomies exist in the world of the year 1242. They lie within society, events and individuals proving one holds sway over the other, the pendulum swinging back and forth. The majority usually aspires to one more than the other, and people scramble and climb to one side. Others sit in the balance, trying to reason what these two strengths mean and get caught in the turmoil when things are thrown out of balance. Still others may see beyond these binaries and wonder what it can all mean. Your character may submit to one family of thought or struggle, having a wider view of time and therefore the hindsight to see that not everything is black and white.

Order and Chaos

In many faiths, the universe begins as Chaos. Through the words, thoughts or bodily fluids of deities, the universe is created and laws are given to the chosen inhabitants. Agents of Chaos such as Set, the Leviathan, dragons,



and others are often put into submission by deities, heroes or other goodly agents. Codes of behavior are given as a gift, in return for good stewardship of the earth and worship. People worship, build temples, make sacrifices, pray, sing, dance.

And yet bad things happen. Children grow sick and die while old men linger and curse their days. Crops fail, storms destroy, and plagues gallop across the land. If those who impose order are sovereign as holy texts say, how can Chaos rear its head so often and so devastatingly? Is it the fault of the worshipers? Is it the fault of non-believers, dooming their neighbors through lack of or misplaced faith? Can something be done to set things down the correct path? Or is Chaos part of Order, following it after just as winter follows autumn? Will holy hands bestow perfect, lasting order upon the righteous? Or must it be created, manipulated from the disorderly, rabid structure which is the medieval world? Time may give your character insight as to what is the correct path, or least the correct path for them.

Good and Evil

Light and dark exists in the world, and it also clashes within the hearts of those who inhabit the earth. Cosmic good and evil lie in contention, tied to Order and Chaos. Good creates, is wise, treats others with kindness, and gives. Evil destroys, is short-tempered and near-sighted, disregards the well-being of all it encounters over itself, and consumes. Spirits and deities fall to one side of the spectrum or the other, occasionally employing or sweeping up humans in their fight to overcome the other. While religious stories are common battlegrounds for these epic battles, many happen within the heart.

Virtue is something to strive for in the human world. For some, it is a way to a peaceful afterlife. For others, it is a way to honor their deities. For still others, it can be a way to make sure all are treated fairly and well. A good life means something different for the Norseman in his longboat than the Zoroastrian priest before the fire. Where evil abounds, people are in pain and suffer. Where there is good, there is at least comfort.

Yet the good are rewarded with evil and the less-than-virtuous gain much in the material world. Good often asks for restraint, while evil indulges as long as it can. If the true reward is beyond this life, how long can it hold the attention of a soldier? A merchant? A scholar? A vampire? Who holds the vampire and their deeds in esteem? Who shall render their accounts when they have spent all their nights?

The vampire knows better than most that Good and Evil lie in the definition of the speaker, and that the rain falls on them all. The reasons for pursuing some moral code lies in the target they have their eyes set on.

Hierarchy

Hierarchy is a part of the Order many people wish to see in the world. Many religions have spiritual hierarchies, with

spirits, angels, demons, and other entities answering to those above them. Similar hierarchies manifest in mundane society. Noble families oversee their lands, those with the most faith and education rise up the ranks of religious orders. Everyone else takes up the mantle of the position they have been born into. However, "born to rule" doesn't always translate to "fit to rule" very well, leading to misuse and abuse of power, which makes the people grumble. When pressed to the point of breaking, those at the bottom overthrow those at the top. War and plagues cause instability, facilitating the rearrangement of key players. With their prolonged lifespans and ability to endure more physical hardship than most, vampires can watch the rise and fall of many a ruler and ride the ebb and flow of power themselves. The waves never stay still for long and equality is not an option. Who will you answer to? Who will you support in times of political upheaval? Or will you race to the front on the backs of those too weak to pull themselves forward?

Five Steps into Darkness

These five steps will guide you in creating your character. Perform them in whatever order results in an individual you are excited to play. See page 156 for a quick guide on building a character.

Preliminary Assumptions

Keep these guidelines in mind when building your character.

Scope: Your character is of an age, gender, and background of someone who could exist in the Middle Ages. The Silk Road stretches from Asia to Europe; religion and trade brings goods and people from kingdoms in Africa. The rules support a vampire who has been Embraced within the last few decades and has spent the last 20-30 years as a fledgling, under the wing of her sire. This assumption dictates the amount of power your character has at their disposal.

These numbers can be manipulated slightly to aid the chronicle the Storyteller has in mind or to accommodate the backgrounds of other characters in your coterie. Be sure to discuss any changes to this timeline with your group, lest a misunderstanding or omission lead to awkward play or relatively overpowered characters down the road.

Details: Stories are not series of numbers in the same way you are not a list of your height, weight, blood pressure, etc. The numbers presented are here to help tell the story, to add suspense, and represent what your character can do in easy and trying situations. Two characters may both be intelligent, but one may be a braggart know-it-all while the other is a quiet calculator. In addition, the Storyteller may impose benefits or handicaps to characters, depending on the situation. The numbers on your character sheet imply the character. You breathe life into them and play them out.

Step By Step: Every character gets the same amount of points to distribute among the various traits and abilities. At the end of the allocation, everyone will receive freebie points to better customize the characters you had in mind. While your character may not be exactly able to do what you may want them to do for the first session, keep in mind that gameplay will earn your character experience points, which can be used to improve your character as you see fit.

Scale: Most traits operate on a scale of 1-6, with 1 being deficient but not abysmal, and 6 being beyond what many humans could even deem possible. A trait rating of 2 is average for most individuals, with numbers above ranking significantly better. Some traits rank from 1-10; they are further discussed in the chapter.

Teamwork: The game of **V20 Dark Ages** is one where a group of characters tell a story together. Some characters may be more manipulative than others or more outspoken, but as a player, don't strong-arm and belittle other people's roles. If you want to switch the focus of the game as a whole, talk it over with the group and figure out the best way to play it out. Better to resolve it together than burn the game at the stake.

In addition, bear in mind certain scenarios are not conducive to certain casts. Are you playing a game of political intrigue played out in the libraries of Persia? That's probably not the best for a combat-minded brute to undertake the endeavor. A setting of a small village where everyone knows each other is not the best locale for urban-minded, cosmopolitan individuals looking to make a name for themselves.

Communicate with each other. Cooperate. The game will be better for it.

Storyteller, Troupe, and Character

One player in your group oversees the gameplay and action. This is the Storyteller. Before characters are created, this player will share their ideas for the tone and themes of the game and suggest the types of characters they believe will work best. Spend a session with the Storyteller and the rest of the group, sharing initial ideas for characters and how they may or may not fit with the story. As you discuss your ideas for your characters, you may hit upon how they're all connected or why they're willing to work together. Both Storyteller and player may augment their



concepts according to what comes up in this conversation. If there's something you would like to see happen, bring it up. Likewise, respect the Storyteller's requests and suggestions. When you're all on the same page, creation and execution will go much more smoothly.

Here are a few tips to make the creation process go more smoothly.

I. Listen to each other. The Storyteller may lay out everything in a few sentences, or the group may discuss character and setting for a few hours, fine-tuning the world you will be playing in. It will take longer if no one is paying attention. Repeating oneself is tedious and takes away from time that could be spent actually playing.

II. Respect each other. If a player or Storyteller says they're uncomfortable running a certain type of game, or wants to focus on certain clans or regions, listen and respect their wishes. Likewise, if you wish to avoid certain situations (e.g. violence towards children), say something before the game starts.

III. Expect to look things up. Very few people will be able to memorize every rule put forth in this book. No one should be expected to. Seasoned players will be able to guide people through various steps and types of interactions, but have the rules on hand in case. Bookmarks of some fashion will serve you well.

IV. Take the time to get to know each other and the world you'll be playing in. Plan to spend about a session talking about your character and how they're connected to the world and other characters. Ask questions. Come up not only with abilities but histories, likes and dislikes, personal tics and irks. Building together will make you all invested in the story and hopefully leaving you eager to play it out next time.

Step I: Character Concept

Who do you want to be? What do you want to do? Perhaps some aspect of a clan or path put forth earlier in this book sparks your imagination. Maybe something you've read or heard about falls into place within the Dark Ages society, sparking an idea for a character.

The exact details of the character don't need to strike you like lightning. Start with a person. Give them a desire and a reason to hope they may achieve their goals. You can sort out the why and how as you continue to create your character.

Overall Concept

Consider your character. In life, they could have had any number of professions or lifestyles, from a miserable serf cursing the field they are working, to the most pious Cardinal gazing over their adoring congregation. Refer to the three sentences stated earlier in this chapter, "In Life I Was…," "My Sire Chose Me Because…," and "Now I Spend My Nights…" to lay an outline for the history of your character. The next section will help fill in the other parts of your characters personality, desires and motivations.

Inez is excited to play "A Dark Page Turns," a chronicle established by her Storyteller and friend Bri. Bri has told the group the game will be a bit about information technology (or lack thereof), spying, oracles, and trying to figure out the truth about situations and events in their region. Inez likes the idea of an illiterate peasant who wants to learn to read and is taught to read by her future sire. The Teacher/Student dynamic is something she thinks would be fun to play.



Clan

Every vampire is made by a sire, stretching back to an Antediluvian and to Caine. Certain traits, characteristics, and weaknesses are passed on from generation to generation of these sanguine families. As the young observe and are trained by the old, they pick up the mannerisms and interests of the clan, gravitating towards certain fields and circles of influence. Of course, every family has its black sheep, and childer do have their rebellious streaks. Still, in a existence where connections can mean the difference between seeing the next evening, family ties are best left a bit frayed, not severed entirely.

Of course, not every vampire has a clan. Some characters belong to rarer Bloodlines, groups that may or may not descend from one of the clans of Caine. Caitiffs, the orphans of the vampire world, also roam the earth. Some are abandoned, others are misled. With no one to answer to, they suffer and benefit from their lack of attachment to clans. Do they wield their clanlessness like a weapon or fall victim to more organized Cainites?

Clan should be discussed with other players and the Storyteller. A player who wishes to play a Caitiff should discuss it within the group and make sure the Storyteller can work with the omission in the vampire's heritage. Clan can remain a mystery to the character and even the player, if handled properly.

Inez looks over the list of clans and considers her character's sire/mentor. She wants to avoid her character being taught by any religious figures, so she decides her sire is a noble of some sort, a minor lord with enough power to not be questioned when he takes a young girl under his wing. She decides to go with Ventrue.

Road

Most aspects of the Curse of Caine are just that: a curse, forced upon an individual for reasons they may never know. However, the character may choose a Road which allows them to reconcile their individuality, their morals, and their motivations with the Beast within.

There are many Roads to choose from, all described in detail in Chapter Three. As with many moral paths, institutionalized or not, the degree to which one adheres will vary from person to person. People's desire for guidance (or excuses) changes during different times in their unlife. Zeal often waxes and wanes depending on circumstance, and your character may find themselves exploring the Road as the game plays out. In addition, meeting other observers of the same Road or different Roads will give your character a reference to compare their beliefs against and decide what they truly believe their life is now about. Clan is the family you are born into. Roads are more the family we choose to associate with.

Inez sees her character as having a religious bent similar to many in her time: harboring belief, but no zealot out to Crusade. Having lived among peasants and seeing the good that great philosophers and creators have brought to the world, she decides the Road of Humanity would fit. Her character isn't power-hungry; she simply thirsts for knowledge. Not to the degree she thirsts for blood, of course. She notes that the Road of Humanity subscribes to the Virtues of Conscience and Self-Control. She crosses off Conviction and Instinct on her character sheet.

Archetype: Nature and Demeanor

The person we are in our heart of hearts differs from face we show the world. This is our Nature and Demeanor. These two aspects of ourselves reveal much about a character's personality and will dictate how they are played. Nature not only reveals what is at the core of your character. When your character performs a task which satisfies your Nature, you are able to (re)gain Willpower. Demeanor may be in opposition to your Nature, a clever mask which allows you to fulfill your true desires more easily or a facade you put up to hide behind. How these two parts of yourself interact and lie in opposition with each other will result in characters who show themselves to the world, Cainites who lie to themselves or to others as to who they are, or something in between.

Inez has decided on the name Magda for her character, short for Magdalene. After considering the list of Natures and Demeanors, she settles on Defender for Nature and Pedagogue for Demeanor. She feels Magda's true nature is one that stands up for the downtrodden, but on the surface, she presents herself as a teacher and positive example to her community.

Step II: Choosing Attributes

After getting a handle on who your character is, what they want, and what drives them, it is time to assign numbers to their various Attributes. Attributes come in three categories. Physical Attributes (Strength, Dexterity, Stamina) all measure your character's bodily potential. Social Attributes (Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance) measure your character's ability to handle themselves in relation to others. Mental Attributes (Perception, Intelligence, Wits) deal with your character's ability to process information and react.

Choose one set of Attributes to be primary, one secondary, and one tertiary, assigning them according to the vision you have for your character. Is she athletic (Physical primary)? Clumsy (Physical secondary or tertiary)? Does she talk back every chance they get (Mental primary?) Can she hold a room in the palm of her hand with her voice (Social primary)? Is she stuttering and shy (Social secondary or tertiary)? Read the descriptions provided on page 159 for more info on these individual Attributes.

All characters begin with one free dot in each Attribute (the exception being Nosferatu, who start with 0 dots in Appearance because of their curse). From there, distribute your dots in the following manner:

- Distribute seven dots among your Primary Attributes
- Distribute five dots among your Secondary Attributes
- Distribute three dots among your Tertiary Attributes

In reading the descriptions, you may notice your character is exceptionally gifted in more than a few ways. Vampirism is a curse, but it is also a boon to the undead body, mind and spirit, enabling it to do things it could only dream of in life and enhancing abilities which were already there. The curse gifts you with strange beauty, unknown vigor, and abilities which almost mitigate the sting of the curse itself. Almost.

Inez wishes to play an intelligent character who spent time performing physical tasks when she wasn't allowed to read. She makes her Mental Attributes her primary set, Physical

her second, and Social her third. Inez decides Magda is bookish and lacks in subterfuge or social graces. She chooses Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Perception 3 for her Mentals, Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3 for Physicals, and Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3 for Socials.

Step III: Choosing Abilities

Abilities, like Attributes, fall into three categories: Talents (natural aptitude), Skills (abilities learned and practiced), and Knowledges (areas of expertise). Unlike Attributes, they are not natural parts of your character's being, but specialties they have gained through experience. As a result, you must assign at least one dot into an Ability if you wish to use it without penalty or to use it at all (specifically, where Knowledges are concerned). Descriptions of Abilities are discussed on page 162.

Abilities are also ranked. Choose which set of Abilities will be primary, secondary, and tertiary. An educated individual would most likely put Knowledges first, while a rough and tumble blacksmith may put Skills ahead of Knowledges and Talents.

Assign dots to your primary, secondary, and tertiary sets of Abilities, being sure to not place more than three dots in any one Ability during this step. Abilities may be raised later through use of freebie points.

- Distribute 13 dots among your primary Abilities
- Distribute 9 dots among your secondary Abilities
- Distribute 5 dots among your tertiary Abilities

Once again, the Curse of Caine affords the character the ability to excel in physical, mental, and social fields, exceeding most humans and even some of your fellow vampires.

Inez puts Knowledges as her primary Abilities. Her ability to retain information and zeal for reading and research were the cause for her Embrace, so that comes first. Talents come next; she spends her points on the more physical Talents, though she does take Empathy; Inez figures Magda knows people hold information in their expressions and how they hold themselves. Skills come last. She can't envision the peasant girl riding horses or fighting with swords all that often. Her sire had other people to fight and ride for them.

Step IV: Choosing Advantages

In this next step, your character will obtain powers more specific to Cainites, forming more of their vampiric self and place in society.

Disciplines

Disciplines are taught to a childe by her sire. Disciplines can also be learned by a vampire over the course of their unlife. Divide four dots among the Disciplines listed for your clan (chosen in step I), choosing the ones which best suit your character. You may choose Disciplines not specific to your clan later, but these may only be purchased with freebie points.

If you are playing a Caitiff, you may choose whichever Disciplines you choose, subject to Storyteller approval. Alternately, Storytellers may want to offer Caitiff players a pool to choose from, if it fits the story.

Inez looks to the Ventrue Disciplines, and notes that Dominate favors Mental and Social Attributes and Abilities. She chooses Dominate 2, Fortitude 1, and Presence 1.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds deal with external things that affect your character. Backgrounds are described on page 179, and you have five dots to divide among them. Whatever you choose should make sense for your character. A young Cainite fresh out of the madrasa of Fez arriving in Spain probably wouldn't have much in way of Allies, though he may have Contacts. Resources imply a source of sustainable income or a cache somewhere which is readily accessible. Mentors are for those willing to answer to others. Choose your Backgrounds wisely, as you will be able to improve these Backgrounds as the story progresses.

Your group may pool Backgrounds as it serves the story and to make the most of what is available. Characters may pool the Allies, Contacts, Domain, Herd, Influence, Mentor, Resources, and Retainer Backgrounds (see p. 182 for details).

The Storyteller may wish to limit the Backgrounds available to your characters in order to better tell the story. They may also encourage or require certain Backgrounds. Since Backgrounds help to round out your character, it is useful and recommended that Storytellers give required

Backgrounds to players for free, allowing them to distribute the five dots from character creation as they see fit.

Inez decides Magda's relationship with her sire is still fairly strong, even though she has been released from his watchful eye. The Storyteller and Inez agree that much of the coterie's adventures will be at the behest of her sire. She takes Mentor 3. Inez takes Contacts 1 as a Background, deciding she has written letters to others at the request of her sire and so has knowledge of individuals and their dealings in various locations. She also takes Generation 1 to start at Eleventh Generation.

Virtues

Each character has three Virtues. One concerns their resolution in perilous times. One dictates their moral compass. The last commands her reaction to destructive impulses. These three weave together to form a character's recourse against the frenzied and impulsive reactions of the Beast within.

Two of your three Virtues will come specifically from the Road you have chosen earlier in character creation. These two Virtues will often run opposed to themselves, countering social obligation with selfishness and introspection with taking the larger picture into consideration. The third Virtue is Courage, a trait all vampires have. Players will start with one dot in each Virtue, and then have seven dots to distribute among the three Virtues as it fits their character.

Like many traits, Virtues run from one to five, where a rating of one is the bare minimum requirement and five means fulfilling the Virtue with excellence. The sum of dots in your Road Virtues determines your Road rating, which will play a role in shaping what your character feels is morally wrong, spiritually defunct, and will have an effect on those who sense her moral orientation (see Chapter Three for details). Your character's Willpower rating will start out equal to your Courage. Keep this in mind when allocating points among Virtues and when you consider what to spend your freebie points on at the end of character creation.

Since she has chosen the Road of Humanity for her character, Inez chooses the Virtues Conscience and Self-Control. She feels her character is more controlled than moral, so Magda starts with Self-Control 4, Conscience 3, Courage 3.

Step V: Finishing Touches

By now, your character is virtually finished. You have created a character with a history and a presence, taking their characteristics and translating them onto the character sheet provided. You have also given her desires and goals, somewhere to go, and a reason to strive in the story to unfold. In the final step, you will round the character out so she is ready to be unleashed upon the world the Storyteller has placed you in.

Road Score

The sum of your Road Virtues results in a Road Score. Road scores run 1-10, with a Road Score of 5 being the lowest possible for the average starting character. A Road Score of 5 implies a lack of a handle of identity or direction, quickly resulting in succumbing to baser instincts and forgoing reason. Road Scores of 9 and higher imply an adherence coupled with zeal, closely following the tenets and acting as a shining example to others. Most characters will start with Road Scores between 5-7. You have taken a direction but you aren't riding the road hard. Gameplay will influence whether you veer to the side or take up the reins of your path and trample those not dedicated enough to keep up with you.

Magda's Conscience is 3 and her Self-Control is 4, so she begins play with seven dots in the Road of Humanity.

Willpower

Your character's Willpower will dictate their ability to resist temptation and control their actions in trying situations. Measured on a scale of 1-10, a player will find it useful to raise their character's Willpower higher than the average human's score of 2-3. With far more to tempt the vampire and with the consequences which will surface if they succumb, raising Willpower to 4 or higher is wise if you wish your character to last.

Magda has Courage 3 and Willpower 3. Inez notes that she'll be setting aside some of her freebie points for additional Willpower.

Blood Pool

The reserve of blood your character has to call upon to perform certain types of actions is called the Blood Pool. The maximum size of your Blood Pool is determined by

your Generation (see page 181). Many people roam the Dark Medieval World in need of sustenance, never filling their bellies to satiety, and vampires are no exception. Since the opportunity to feed is sporadic, your starting Blood Pool is determined randomly. Roll one die and add your dots in the Backgrounds Domain and Herd. The total may not exceed the Generational maximum.

Magda is of the Eleventh Generation, so her maximum Blood Pool is 12. Since she does not have the Domain or Herd Backgrounds, Inez simply rolls a die and gets 2. That means she'll be starting play starving.

Freebie Points

Each player will receive freebie points to spend at the end of character creation to help customize the character they have in mind. Consider what you wish your character to be able to do and look over your character sheet. Do the ratings match the person you had envisioned? Will your character be able to easily perform tasks you want them to carry out, or will they only be the person you want if you roll lucky the entire session? In addition, you may have decided certain Attributes might be more important to your character's story.

Referring to the chart on page 158, distribute 15 points among your Attributes, Abilities, and Advantages. Bear in mind what raising certain Traits means for the world around you and your place within it. A rating of 3 in any Ability is mastery. A 4 or 5 places you above and beyond the capabilities of most of those you will ever encounter. People notice these things.

Inez remembered that low Willpower score and decided to spend five freebie points to raise Magda's starting Willpower to 8 dots. She decides to put five more into raising Intelligence to 5 dots, and the last five to increasing Dexterity to 4.

The Spark of Unlife

You've come up with a character with a story and have broken down their abilities, determination, and resolve into numbers. Now it is time to reconcile the numbers with the character you have in mind and decide how they will play out. Two characters may have the same Strength, able to lift and carry roughly the same amount. One will do this as often as she can, relishing the attention it garners her, while the other merely offers to do the brunt of the physical labor. Two characters may have the same Knowledge, but one may treat it cold and informally, mere facts gained from a book to be stored away for later, while another loves to share information and gains knowledge through questioning people, experiencing as much as he can firsthand. Just because your character is physically strong doesn't mean they default to brute force in every situation. Which of your Abilities do you rely upon to get you out of tough situations? Which of your Abilities are you most proud of and why? Is it something you excelled at in your previous life, something you believe to be untouched by the Beast? Perhaps it is something which has been enhanced by your Cainite nature, making your Unlife worthwhile. How do you manifest Abilities you lack in? Do you make up for them in another area or hide your inability? Your Abilities may also complement the pool of one of your fellow players, making you natural allies, or you may compete with another player, trying to be the smartest or strongest or most attractive in the coterie.

History, ability, personality, steeped in blood and ravenous for more of it. When all these aspects of your character are combined, who are you? You now have an answer.

The Prelude

Your character is ready. Now is the time for the Storyteller to ease all the characters into the story, focusing on each one with a short interval of play showcasing important aspects of your character, such as who your contacts are, where you learned Coptic and Greek, etc. All of it culminates with the gathering of the coterie, waiting, sleeping until the first sun of the game slips below the horizon.

Character Creation Quick Reference

Step One: Character Concept

Choose Concept, Clan, Nature, and Demeanor.

Step Two: Select Attributes

Allocate one dot to each Attribute.

Rank categories of Attributes in order of importance to your character: Physical, Social, and Mental.

Allocate 7 dots among primary Attributes.

Allocate 5 dots among secondary Attributes.

Allocate 3 dots among tertiary Attributes.

Step Three: Select Abilities

Rank categories of Abilities in order of importance to your character: Talents, Knowledges, and Skills.

Allocate 13 dots among chosen primary Abilities.

Allocate 9 dots among chosen secondary Abilities.

Allocate 5 dots among chosen tertiary Abilities.

Note: No Ability shall have more than 3 dots at this stage.

Step Four: Select Advantages

Choose Disciplines (4), Backgrounds (5), and Virtues (7). Your character automatically receives one dot in each Virtue.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record Road rating (equal to Conscience/Conviction + Self Control/Instinct), Willpower (equal to Courage), and blood pool.

Spend freebie points (15), and optionally, Merits and Flaws (max. 7 points)

Sample Concepts

- **Criminal:** Thief, fence, highwayman
- **Drifter:** Displaced from home because of war or famine, pilgrim, part of a caravan
- **Entertainer:** Musician, actor, troubador
- **Intellectual:** Philosopher, teacher, member of clergy
- **Investigator:** Sheriff, Inquisitor, witchhunter
- **Child:** Runaway, child soldier, urchin
- **Cleric:** Nun, monk, imam, priestess, seer
- **Outsider:** Foreigner, member of a different religion, leper
- **Politician:** Nobleperson, judge, councilor, magistrate
- **Professional:** Mason, doctor, smith, bookbinder
- **Soldier:** Town guard, mercenary, paladin, Crusader
- **Worker:** Farmer, miner, sailor, brewer

Clans and Bloodlines

- **Ahrimanes:** Descended from a single Valkyrie, a Valkyrjr is part of an allfemale bloodline, born of vengeance and living life as they please.
- **Assamites:** The Children of Haqim, self-appointed judges of other Cainites.
- **Baali:** Emerging from an ancient struggle between dark and light, the Devils follow primordial evil older than Satan himself.
- **Bonsam:** From the merging of an anguished hunter and a darkness rife with desperation, the Unseen are solitary Cainites who suffer no one.
- **Brujah:** Fervid and physically inclined, the passion of the Zealots often drives them to frenzy.
- **Cappadocian:** As mysterious as death itself, the Clan of Death realizes this coil touches all aspects of life and unlife.
- **Children of Osiris**: Natural leaders, where the Penitents steer their flock is not always righteous.
- **Danava:** With the power of a primordial Indian goddess running through them, the Children of Danu performs feats which are great indeed.
- **Followers of Set:** Hailing from the Egyptian deity Set, not the once mortal Caine, the Serpents' state is a part of their worship of evil and chaos.
- **Gangrel:** Thrusting aside the false security of civilization, the Outlaws are the wolves among Cainites.
- **Giovani:** Descended from Cappadocians, The Young Ones shun staring at death and chose instead to seize unlife.
- **Impundulu:** Living in symbiosis with a bloodline of witches, the Witchkin's insular arrangement is starting to look elsewhere in order to sustain itself.
- **Kiasyd:** A merging of Cainite and faetouched, the Weirdlings can survive by making themselves useful to other Cainites.
- **Lamiae:** A bloodline which follows Lilith, whether warrior or priestess, Gorgons are always eager to put their hand to the task.
- **Lasombra:** A diverse and powerful clan, differences in religion and culture both builds and threatens the Magisters.
- **Lhiannan:** Forgoing Gangrel violence for lives of solitude, the Witches keenly feel the passing of their power from sire to childe.
- **Malkavians:** Touched by madness, the Children of Malkav still realize there is a method behind it.

- **Nagarajah:** These mysterious necromancers walk between the lands of the living and the dead.
- **Niktuku:** Tied to that famous witch, Baba Yaga, the Hungry can only sate their thirst with the blood of one victim: other Cainites.
- **Nosferatu:** Forever warped by the vanity of their founder, the secrets the Priors seek are their comfort in the dark.
- **Ramanga:** Born from ambition and demonic council, the Puppeteers gladly rule from behind the scenes.
- **Ravnos:** Displaced within the world, the Shapers use their unique perspective to adjust reality to their whims.
- **Salubri:** Three ancient, dying lines hailing from a single, dead founder. The Healers, Warriors, and Watchers turn their gaze into a dark future.
- **Toreador:** Enthusiastic patrons of arts they can never be a part of, the Aesthetes' desire to cling to things of beauty often brings the crush of death.
- **Tremere:** A clan still its infancy, the Trembling Ones can be given to tantrums as they strive to establish themselves within Cainite society.
- **True Brujah**: A line thought long destroyed, these few seek to turn back time on their lost clan.
- **Tzimisce:** Fleshcrafting lords from the Transylvanian mountains, the Fiends change their bodies and the land itself to fend off intruders.
- **Ventrue:** As the eldest clan (by their reckoning), the Ambitiones see themselves as the elder siblings of the other Cainites and seek to exercise the power and authority that comes with this position.

Disciplines

- **Abombwe:** The Bonsam gift of predation
- **Abyss Mysticism:** Rituals of darkness and shade
- **Animalism:** Mastery over beasts
- **Auspex:** Senses beyond sight
- **Celerity:** Unnatural speed and dexterity
- **Bardo:** The manipulation of humanity as practiced by the Children of Osiris
- **Chimerstry:** Ravnos illusion and deception
- **Daimonion:** The Baali affinity for the fiendish
- **Dementation:** A Malkavian's honed madness
- **Dominate:** Mastery of the mind
- **Flight:** A Gargoyle's ability to fly
- **Fortitude:** Supernatural toughness
- **Koldunic Sorcery:** Raw, elemental magic
- **Mytherceria:** A Kiasyd's fae magic
- **Necromancy:** Varied death magics
- **Obfuscate:** Moving unseen and unnoticed
- **Obtenebration:** Lasombra shadow play
- **Ogham:** Spiritual power over the earth
- **Potence:** Unholy strength
- **Presence:** Uncanny charm and guile
- **Protean:** Gangrel shapeshifting
- **Quietus:** Secrets of Assamite judgment
- **Spiritus:** Ahrimane spirit manipulation
- **Temporis:** True Brujah time manipulation
- **Thaumaturgy:** Ritual and hermetic sorcery
- **Valeren:** Salubri work of the soul
- **Vicissitude:** Tzimisce fleshcrafting

Archetypes (Nature and Demeanor)

- **Architect:** You strive to build something of importance or enduring.
- **Autocrat:** Nothing gives you greater pleasure than ruling over others.
- **Bon Vivant:** You desire to enjoy life to its fullest.
- **Bravo:** Some may call you a bully. You just get what you want through force.
- **Caregiver:** You find satisfaction comforting and nurturing others.
- **Celebrant:** You revel in holding fast to your beliefs and passions.
- **Chameleon:** You blend in, able to find acceptance in many crowds.
- **Child:** Undeveloped and immature, you seek someone to guide you.
- **Competitor:** You can turn anything into a rivalry. Anything.
- **Conformist:** You follow, aiding those heading in your direction.
- **Conniver:** You twist situations and people into a social ladder.
- **Creep Show:** You love to unnerve and disgust.
- **Curmudgeon:** You see the flaws in everything.
- **Dabbler:** You are a butterfly and life is full of flowers.
- **Defender:** Stalwart in your beliefs, you will uphold and justify them.
- **Deviant:** Your tastes are eccentric or even unorthodox. Doesn't mean they aren't right.
- **Enigma:** You know why you do things. Others may keep guessing.
- **Eye of the Storm:** Trouble surrounds you, and yet you maintain your peace.

- **Fanatic:** Your devotion consumes you.
- **Gallant:** All eyes will be on you. You'll make sure of it.
- **Guru:** Your spirituality inspires others.
- **Idealist:** You know perfection exists. You reach for it constantly.
- **Jester:** You reveal truths of the world through tricks and jokes.
- **Judge:** You consider the evidence to find truth.
- **Loner:** You don't need anyone. Many agree.
- **Martyr:** Your suffering will benefit many.
- **Masochist:** Pain inflicted upon you is pleasure.
- **Mercenary:** Anything can be bought. Even you.
- **Monster:** Nightmares exist for a reason.
- **Pedagogue:** Your knowledge could benefit many.
- **Penitent:** You constantly miss the mark and must make amends.
- **Perfectionist:** You strive to be exemplary.
- **Philosopher:** You will find the meaning of life. It will make sense.
- **Rebel:** The system is at best a joke, at worst, a yoke. Destroy it.
- **Rogue:** You look out solely for yourself.
- **Sadist:** Inflicting pain is your pleasure.
- **Soldier:** You have a code. Orders given must comply with them. If not, you'll make it work.
- **Survivor:** Nothing will stop you.
- **ThrillSeeker:** Adrenaline is almost as strong as blood. Almost.
- **Traditionalist:** Things are this way for a reason: because they work.
- **Tyrant:** Out of chaos, you will form order.
- **Visionary:** You see possibility. There is much to strive for.

Backgrounds

- **Allies:** Mortal associates, friends, and family members
- **Alternate Identity:** Who you are passing for, with corresponding back story
- **Contacts:** Individuals and organizations you can glean information from
- **Domain:** Feeding grounds recognized by Cainite society
- **Fame:** How far your name and reputation have traveled
- **Generation:** How far removed from Caine the character is
- **Herd:** Those the character may feed upon freely and at will
- **Influence:** The character's political influence within mortal society
- **Mentor:** The Cainite individual who guides and assists the character
- **Resources:** Income, wealth, and possessions
- **Retainers:** Underlings that serve in a domestic, martial, or other fashion
- **Status:** The character's position in relation to other Cainites

Freebie Points

Trait	Cost (Per dot)
Attributes	5
Ability	2
Discipline	7
Blood Sorcery Path	4
Blood Sorcery Ritual	Ritual Level
Backgrounds	1
Virtue	2
Road	2
Willpower	1

Traits

Here, we describe the myriad of traits that make up a **V20 Dark Ages** character. You'll remember these from the earlier section on character creation. Here, we provide a bit more depth and clarity. The word "strength" means something in the real world, but addresses only specific ideas in the scope of our game as the Strength Attribute, for example.

Attributes

Attributes reflect the raw capabilities every character possesses. All **V20 Dark Ages** characters share the same nine Attributes, in the same three categories (Mental, Physical, and Social). They usually rank from one to five dots. Characters of great Generation can have Attributes at six or higher. Some characters, such as Nosferatu with Appearance, may have an Attribute at zero dots, reflecting an utter, crippling limitation with that Attribute.

Physical Attributes

The Dark Medieval World is a physical one. Ancient forests spread over fertile earth, and deserts lay hot and monotonous. Peasants toil with plows and animals, trying to cultivate food for their survival. Battlefields stretch, weapons are forged, and cathedrals rise up into a sky sullied with wood smoke from cooking fire and pyre alike. It can be touched, created, and destroyed. As you maneuver and move through this world, Physical Attributes will aid your character in making the most of all you can see, all you would possess, and all which would have you destroyed.

Vampires may use their vitae to augment their Physical Attributes, and only their Physical Attributes (see p. 340).

Strength

Strength fuels feats of pure muscular power, such as bringing a greatsword around in a long arc to sink through armor and muscle, crushing the bone and sinews of your enemy's windpipe with your bare hands, or pushing a boulder in front of the mouth of a cave before the sun's first rays peek over the horizon. On the gore-soaked battlefield or a beer-drenched tavern, Strength is used when a character engages another in hand-to-hand combat. In addition, lifting, breaking, carrying items, and jumping all call upon this pool of dice. Whether a hulking mass of undeath or a sinewy bundle of brawn, those with many points in Strength are literally movers and shakers of the world.

- • Poor. A few buckets of water makes you break out in a sweat. Or what serves for sweat.
- •• Average. The daily chores of humans are doable. Not that you'd want to debase yourself by doing them.
- ••• Good. Above and beyond, you can raise eyebrows as you move and move things through the world.
- •••• Exceptional. Your strength is noteworthy. Perhaps you have garnered yourself a nickname because of it.
- ••••• Outstanding. Oaths are sworn to the deities of might as you display your prowess.

Dexterity

Dexterity is the trait tied to feats of speed, agility, and precision, such as balancing a sword on one's head as you dance to lively, undulating music, throwing an az-zegaya into the gut of a fleeing priest while you hurtle by on horseback, or hopping from stone to slippery stone over a dark, rushing river as quickly as you can. Ranged weapons are serious threats in the quick fingers of the character with high Dexterity, and daring escapes through the busiest of streets and alleys are possible with those who focus on this trait. Why bash when you can bend and then attack from an unexpected angle?

- • Poor. Standing on one foot and not falling over is a challenge. For the good of those around you, keep two feet on the ground at all times.
- •• Average. The occasional intricate knot may confound you, but that's what knives are for.
- ••• Good. You're sure of your body and can push yourself to leap distances, walk beams, and throw knives with the slightest hesitation, to make sure it sticks.
- •••• Exceptional. People insist you must be a dancer. Every measure of your body and joints is accounted for. Fitting into small spaces is hardly an issue.
- ••••• Outstanding. As liquid as the blood you crave, you flow through life, over and through physical opposition.

Stamina

Out of all the Physical Attributes, Stamina is the only one that spills over into not only what the body can bear but what the mind will persevere through. Feats of Stamina include crossing a vast desert, bloody footprints

leading away from the battlefield you abandoned to seek shelter from the oncoming sun, holding in your cries as the priest's hammer comes down on your inflamed joints along with the Latin words driving into your skull, and enduring the boils and lesions this summer's plague has brought to every shore from Carthage to Sevila. The character who concentrates on Stamina will endure brute force, illness, torture, being chased, and more. Perhaps they will be bloodied and bruised, but they will still stand.

- • Poor. How you made it through infancy is a mystery. The effects of chronic illness haven't treated you kindly.
- •• Average. You've survived with the rest of them. Loyalty or zeal may make you want to push your limits, but you will eventually have to stop.
- ••• Good. Distances may be daunting but not undoable, if you pace yourself. Illness rarely visits your doorstep.
- •••• Exceptional. Cities fall, ravaged to illness. Comrades cry out in pain. You've barely begun to grit your teeth.
- ••••• Outstanding. Each hardship fuels your tenacity to endure the next hardship.

Social Attributes

The Dark Medieval World is a social one. Families gather for meals cooked over the hearth for hours. Crowds sit shoulder to shoulder in dark and fragrant taverns, artisans and merchants unwinding after a long day. Soldiers whisper to each other in the dark, unable to sleep as tomorrow's battle looms before them. Social interaction is a daily reality for a vast majority of the human population and for Cainites, knowing how to carry oneself in a crowd can be very useful. Perhaps the vampire in question would prefer to lead the crowd away? A few enticing words and a charming smile might get you farther than you think.

Charisma

Charisma draws the eyes and interest of other people to you, garnering their trust or at least their compliance. Testaments to your Charisma are the nod of the monk as he departs to retrieve the worn and battered text you requested, the hands raised in adoration as you walk on rose petals that cushion your sandaled feet from the stones of dusty streets, and the tilt of the head of the innkeeper as you relay the tale of beleaguered passage on the road that led to your shabby appearance and empty purse. A Beast raging within doesn't necessarily make the individual unsympathetic. If people naturally trust and lend a helping hand, who are you to refuse their sweet offerings?

- • Poor. Before you can even open your mouth, people are shaking their heads at you, refusing your requests.
- •• Average. You're able to maintain friends and acquaintances, and you can occasionally call upon favors.
- ••• Good. People are happy when you enter their establishments. People nod often when you speak.
- •••• Exceptional. Many things you desire now, you can pay for later. And no one has an issue with this.
- ••••• Outstanding. Sighs of adoration often waft over your ears as you pass through throngs of people. What would you like? It's yours.

Manipulation

Where Charisma encourages people to see things your way, Manipulation corners people; the only way out of this precarious situation is through you. Evidence of Manipulation abounds in the sneer of the merchant as she finally agrees to sell you the lustrous, black pearls for the price you insisted upon, the looks of confusion as bets of jingling coins are placed amid circling walnut cups and a carefully-concealed ball of white marble, and the sweat pouring down the forehead of the general as you trace the tip of your knife across the map to draw a new route for his troops. Sometimes people don't know what they want. It's up to you to make sure what they get best serves your interests. If they don't like being manipulated, they should stay out of your way. You're here to get what you want, not make friends.

- • Poor. Even a child can see through your tricks. Have fun doing everything yourself.
- •• Average. You can make a decent case from time to time. Don't push it.
- ••• Good. If you see it, you can make it yours. Who cares about the trail of displeasure you leave in your wake?
- •••• Exceptional. Doublespeak rolls off your tongue like another language. Twisting arms comes as naturally to you as walking.
- ••••• Outstanding. Against their better judgment, people bend over backwards for you.

Appearance

Appearance, while tied to physical characteristics, affects how people will engage with one another. The rags and reek of an unwashed transient huddled dejectedly

on the side of the road, the flushed, cinnamon-scented skin of a dancer draped in fine, boldly colored silksand shining gold jewelry, or a telltale widow's peak that hints at a parentage whispered about behind closed doors all add to a character's Appearance. Visual creatures by habit, both humans and Cainites cannot help but judge and react to what appears before them. The Cainite who wishes to always make a good impression should make Appearance a priority, as the initial assessment of looks, posture and demeanor will almost always happen first in a social gathering. Who cares if the pages of the book are tattered, blood-stained, and scrawled with curses? Give the ancient tome a handsome cover, and people will be clamoring to get their hands on it.

- • Poor. You look bad, you dress bad, and/or you smell bad too.
- •• Average. You won't stand out in a crowd. Perhaps you are funny or smart. People like those things.
- ••• Good. People aren't upset to be seen with you. Or to look at you.
- •••• Exceptional. Many refer to you when considering beauty standards.
- ••••• Outstanding. People are often dumbstruck by your beauty. You may or may not smell like baked goods.

Mental Attributes

The Dark Medieval World is a cerebral one. Great military campaigns are planned and executed with belligerent precision. Works from Ancient Greece, Rome, India, and Byzantium are translated into Arabic and Latin, contributing to strides in astronomy, mathematics, architecture and more. Systems of writing are standardized, making reading and writing easier for a population attempting to be literate. In a world of many beliefs, traditions, superstitions, and maneuverings, both political and ecclesiastical, keeping your wits about you can pay off. To make the best of an opportunity, one must first see it and be able to make sense of it. Those wishing to see the opportunity first are best served by making the most of their Mental Attributes.

Perception

Perception allows you to notice the small details that lead to significant ramifications later, such as a cloud, low to the ground, so gray it's almost green, that signals torrential rain, the tears forming at the corner of the speaker's eyes as they reminisce about their partner, and the eastern wing of the castle, built from stones quarried much more recently than the rest. Clues to mysteries both sought out and undiscovered lay all around you. Obliviousness may be a welcome respite from the crush of the mundane, but many a life or unlife can be lengthened by perceiving one's environment and associates. Knowing the Abbess is in a mood most foul is the first step to being sure you don't further anger her. See the pieces on the board and then proceed.

- • Poor. Things can literally zip past your head unnoticed.
- •• Average. If it doesn't attempt to evade you, you will probably see it.
- ••• Good. Those aren't just curtains, they're silk curtains. More of a seafoam green, if you ask me.
- •••• Exceptional. You soak up details like moods, textures, dimensions, materials, and colors effortlessly.
- ••••• Outstanding. You perceive everything. The fire which raged through the apple orchard last season still rankles in your nose.

Intelligence

Intelligence covers the realm of problem solving as well as the ability to research and retain information. Intelligence finds its value with the linguist who speaks Latin, Greek, Arabic, and Berber, with a smattering of Babylonian and Phoenician, the engineer who designs a ballistic weapon which will maintain range but weigh less, increasing maneuverability, and the scientist with scalpel at the ready to carve their newfound discoveries on the human body into history. Training can be acquired in different ways and areas of expertise are endless, but a quick mind takes in the facts and balances them until a logical conclusion or attainable outcome can be made. What one does with the information is left mostly to your sensibilities, proclivities, and ambitions (or the ambitions of others, if you aren't careful). The world is a large place. Knowing more about it may shed a bit of light on your path.

- • Poor. A simple life is best for you.
- •• Average. If asked a question, your answer is probably similar to whatever everyone else in the tavern says.
- ••• Good. People come to you more for answers than the rest of your peers.
- •••• Exceptional. You can figure out most any problem laid at your feet.
- ••••• Outstanding. Something may be named after you in the future, such as a theorem or a school of thought.

Wits

Wits are how quickly and gracefully you can react to a situation. People with quick Wits are the waitress who has a humiliating answer to every bawdy proposition thrown at her, the merchant who considers what in their caravan would make the best bribe, or the thief who sees the funeral procession solemnly plodding down the main street and ducks into an alley. Some people get flustered or awkwardly defensive when confronted. The character who has concentrated on Wits might be caught off guard, but can always bounce back, hopefully coming back on top. If someone tries to make a fool out of you, rest assured, you'll be the one getting the laughs in the end.

- • Poor. What should you say? Uh... too late, they've already left.
- •• Average. You quip and jab back and forth with acquaintances and friends.
- ••• Good. You can usually get the last word and the last laugh.
- •••• Exceptional. You have an answer for almost everything.
- ••••• Outstanding. Always cool. Always collected. Always.

Abilities

The following traits comprise a character's Abilities. This collection of aptitudes encompass three qualities. *Talents* are inherent abilities, knacks a character can learn on her own, without outside assistance. *Skills* are trained abilities, crafts which require mentorship to improve. *Knowledges* are learned abilities, disciplines which can be learned from study, experimentation, or lecture.

Abilities are often broad in scope. Some require "fields of expertise", or narrower disciplines. These are noted in their descriptions, with examples provided. When using an Ability outside your area of expertise, treat it as if you have no dots in the Ability. You can acquire additional fields for one experience point each.

Talents

While Attributes lay the foundation for a character's potential, Talents are easier to attempt and are improved through practice and experience. Any character can try to hold their own in the tavern fight or stare down the local sheriff, regardless of whether they have devoted dice to the proper Talent or not. In addition, Talents can be attempted without suffering a penalty.

Alertness

"Did you hear that?" Brigido asked, thick eyebrows furrowed.

"Hear what?" Jovan asked. Brigido gasped as white fingers wrapped around Jovan's neck, ragged claws tearing flesh like paper and blood gushing from the ragged wound.

Alertness allows characters to notice physical changes in their environment, such as items out of place, changes in scenery, and strange noises. Usually coupled with Perception, Alertness is useful for the character who wishes to be the first to uncover whatever secrets the world may hold.

- • Novice: A heavy rain beginning to fall wouldn't escape your notice.
- •• Practiced: Your senses often pick up sounds, objects, or smells others miss or gloss over.
- ••• Competent: You're the person everyone wants to keep watch.
- •••• Expert: If it can be noticed, you notice it.
- ••••• Master: Nothing escapes you. Nothing.

Possessed by: Burglars, hunters, messengers, sentries, tramps

Specialties: Ambushes, Angelic/Demonic Manifestations, Crowds, Forests, Noises, Paranoia, Traps

Athletics

Karl leapt over the last gate, breathless but exuberant. He had pulled ahead and won the race against Alex, finally. "I won," he gasped, turning to claim his victory. "I beat you, Alex!"

Only silence followed.

"Alex? Where are you?"

Athletics is the realm of the physically talented. It encompasses activities of the sports field, not the battlefield. Running, jumping, dodging attacks, and throwing objects are all examples of Athletics exploits.

- • Novice: Moving and using your muscles is an everyday part of your life, and it shows.
- •• Practiced: Competing in local events is no issue for you. You usually win.
- ••• Competent: In tournaments, many find you a worthy adversary, if not a formidable one.
- •••• Expert. You are at the top of your field. Few can compete against you and hope to stand a chance.
- ••••• Master. You set the standard for perfection in the arena.

Possessed By: Entertainers, spearmen, squires, warriors, youths



Specialties: Climbing, Dancing, Juggling, Running, Swimming, Thrown Objects, Tumbling

Awareness

Catrain sipped her drink, eyes forward. Her hand shook. The girl who sat beside her stared at her with longing eyes. And then a man sat in the same chair, the girl dispersing into a cloud of sparks and smoke only Catrain could see. Catrain gulped her drink.

With belief and superstition holding the same weight as knowledge and science, the distinction between the natural world and the supernatural is not as solid. Many expect to see those things which lie in the dark places of our world. Sometimes, those things are indeed seen. Awareness makes the cold chill on your neck and the thing out of the corner of your eye more solid, more perceptible for human and supernatural alike. Better to know it's there so you can deal with it accordingly than go through life ignorantly and perhaps anger something on your way.

- • Novice: You find yourself looking over your shoulder more than others. Nothing physical is there. Still, you can't help but wonder if it's not just all in your head.
- •• Practiced: You avoid certain parts of the forest or individuals. Something about them unsettles you and more often than not, you have proof to go with your feelings.
- ••• Competent: The general feeling of unease is more specific. You can tell when something otherworldly is amiss.
- •••• Expert: Your senses can hone in on what or who is otherworldly.
- ••••• Master: Your world is one where ghosts, demons and things you have no name for walk the streets with people and animals.

Possessed by: Mystics

Specialties: Angelic/Demonic Manifestations, Magic, Ghosts

Brawl

Sir Gawain considered taking off his gauntlet before he attacked the drunk, insolent peasant. But why bother? It would only be more work. The knight brought his armored fist crashing across the jaw of the serf, teeth and blood exploding in the air.

In the taverns or on the battlefield, because of honor or misunderstandings, fighting is a fact of life in this dark world. Unarmed combat encompasses everything from the skilled, methodical strikes of the martial artist to the rough-and-tumble street fighter. Those who Brawl know where to strike as well as how (an elbow to the throat or to the nose) and can take hits as well as deal them. And for the scrappiest of fighters, fighting "fair"isn't worth anything if it means losing. Win. With your own two hands and knuckles and muscles. Win.

- • Novice: You can take a punch or two.
- •• Practiced: You've taken on a few neighbors (and maybe a few strangers) and always come out alive.
- ••• Competent: You're confident in your abilities to engage in a fight and come out on top. If you lose, the other fighter will come out just as poorly as you.
- •••• Expert: Most of the people you encounter wouldn't be able to defeat you. You know this.
- ••••• Master: When you brawl, none can stand in your way. Systems of fighting are based on how you tear the world apart.

Possessed by: Brigands, bullies, soldiers

Specialties: Arm-Locks, Boxing, Drunken Fighting, Showing Off, Throws, Wrestling

Empathy

Alvild wrapped an arm around Sigar's shoulders. Only then did his body begin to rock, the sobs he had been keeping trapped inside of him escaping in loud cries and hot tears.

While Alertness picks up the physical characteristics of a location or situation, Empathy allows a person to discern the emotional states of those they encounter. Empathy can be used for ill or good, to weed out deception or determine a person's true feelings. Facts don't tell the whole story. Emotions add another layer of complexity to every situation. Sorting them out can reveal what is really at stake.

- • Novice: You can pick up people's feelings through their gestures and facial expressions.
- •• Practiced: The way people speak can sometimes say more than the words themselves.
- ••• Competent: Emotions are often tangled. You understand this and are astute at unraveling them.
- •••• Expert: Your ability to peer into the psyches of those you encounter is uncanny.
- ••••• Master: You know what lies within the hearts of those around you. Emotions are as real and tangible to you as the earth beneath your feet.

Possessed by: Commanders, diviners, gossips, merchants, parents, priests, tricksters

Specialties: Background Emotions, Emotions, Family Problems, Long-Term Concerns, Personalities, Truths

Expression

"I-I-I-I just think," Silvio stuttered. He cringed, feeling Flavia's gaze upon him. It was hotter than the sun.

Sometimes it's easier to convince people than it is to force them into submission. Expression is an art which has been valued through time and many a war has been turned or undertaken because a good case was clearly and expertly stated. Facts aren't necessary in all cases; the ability to wield words expertly, brand meaning into listeners' minds, and slip the point into the listeners' hearts can accomplish much more. Please note, being able to make one's case using the quotes and allegories of others doesn't mean you can necessarily read them yourself. Reading and writing is for academics. Bringing them to life to influence those who will listen? That's your job.

- • Novice: You can make your case. You may stumble a few times but you get your point across with a bit of flourish.
- •• Practiced: You have a command of oration. People often nod as you speak.
- ••• Competent: Your oratory skills benefit you in many ways. Not only do people wish to hear your words, but they will often pay you to bring them forth.
- •••• Expert: Your style and speaking conventions are well-known and effective. Many imitate you.
- ••••• Master: Your way of presenting your arguments makes them irrefutable. Discourse lasts only a few turns before you emerge triumphant.

Possessed by: Minstrels, poets, preachers, rabble-rousers, teachers

Specialties: Acting, Conversation, Improvisation, Poetry, Preaching, Storytelling

Intimidation

"I can release you, Calvin, if you will only tell me who gave you the vial of blood to transport," Father Octavius replied calmly, evenly. He laid a hand on Calvin's bloody, sweat-covered forehead. "Please, my son." He gripped the hilt of the whip tighter. "Please."

Among many of the weapons in a person's social arsenal, striking fear into the hearts of others is a keen tool indeed. Threaten people's loved ones, flesh, livelihood, whatever they hold dear. See how quickly they bend to your will.

- • Novice: Those obviously beneath you easily succumb to your threats.
- •• Practiced: You've followed through several times. Those close to you know this and respond accordingly.
- ••• Competent: Your cruel presence lends you the air of authority. Few think to question it.
- •••• Expert: Fear precedes you. Friends laugh nervously around you. They know how you ask for things.
- ••••• Master: Those who will not bend shall break. You will see to it. Personally. All know this. A cold sweat breaks out on the foreheads of all who tremble before you.

Possessed by: Bullies, thugs, commanders, lords, thugs, torturers

Specialties: Blackmail, Overt Threats, Physical Coercion, Politics, Pulling Rank, Staredowns, Veiled Threats

Leadership

Arshad gripped the horse's reins, looking out across the battlefield. His heart thumped and then leapt in his chest as he raised his sword over his head. "Charge!" he bellowed, spurring his horse forward. The jubilant cry behind him told him his legion of men rode hard behind him.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." Every body needs a head. Leadership allows one such person to take on that role and direct those who have respect and are willing to follow. The best leaders inspire rather than exploit their disciples; Leadership is more often rolled with Charisma rather than Manipulation.

- • Novice: You are able to accrue a handful of followers from time to time, if the need is dire.
- •• Practiced: People naturally fall under you from time to time.
- ••• Competent: Your ability to lead has been noticed by those above you; they have appointed you a title and position over others.
- •••• Expert: More operate below you than over you.
- ••••• Master: If nations, factions, or armies need to be led, you are there, ready to guide them. They willingly follow, and you can usher everyone before you into a new age.

Possessed by: Commanders, constables, ecclesiastical authories, family patriarchs, nobles

Specialties: Commands, Compelling, Friendly, Noble, Oratory, Pious, Stern

Legerdemain

"As you can see," Yekuno said, waving his hands through the air. "I have now turned this simple stone into…" He clapped his hands together and then held up the ivory and gold button. "A rather valuable fastener for what we can assume is an expensive garment."

"My Button!" screamed the viceroy.

Can your hands move faster than their eyes? Legerdemain provides a type of manual dexterity which aids in sleights of hand, picking pockets, and even juggling. Why sing for your supper when you can just take it, with no one the wiser?

- • Novice: If something goes missing while no one was looking, no one knows who took it.
- •• Practiced: You can roll a coin over your knuckles easily. Where did the coin come from?
- ••• Competent: You can manipulate objects on or off your person easily. If you can get your hands on it, you can get away with it.
- •••• Expert: Your movements are so fluid and quick, people are more willing to believe it is genuine magic than physical ability.
- ••••• Master: Your reputation at skullduggery is often the only clue linking you to the most baffling of misappropriations. Good thing there's no evidence.

Possessed by: Beggars, jesters, minstrels, robbers

Specialties: Concealment, Conjuring Tricks, Juggling, Picking Purses

Subterfuge

"Ariq was with me," Tolui said, blowing on his tea. "I often entertain countrymen when they first come to your great city." He smiled at the constable, who smiled back.

Subterfuge is an elegant way of saying "lying." While the motives behind the lies may be good or evil, the ability to hide one's feelings and motives can be used to accomplish deeds of varying morality.

- • Novice: You can pull off small, short-term lies.
- •• Practiced: Your ability to convey conviction can appease most doubts.
- ••• Competent: Lies come as easily as truths. You know how to balance truths and untruths to make people doubt their own understanding rather than question you.

•••• Expert: Even under stressful circumstances, you keep your wits and stories about you.

••••• Master: Your confidence in your own words carries more weight than what people know to be true.

Possessed by: Courtiers, charlatans, heretics, minstrels, spies, wooers

Specialties: Changing the Subject, Finding Weaknesses, Flattery, Patter, Seduction, Selective Omission

Skills

Skills are learned through hands-on instruction, often during apprenticeships or at the hands of family members passing on the intricacies of their trade. They might come with conscription into an armed force, or be self-taught out of necessity, curiosity, or desperation. Any rolls to attempt an action without the necessary skill have their difficulty increase by one.

Animal Ken

"You thought this was four on one?" she asked the would-be thieves. "I suppose you were unaware of the wolf den nearby. They consider me part of their pack. Pity for you; we don't like intruders."

Animals in this era are not only domestic companions, but also labor on farms, trackers in the field, and companions in battle. Animal Ken reflects one's rapport with beasts both domestic and wild, including the ability to tame and train them, to understand their instincts and use that knowledge in their handling, and to predict and control their behavior.

• Novice: You can soothe a wary hound or calm a skittish horse. You are comfortable working with animals commonly used for labor, such as camels and oxen.

•• Practiced: You can train domesticated animals such as dogs and horses. Birds of prey will return to your glove at your call.

••• Competent: You serve as the master of hounds for a household, or hire out your skills as a tracker. You know the habits of wild animals native to your area and what to do when one of them acts abnormally or turns violent.

•••• Expert: You've broken in horses others have written off as untamable. Wild beasts might not do your bidding, but you can approach them without fear of attack. If you are in unfamiliar territory, you are quick to learn the habits of local wildlife.

••••• Master: Beasts do your bidding at a gesture. You could make a loyal hound turn on its beloved master in the space of a moment. You could even herd cats, if you were so inclined.

Possessed By: Hunters, trackers, cavalry, squires, farmers, stable masters, performers

Specialties: Taming, Training, Dogs, Horses, Birds of Prey, Big Cats, Bears

Archery

The Prince thought himself untouchable, surrounded as he was by his ghouls and thralls. The archer counted them: half a dozen. He set six ash-tipped arrows in the ground, nocked the seventh. Breathed. Released.

Archery is both a domestic and a martial skill. With the same bow, a person can feed her family or defend her home. This ability covers not only the use of bows and crossbows, but also one's proficiency in maintaining, repairing, and, at the highest levels, crafting the weapons.

• Novice: You can consistently hit motionless targets at close range.

•• Practiced: You can hit a moving target and are able to maintain and repair your bow.

••• Competent: You can hit a target while you are moving. You can consistently feed your family from your hunting trips. You have won some local archery competitions. You can craft simple bows yourself.

•••• Expert: You can hit a target while both you and it are moving. You are proficient with, and can craft, several different types of bow.

••••• Master: They say you can't shoot around corners. They haven't met you.

Possessed By: Hunters, soldiers, performers, bandits, guards

Specialties: Target Shooting, Tournament Competition, Long Bow, Crossbow, Shooting From Horseback, Forests.

Commerce

Some of the Warmasters and Seneschals surrounding her at the table had traveled for weeks to answer her summons, sent by their Princes to hear her proposal. "Friends," she said, "I have something you want very much. Let's talk about prices." She hadn't the sway of a Prince, but she didn't need it, not tonight. Because in the end, blood was a commodity, too, and everyone would want to buy.

At its most basic, Commerce is the practice of buying and selling. However, all the intricate details that go in to getting goods to market also factor into this skill: knowing trade routes, evaluating the quality of the goods, negotiating their prices, keeping track of who might want what, and what they'd be willing to pay for it. Choose a

field of expertise when taking Commerce. Outside that field, treat the Ability as if it had no dots. Additional fields can be purchased with one experience point..

Not all Commerce is legal; in fact, some of it delves into the downright inhuman. Trade routes exist for stolen goods, drugs, and slave trafficking as well as spices and silk.

- • Novice: You can strike a bargain with local merchants and turn a livable profit.
- •• Practiced: You run a modest business, and know who to contact if you need to acquire hard-to-get items.
- ••• Competent: You turn a steady profit in your trade. When negotiating, you are able to achieve favorable results.
- •••• Expert: Your services are sought out by others who need goods imported or exported. You run a thriving business and know the intricacies of your products' trade routes.
- ••••• Master: All trade routes lead to you. You control a vast trading empire, and your actions send ripples through the world.

Possessed By: Merchants, traders, nobles, clerics, mercenaries

Specialties: Trade Routes, Negotiation, Spotting Trends, Evaluating Goods

Fields of Expertise: Livestock, Fabric, Foodstuffs, Books, Spices, Stolen Goods, Art, Alcohol, etc.

Crafts

The house had rooms upon rooms, each a delight beyond the guests' wildest imaginings. One could roam its hallways for days and never see the same chamber twice. It would be so easy to get lost in the maze of corridors, never to be seen again. In fact, their hostess counted on it.

The Crafts Skill encompasses a wide variety of practices, from making furniture to the creation of weapons and armor. Crafts covers the act of making useful items and tools. Also included is the ability to evaluate the expertise and value of another person's work. Choose a field of expertise when taking Crafts. Outside that field, treat the Ability as if it had no dots. Additional fields can be purchased with one experience point. Attempting to deal in a good outside your field of expertise is treated as though the Skill is at 0, and rolls begin with their difficulty increased by one.

- • Novice: Your creations are serviceable. Weapons you craft are useful, if not pretty, and clothing you make will keep the body warm. You are able to repair items in your field of expertise.
- •• Practiced: You can make money from your crafts. Goods you created are both functional and aesthetically pleasing.
- ••• Competent: You can make a living off of your craft. People from surrounding towns seek to commission you for your skills. You might have a patron commission your work.
- •••• Expert: Students seek you out to learn your methods. Your work is durable, functional, and beautiful.
- ••••• Master: Your creations are utterly flawless, as though made by divine hands. Items you make will last hundreds, even thousands of years.

Possessed By: Artisans, blacksmiths, seamstresses, townspeople, nobles

Specialties: Commission Work, Innovation, Quick Turnaround, Evaluation

Fields of Expertise: Armorsmithing, Blacksmithing, Dressmaking, Woodcarving, Architecture, Masonry

Etiquette

"Did you study here, perhaps? As a child?" he asked, as his lord's visitor led him onto the floor for another dance.

"No," said the man. He bowed with exactly the right amount of deference before taking his partner's hand. "Not that I remember."

"I'd swear you've been dancing these steps all your life."

"Only tonight," said the man. "Only with you."

Etiquette is the ability to comport oneself appropriately in social situations, and to assess and adapt to traditions and expectations that are new to the participant, including manners, speech patterns, dress, movement, and social interactions.

Characters begin knowing the basic etiquette of their own class and culture without taking levels in Etiquette.

- • Novice: You can attend a function in your own culture without embarrassing yourself, and are able to gracefully recover from minor gaffes.
- •• Practiced: You can interact smoothly within the upper tiers of your culture's society.
- ••• Competent: When presented with unfamiliar circumstances, you can take cues from those surrounding you and act accordingly.
- •••• Expert: Your company is sought after by people of all stations. Children and childer alike are told to model their behavior after yours.
- ••••• Master: There is no room you can't read, no custom so obscure you aren't aware of it. You pick up on even the most nuanced of nuances, and act accordingly.

Possessed By: Merchants, nobles, soldiers, spies, emissaries, religious leaders

Specialties: Courtly Manners, Reading a Room, Heraldry, Religious Customs, Foreign Customs

Melee

"The smiths forge spirits into the blades." The woman held the kris knife up so its wavy edge caught the moonlight. Her opponent said nothing; she'd lost her ability to speak when she lost the fight and her life in quick succession. The dead woman was the last in a string of attackers, their corpses strewn the length of the street like pearls on a string. "She was thirsty tonight. As am I."

Melee is a measure of the character's prowess with hand-to-hand weapons (as opposed to ranged weapons, covered by Archery, or fighting unarmed, covered by Brawl). This Skill includes the ability to use staves, swords, clubs, axes, and knives. Some melee weapons can be repaired and crafted based on the character's level of expertise, though making metal weapons requires Crafts.

- • Novice: You're clear on the concept of putting the pointy end in the bad guy, and can maintain your weapons.
- •• Practiced: You can win a one-on-one fight against someone of similar skill. You are able to repair your weapons.
- ••• Competent: You could enlist as a soldier or hire yourself out as a personal guard. You are familiar with several different weapons. You can craft functional weapons.
- •••• Expert: You could enter and win a melee at a tourney. You are a fearsome opponent on the battlefield. Weapons you craft are not only sturdy, but also elegant to behold.
- ••••• Master: You are nigh undefeatable in combat, and are well-trained in several types of weaponry. Your creations will be used and admired for centuries to come.

Possessed By: Soldiers, mercenaries, guards, nobles, adventurers, thieves

Specialties: Swords, Knives, Axes, Clubs, Quarterstaff, Disarm, Fighting From Horseback

Performance

The tavern ought to have closed its doors hours ago, but the minstrel kept playing drinking songs, and the people kept drinking. He finally lay down his lute an hour before sunrise. Those who passed out on the benches woke late the next day, sore-necked and lethargic. The minstrel was long gone.

Performance is the ability to entertain an audience and keep them enthralled, whether it's a full amphitheater, a handful of passers-by, or a single mark. YChoose a field of expertise when taking Performance. Outside that field, treat the Ability as if it had no dots. Additional fields can be purchased with one experience point.

- • Novice: You can carry a tune or act out a skit without tripping over your lines.
- •• Practiced: You are often invited to share your talents with the local community.
- ••• Competent: You can support yourself with your ability. People from nearby towns come to see you perform.
- •••• Expert: You draw large crowds when you travel outside of your home region, and can live comfortably on the money you make from your performances.
- ••••• Master: You could make the angels weep with your performances. Rumor has it you actually have.

Possessed By: Actors, minstrels, nobles, religious figures, orators, thieves

Specialties: Stirring Speeches, Courtly Songs, Tavern Songs, Reading a Crowd

Fields of Expertise: Singing, Acting, Wind Instruments, String Instruments, Dance, Acrobatics

Ride

Eighty miles in a night was nothing. He'd ridden with the Great Khan on his long marches and switched mounts without ever touching the ground. Sunrise over the steppe had been a beautiful thing, back when he was alive. Now, though, it would be his death if they didn't reach shelter before dawn. "Just a little farther," he said, patting the stocky horse's neck. "Just a little faster." The tall feather grass, already flying by beneath them, blurred as horse and rider picked up speed.

Ride describes the character's affinity for travelling by horseback, fighting while mounted, and in a limited capacity, caring for the animal. Expert riders can also gauge the value of other animals and treat minor ailments that befall them. They are also able to spot quality craftsmanship from poor when it comes to gearing their mount.

- • Novice: You can successfully mount a horse and get it to respond to simple commands.
- •• Practiced: You can stay in the saddle if your horse spooks. You are accustomed to long rides and the different paces at which horses can run, provided the terrain is relatively forgiving.

••• Competent: You are able to fight from horseback. Difficult terrain presents you no difficulty when it comes to staying in the saddle.

•••• Expert: You can guide your horse through complicated maneuvers, and keep it calm in the heat of battle. You're known as one of the best riders around.

••••• Master: You and your horse move as one. You hardly have to twitch the reins or move a leg to get it to respond to your commands.

Possessed By: Cavalry, nobles, knights, performers, messengers

Specialties: Trick Riding, Jumping, Hunting, Speed, Mounted Combat

Stealth

She'd watched them come and go all night, wary and watchful. The Sheriff wanted her found, fearing that she'd spill his secrets to the Prince. He'd looked right at her once, the traitor, but his eyes skipped away. Now, she stood behind the Prince, touched her lips to the curve of his ear, and whispered what she knew.

Stealth is the ability to pass unseen and undetected through a space, to get in and get out with no one the wiser. This includes hiding in plain sight in the midst of a crowd, tailing a mark, or skulking past guards to gain entry to a household. If the roll is contested, the character pits her Dexterity + Stealth against the target's Perception + Alertness. Sleight-of-hand attempts fall under Legerdemain.

• Novice: You can move about undetected, provided that no one is looking for you.

•• Practiced: You know the best places to duck into to lose a tail in your home city, and can blend into a crowd composed of people from your own culture and social class.

••• Competent: You slip away even when people are actively looking for you. Efforts at keeping intruders out are merely an invitation to you.

•••• Expert: You could tweak your target's noses if you wanted, and disappear again before they blinked.



••••• Master: You were never there. No one ever saw you. You've infiltrated fortified keeps and sat in on the most secret of meetings. Your name is spoken in awe by highwaymen and in consternation by lawkeepers.

Possessed By: Thieves, spies, hunters, trackers

Specialties: Blending In, Crowds, Small Groups, Daylight, Prowl, Wilderness

Survival

The snows were never-ending. He'd lost his companions hours ago, his spooked horse not long after that. Now, teeth chattering, clothes soaked through, everything numb, he followed the impossible scent of hot meat carried on the freezing wind. Ahead, a man sat sheltered in a stand of trees, a rabbit roasting on a spit above the most beautiful fire the traveler had ever seen. The impossible became possible right before his eyes. "Come sit," said the man, "and warm yourself."

The traveler did, noticing far too late that his savior wore no coat, or that he did not eat, or that his mouth watered not at the rabbit, but at his guest.

Survival measures how successfully the character can move about in, adapt to, and thrive in the elements. Sometimes, Survival is more about living long enough to return to civilization than it is about eschewing it: finding your way through the forest, foraging for food, and locating drinkable water.

• Novice: You know how to navigate the terrain in your local area. With the proper supplies, you could spend a few nights outside in mild weather.

•• Practiced: You can make a rudimentary shelter and find adequate food if you're in a familiar environment.

••• Competent: You can keep a group of people fed and warm in the wilderness. You are often asked to serve as a guide for people unfamiliar with the region.

•••• Expert: No terrain poses you great trouble. You can make a sizable living leading travelers safely through the region. You could live completely off the land if you wished.

••••• Master: Fierce blizzards, storm-tossed seas, and endless steppes have thrown their worst at you, and you outlasted them all.

Possessed By: Hunters, hermits, penitents, soldiers

Specialties: Foraging, Forests, Deserts, At Sea, Tracking

Knowledges

Knowledges are Abilities with academic bent. Primarily, Knowledges require rolls with Mental Attributes. With the exception of general public knowledge, characters lacking Knowledge in a given subject will fail an attempted action.

Characters can develop Knowledges not only in a standard academic setting, but also through apprenticeships, workshops, or tutoring. Many of these Knowledges passed down through word-of-mouth at this time, so your ability hinged on who you knew.

Academics

"The immortal Seneca once said, 'Dum inter homines sumus, colamus humanitatem,'" she said, sliding her dagger across his throat with delicate precision. "Or, 'As long as we are among humans, let us be humane.'"

He gasped for air, clutching at her cloak until his hand stilled.

"If you could speak, I know you'd thank me later."

At this time, there is more unknown than known in the world, and endless discoveries await. Chemistry, physics, astronomy, and athematics are only nascent sciences; literature and rhetoric bloom. Scholars are only just developing universities. With Academics, you have the capacity to be the light burning against the darkness of ignorance and superstition.

• Novice: Your Latin could use some work, but you can make yourself understood. You have scratched the surface of your field of study, amassing enough basic knowledge to speak without looking foolish.

•• Student: You read the right books and have a firm grasp of your subject. You can argue your opinion in your field competently.

••• Learned: You have graduated from the student to being the teacher. You could instruct any interested party in your chosen subject. You have gained a reputation for being an academic.

•••• Scholar: You have dedicated your academic life to your subject, to the exclusion of other tertiary interests. No fact is too obscure for you to add to your substantive body of knowledge.

••••• Master: You have written a number of books on your subject, which are used as citations by scholars in your field. Your eloquence on your topic is legendary and you are in demand as a speaker to the literati.

Possessed by: Clergy, scientists, tutors, court officials and advisors, university scholars

Specialties: Instruction, Research, Esoterica

Fields of Expertise: Arts (literature, music, philosophy), Sciences (physics, chemistry, astronomy, mathematics)

Enigmas

"Hey Nonny, Nonny!"

Elba rowed the boat grimly, trying to ignore the shepherd who considered himself a wit. "Which water's least jeopardy-e to pass-e over?" He pronounced extra "e's" like he was trying to be Chaucer. "The dew-e!" he crowed.

"Have you heard the one about the fox and the sheep?" she asked, dabbing at her forehead with a dirty rag; the Thames smelled particularly ripe today. "A shepherd finds a small boat on the river's bank, but there's a fox. The boat holds the shepherd and one sheep. If the shepherd leaves the fox with them, the fox eats the sheep."

"A knotty problem, my good lady-e!" He disembarked once she drew ashore. "And what be the answer?" he asked, sweat staining the tunic under his arms.

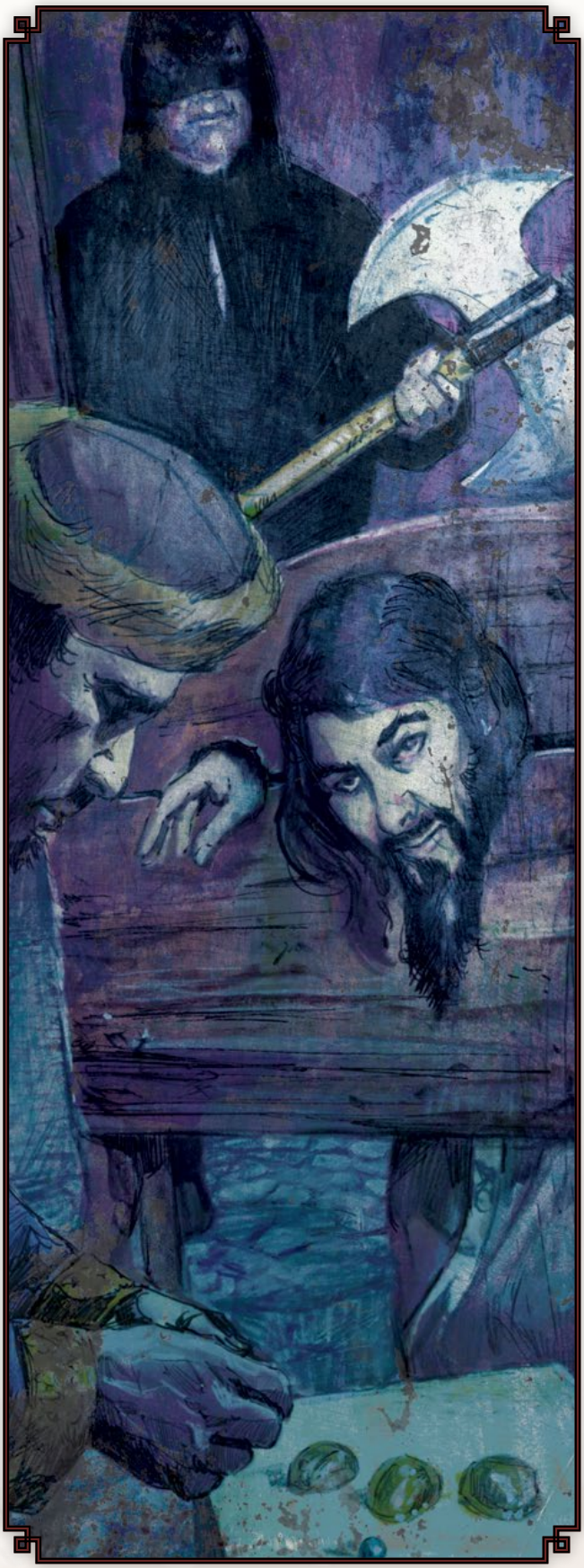
"Never trust a fox."

With that, Elba shoved off and rowed away calmly with his six sheep, leaving him cursing on the bank.

Medieval enigmas encompass symbolism, history, lore, and cryptography. The smallest pieces click into a cohesive whole when you have sufficient knowledge of enigmas. Each thread spins together into a tapestry of an answer.

Your experience with enigmas allows you to draw logical connections to deduce the solution when it is least evident to others.

- • Novice: Those little wood and rope puzzles are no match for you. You enjoy stumping people and can create simple cryptograms and word substitutions.
- •• Student: Given a few hours, there is almost no cipher that you cannot penetrate.
- ••• Learned: People seek you to unravel their dreams or decode illicit love notes. You have written a key reference to symbolism in your field.
- •••• Scholar: Your journals are written in spontaneous codes and will perplex scholars even centuries from now.
- ••••• Master: Your puzzles require a key or a mind equivalent to yours to unravel. If you were locked in a box, your mind could provide diversion indefinitely.



Possessed by: Sages, shamans, mystics, prophets, astrologers

Specialties: Arthurian Mysteries, Sacred Mysteries, Relics, Cryptography, Prophecies, Riddles

Hearth Wisdom

"Did ye leave out the saucer of milk?" asked the midwife, turning the spit with a crinkled hand. "That's why the pixies leave this house be."

"There's no such thing as pixies." He spat on her rug just as shackles clicked in place around his ankles.

He stared at his ankles in disbelief, then looked up at the midwife to demand an explanation. What he saw stole the protest from his lips. Firelight gleamed off her now-satin skin. "Disbelief can be dangerous,"she purred.

The scream that followed startled and scattered the sheep the next glen over.

What berries can you eat? Will it rain tomorrow? What's the best remedy for whooping cough? This wisdom is not found in books, but from sitting at the knee of people wiser than you, and spoken in sewing circles and market stalls. They know the cures and they know the reasons to be afraid of the dark.

- • Novice: You listened at the fireside of your elders, at the docks when the ships came in. You know local lore better than most.
- •• Student: Your recall for stories and traditions is uncanny, and you collect even the most esoteric of tales. You keep the words from being forgotten. Those who know bend your ear, filling it with centuries of wisdom.
- ••• Learned: You are the collector of tales. You keep the words from being forgotten. No matter where you go, you collect bits of knowledge. People seek you out for answers to their problems.
- •••• Scholar: You are known for your expertise on the collected wisdom of your chosen field. Though your knowledge is not kept in books, you are sought for training by those who wish to learn at your hearth.
- ••••• Master: Though you are famed for all you know, there are murmurs that you know too much. Your vast body of knowledge influences the younger generations; you are their almanac.

Possessed by: Hardened sailors, healers, herbalists, farmers, hermits, grandparents, village elders

Specialties: Locale (e.g. central France), Culture (e.g. Celtic), Omens, Wards, Home Remedies, Poisons, Charms

Investigation

"It seems you are lying to me." Nottingham pared his nail with the apple knife. "I explained how I feel about people who lie."

"I don't know anything! Ask Mary, she'll tell you!" His face was reddening near the branding iron, blistering like a roasting pig skin.

Nottingham's face worked into something like pity. "And who do you think told me?"

Your eye spies the smallest details, tracing them back through the web of information. You have the questions and they have the answers, and woe betide any who stand long in the way of your search.

You connect all the threads, weaving them together to reveal the tapestry of the truth. Or the Church's truth. Or the King's truth. Whatever truth you seek, you have the tools to discover it.

- • Novice: You ferret out the little secrets in your vicinity: who is a-courting, who is a-cheating, who is lying and stealing.
- •• Student: You have made a study of the art of questioning. You can sift through the talk of others to find the kernel of information you need. Mysteries do not keep long in your company.
- ••• Learned: Investigation could be your profession. It's a keen talent of yours and one that ought to make your friends and relatives shake when you bend it their way.
- •••• Scholar: Your discoveries could write a book or two. In fact, some would pay you not to publish that book. Those who want a secret unearthed – or would like it buried forever – seek out your counsel.
- ••••• Master: You are the Spymaster. You have a network of spies; the eyes and ears of others tell you all. If your bent is religious, heathens beware. If political, enemies of the state always check over their shoulder for you before speaking – to no avail.

Possessed by: Blackmailers, inquisitors, bounty hunters, Father or Mother confessors, seneschals

Specialties: Torture, Peccadilloes, Confessions, Tracking, Audience (e.g. Royal, Church, State), Questioning

Law

"Your Majesty, it's clear that this man didn't know he'd trespassed on royal lands to shoot the deer." Edward strode to

the foot of the throne, daring to raise his eyes to bore into the king's. "Though I know the sentence is death, mercy in such a matter would show your subjects your goodwill."

The defendant burrowed his head further into the stone tile, prostrating himself before the courtiers assembled.

After a long moment, the king waved a careless hand, his hand a shimmer of rubies. "Ten lashes and be done with it."

The Romans called it *Justitia*, but you don't need Latin to know how it works. Though there may be a thousand years of jurisprudence for precedence, blindfolded Justice still holds her sword. Those who have the purse to pay receive finer justice than those who don't; the King trumps the lord and the lord trumps the peasant.

The law of the Church (canonical) often clashes with the law of the land (royal decree or common law), with the end result being a law only as strong as those enforcing it.

- • Novice: You avidly study the laws of your home city and country. You know even the obscure laws and you track the rapidly changing landscape of precedent.
- •• Student: You can confidently defend someone in a debate or casual setting, successfully using recent cases to prove your point.
- ••• Learned: You could make a good living as a lawyer. Your legal advice brings good coin. Whether you defend the rich or the poor, it takes a real expert to outmaneuver you in a legal setting.
- •••• Scholar: Your brain is a library of law and you can cite decisions, chapter and verse, dating back to Justinian. You can compose written legal arguments that can sway kings and popes alike.
- ••••• Master: Precedent? In many cases, you tried the cases that created the precedent. Your legal theories formed the basis of subsequent law amendments.

Possessed by: Attorneys, judges, kings, cardinals, land owners

Specialties: Mediation, Contracts, Type (e.g. Canonical, Tribal, Royal, Inheritance), Pleadings, Sentencing

Medicine

"I once treated a man bitten by four score snakes. I spent sixteen hours applying hot cups to the limbs of his body." Lilia tapped her staff in rhythm on the uneven cobblestones as she strode ahead of her companion, dragging her gray cloak through the mud.

"What happened to him?"

"Oh, he died."

This is the age of the humors. Feeling low? You are melancholic, with an excess of black bile. Phelgmatic? Too many cold foods. Keeping the humors in balance could be a full-time occupation, involving charts and diagrams and leeches. It is a strange mix of superstition and ancient Greco-Roman research.

Anatomy and physiology are still being developed and, unfortunately, dissecting the human body for research is still centuries away from being acceptable. In the meantime, take a tonic and be sure to wear that amulet for that cough.

- • Novice: You are the fixer-upper for minor wounds: cuts, scrapes, splinting broken extremities. You know the basic lingo for describing ailments.
- •• Student: In an emergency, you are handy to have around. Your treatment can sometimes stave off the scythe of Death long enough for a real professional to arrive.
- ••• Learned: Your job is to heal, whether as a doctor, a nursemaid, or surgeon. It is one of your primary talents and you spend a good deal of time reading up on the subject and trying new treatments.
- •••• Scholar: Your work has led to several important medical discoveries and everyone near you benefits from increased vitality and longevity.
- ••••• Master: Be wary, O Death, for your competition has arrived. Laying your hands on the ill brings near-instant relief. Your unerring diagnoses can ease the mind of those who bring their unwell loved ones to you.

Possessed by: Healers, doctors, charlatans, herbalists, midwives, apothecaries, barbers, chirurgeons

Specialties: Childbirth, First Aid, Pain Relief, Preventative Medicine, Surgery

Occult

"You think that knowledge of the Occult is black dogs gutted on an altar, incantations whispered at midnight under a lightning-blasted tree, contracts signed in blood." Donal stroked his finger along the spines of the books in his library, the youngest of which was several hundred years old. The blacksmith nervously licked his lips and tried to speak.

Donal held up his left hand, signet ring gleaming in the candlelight, "I can purchase your soul just as easily in ink, my friend."

To know the occult is to understand the unseen and the inexplicable. The supernatural is a hole that reaches much deeper and darker than people imagine. Just as you reach the bottom, another tunnel reveals itself, burrowing ever deeper.

Some might say Occult and Theology are just two sides of a coin that reality flips. One person's miracle is another person's ghostly encounter. Both require a faith in something not easily seen or understood. Overlap does occur between the two, especially in the case of miracles or saints.

If a character's Occult score is high, the outcomes of their Occult rolls tend to be more accurate.

- • Novice: You can recognize the influence of the occult in your vicinity and have a basic understanding of the more common forms of the supernatural.
- •• Student: You have made a study of the occult, which could cause you to brush up against powers beyond your understanding. Your conclusions from these experiences can be imperfect.
- ••• Learned: You have cultivated an air of the mysterious, which allows you to market answers of an occult nature to those who seek them. If a few of those answers are wrong, well, who can know everything?
- •••• Scholar: The mysteries of the unseen world hold few mysteries to you. You've written several books on the subject, and others consult you as a general authority by those too frightened to understand with what they are dealing.
- ••••• Master: You advise kings and popes with great authority. Whether its peasant girls with visions or cases of demonic possession, you are called in with alacrity. Naturally, the more important you are, the more attention you will draw from those whom you unveil.

Possessed by: Heretics, Inquisitors, witches, witch-hunters, fortune tellers, pagans, priests

Specialties: Magical Research, Scrying, Vampires, Witches, Fae, Spellcasting, Summoning

Politics

She led him through a passage behind the tapestry in the dining hall. "True power does not reside in a throne." Her wool skirts left a trail in the dirt, her pace remarkably fast.

His candle trembled with every gasping breath. "Then where does it reside?" he asked when they stopped.

She swung open a hinged door and shoved a sheathed dagger in his hands. "Knowing where a king sleeps."

Politics is the great game; some say the greatest game. It can bring unimaginable power, but the wheel of fortune can turn quickly, grinding the ambitious into the finest of powder. History is littered with the names of those who overreached.

High-level politics is a mixture of diplomacy and carefully exercised leverage. The more you understand, the more you can bend others to achieve your goals.

- • Novice: You understand the basic machinations of governance. You can stir people up or smooth them down as you need to accomplish what you want.
- •• Student: You hold an office of minor significance on a local level. People of influence know your name and take note. Your authority is good, but you are careful not to push too far.
- ••• Learned: No matter which level you operate on, you are a canny political player, a savvy climber who is slowly amassing more influence and power. You communicate to commoner and lord with equal fluency.
- •••• Scholar: You are a leader and your name is honored. Your place in the annals of history could be mighty indeed. Even still, sometimes you have to look sharp to ensure there is no one ascending to topple you from your place of power.
- ••••• Master: You are a legend and your grip on your lands and people is uncontested. Your skill in politics so flawless that people rarely even realize they are being manipulated into what you want.

Possessed by: Advisors, courtiers, governors, lords, ladies, cardinals, popes, kings, queens

Specialties: Type (e.g. Feudal, Court, City, Church), Bribery, Law-making, Diplomacy

Seneschal

"It's essential that the grain you buy be quality." He took a big handful in his giant ebon hand, letting it run through his fingers. "Some men will cut the grain to make a few coins. Those men are foolish."

The fine gold thread in the embroidery on his luxuriant sleeve caught the light. "Those men will always be poor. When a king trusts you, you can hold that in your pocket better than gold."

You are the oil that allows the gears of a great house to run smoothly. You handle the books and the market accounts. You manage the number of workers for the harvest, maintain the stables, keep the ponds and forests stocked, and so forth. A good servant is worth their weight in gold, it's said, and it's never truer than here.

You will never be caught flat-footed with a surprise hunting party. True experts can tell at a glance the quality of other people's households as well, ferreting out the hidden dust and the half-shined silver that falls beneath the notice of others.

- • Novice: You can manage a small household of 3-5 people, keeping food available and ensuring the standards are presentable.
- •• Student: You can manage a modest manor house or oversee a small business. You have mastered double-entry bookkeeping and other basic skills that will serve you well.
- ••• Learned: Multiple properties are under your care, and your excellent planning allows your estates to have bread, even during shortages from famine or war.
- •••• Scholar: You wrote the book on running a household. No minutia is beneath your notice. When you host kings and queens, the details matter.
- ••••• Master: Not to overstate the case, but you can turn one loaf into two and double the size of a wine cellar with a mere word. Lords and ladies pay a pretty penny for you to handle their great estates.

Possessed by: Innkeepers, stewards, seneschals, wives

Specialties: Type (e.g. Urban, Farm, Feudal, Nobility), Religious Orders (e.g. Monasteries, Nunneries)

Theology

After fifty years, his eyesight was not what it once was. Brother Thomas dipped his quill in the pot of watered soot and methodically wrote another verse. Wouldn't the Archbishop be surprised to see the obscene drawings that accompanied this little ditty he began composing last year?

Theology is the science of God, by whatever name you might call him, and never was it more compelling than at this time in history. God was in the smallest mustard seed and in the largest ocean. Plagues were the wrath of God and a bountiful harvest was the blessings of God made manifest.

Two questions plagued the minds of medieval theologians: what is the nature of evil and does our free will allow us to act independent of it? To a religious mind, every day was a choice to walk with God or dance with the devil in the pale moonlight.

- • Novice: Your understanding of religion is fairly vague. You believe and understand the basic principles: the commandments, the rules, the practices. You can hold a conversation about religion, able to articulate your convictions reasonably well.
- •• Student: You have read the holy books of your religion. You can debate religion (as much as your milieu allows) and compose a competent religious tract.
- ••• Learned: Your grasp of other religions is strong, despite any disagreement you may have with them. You are occasionally asked to speak to followers of your religion on an official basis.
- •••• Scholar: You have made a number of important contributions to doctrine. Your words are powerful: you could raise funds for a cathedral or mosque, incite violence against heretics, or fill people with a holy spirit of inspiration.
- ••••• Master: You have discovered layers to your faith that others can only imagine. You're considered an honored speaker on religion at your forum of choice, no matter where that pulpit stands.

Possessed by: Monks, nuns, dabblers, priests, theologians, rabbanim, A'immah

Specialties: Confession, Orthodoxy, Heresy, Proselytization, Conversion

Nature and Demeanor

After choosing concept and clan, a player chooses her character's Nature and Demeanor. These behavioral Traits are known as Archetypes and describe a character's personality. Demeanor is the attitude the character presents to the world and does not have any effect on the rules. Nature is the character's true self and reflects a deep-rooted perspective of the world. Nature also determines how a character regains Willpower (see p. 175).

Architect

The Architect holds to a purpose greater than herself and is fulfilled when creating something of lasting value for others. She works to provide necessities to those around her.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you establish something of importance or lasting value.

Autocrat

The Autocrat pursues power and control for its own sake.

Regain a point of Willpower when you exercise control over a group or organization.

Beast

The Beast only respects actual deeds and believes civilization is a trap set for the weak. What counts is personal achievement.

Regain a point of Willpower when you beat civilized competition through personal action.

Bon Vivant

The Bon Vivant lives life to the fullest, making use of every second.

Regain a point of Willpower when you truly enjoy yourself. At the Storyteller's discretion, a particularly fabulous revel may yield multiple Willpower points.

Bravo

The Bravo believes that might makes right. Power matters, and while physical power is the best kind, any will do.

Regain a point of Willpower any time you achieve your agenda through physical or social brutishness or intimidation.

Caregiver

The Caregiver takes comfort in consoling others, and people often come to her with their problems.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you successfully protect or nurture someone.

Celebrant

The Celebrant takes joy in her cause and indulges in her chosen passion as deeply as possible. She pursues it out of enthusiasm, not duty.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you pursue your cause or convert another character to the same passion.

Chameleon

The Chameleon is independent and careful. He studies behavior and mannerisms to pass himself off as someone else later.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you fool someone into thinking you're someone else for your own benefit.



Child

The Child is immature in personality and temperament. She can care for herself if need be, but would rather have someone cater to her desires.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you convince someone to help you with no gain to himself.

Competitor

The Competitor approaches every task and social interaction as a new challenge to meet and contest to win.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you succeed in a dramatic situation. Especially difficult victories may allow you to regain multiple Willpower points at the Storyteller's discretion.

Conformist

The Conformist is a follower, throwing in with the rest of the group and lending aid to the cause.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever the group or your supported leader achieves a goal due to your support.

Conniver

The Conniver finds the fast track to success and wealth through trickery and manipulation.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you trick someone into doing something or convince them to help you against their best interests.

Creep Show

The Creep Show revels in shocking and disgusting those around her. It's a facade to intimidate and control others, but others buy into it and think she's the Devil incarnate.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever someone recoils from you in horror or reacts in fear.

Curmudgeon

The Curmudgeon is bitter and cynical, finding flaws in everything and seeing little humor in life or unlife. Fatalistic and pessimistic, he has very little esteem for others.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever someone takes a specific negative action, just like you said they would. You must predict this failure aloud.

Dabbler

The Dabber is interested in everything but focuses on nothing. He flits from idea to idea without actually finishing anything.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you find a new enthusiasm and drop your old one completely.

Defender

The Defender struggles to defend her chosen cause in the face of its enemies. It may be some fragile innovation or hope of future progress.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you successfully defend your cause.

Deviant

The Deviant is a freak, ostracized from society by non-mainstream tastes or beliefs and feel the world stands against them.

Regain a point of Willpower any time you are able to flout social mores without retribution.

Enigma

The Enigma's actions are bizarre, puzzling, and inexplicable. Her erratic actions suggest she's eccentric, if not completely crazy.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever someone is perplexed by actions you take that later turn out to be a fruitful endeavor.

Eye of the Storm

The Eye of the Storm retains a calm appearance but chaos seems to follow him.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever a ruckus, riot, or less violent but chaotic phenomenon occurs around you.

Fanatic

The Fanatic has a purpose that consumes her existence. She may even feel guilty undertaking an object that deviates from the higher goal.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you accomplish something directly relating to your cause.

Gallant

The Gallant is a flamboyant soul, always seeking attention in the company of others, if only to earn their adoration.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you successfully impress another person.

Guru

The Guru's enlightenment draws others to her. Her presence motivates others to engage in spiritual or ideological pursuits.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever your guidance moves a person to an enlightened action he normally would not have taken.

Idealist

The Idealist believes in some higher goal or morality and tries to reconcile his beliefs with the demands of vampiric existence, often acting contrary to his self-interest in doing so.

Regain a point of Willpower any time an action furthers your goals and brings your ideal closer to fruition.

Jester

The Jester sees the world as a veil of folly and deceit, and enlightens others through the subtle ways of humor.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you raise the spirits of those in great misery, or when you undermine a bully or tyrant by making him the object of ridicule.

Judge

The Judge seeks to improve the system and sees justice as the most efficient model for resolving issues.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you correctly solve a problem by considering the evidence presented, or when one of your arguments unites dissenting parties.

Loner

The Loner prefers her own company to that of others, and the feeling is often reciprocated.

Regain a point of Willpower when you accomplish something by yourself that still benefits the coterie as a whole in some way.

Martyr

The Martyr suffers for his cause, enduring her trials out of the belief that her discomfort will ultimately improve the world.

Regain a point of Willpower when you suffer some damage or loss of a definable resource for your ideals or another's immediate gain.

Masochist

The Masochist exists to test her limits and gains satisfaction in humiliation, suffering, denial, and physical pain.

Regain a point of Willpower when your own suffering leads to some tangible gain for you, or whenever you experience pain in a unique way.

Mercenary

The Mercenary believes anything can be a commodity. Appearance and influence are everything when it comes to a sale, and no advantage is wasted.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you make a successful sale of any commodity or service.

Monster

The Monster knows she is a creature of darkness and acts like it. Evil and suffering are tools. She doesn't commit evil for evil's sake but rather as a means to understand what she's become.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you commit a specific atrocity. Storytellers should be careful when rewarding this Archetype. A player who chooses violence as an atrocity shouldn't regain Willpower every combat, but perhaps only when she needs to roll a degeneration check. Rewards should come as a result of the character challenging his own descent into the Beast.

Pedagogue

The Pedagogue knows it all and make sure his message is heard – at length, if necessary.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you see or learn of someone who has benefited from the wisdom you share with them.

Penitent

The Penitent atones for the grave sin she commits simply by being who she is and feels compelled to "make up" for inflicting herself on the world.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you feel that you have achieved absolution for a given sin.

Perfectionist

The Perfectionist demands flawless execution from herself as well as others.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you motivate another character to succeed as a result of your own shining example.

Philosopher

The Philosopher critically examines every situation looking for logical outcomes and patterns.

Regain a point of Willpower any time a logical, systematic approach to a problem helps you solve it, or information gathered logically is of use in another similar situation.

Rebel

The Rebel is a malcontent, never satisfied with the status quo or the system as it is. He does everything in his power to undermine authority.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever your actions adversely affect your chosen opposition.

Rogue

The Rogue only cares about one thing: herself. She is not necessarily a thug or bully; she simply has her own best interests in mind at all times.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever your self-centered disposition leads you to profit.

Sadist

The Sadist exists to inflict pain and suffering on others. Killing is too easy. She seeks the slowest, most painful means to push others to the ultimate limits.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you inflict pain upon someone for no reason other than your own pleasure.

Soldier

The Soldier is not a blindly loyal follower. While she exists for orders, she does not adhere to them unquestioningly. More independent than a Conformist but too tied to the idea of command to be a Loner, the Soldier applies her own techniques to others' goals and ambition lies within the established hierarchy and structure.

Regain a point of Willpower when you achieve your orders' objectives.

Survivor

The Survivor always manages to pull through, no matter the odds or opposition. The Survivor's utter refusal to accept defeat often makes the difference between

success and failure.

Regain a point of Willpower whenever you survive a threatening situation through sheer tenacity, or when your counsel causes someone else to persist in spite of opposition.

Thrill-Seeker

The Thrill-Seeker lives for the rush of danger and actively pursues hazardous and possibly deadly situations. He is not actively suicidal or self-destructive; he simply seeks the stimulation of risk.

Regain a point of Willpower any time you succeed at a dangerous task you have deliberately undertaken.

Traditionalist

The Traditionalist prefers to accomplish her goals with time-tested methods. The status quo is acceptable, even preferable to change.

Regain a point of Willpower any time the proven way turns out to be the best. Also, regain a point of Willpower any time you adhere to one of your previously espoused positions and it proves a wise course of action.

Tyrant

The Tyrant seeks to be in charge or guide a group, bringing order out of strife.

Regain a point of Willpower when you influence or aid a group in the completion of a difficult task.

Visionary

The Visionary tests accepted societal limits and seeks what few others have the courage to imagine. She encourages society to offer what it is capable of offering instead of what it actually does offer. She is responsible for bringing about progress and change.

Regain a point of Willpower each time you are able to convince others to have faith in your vision of the future.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds describe advantages of relationship, circumstance, material possessions, and opportunities. They are external traits and you should always rationalize how you came to possess them, as well as what they represent.

Allies

Allies are mortals who support you willingly, without coercion. They are not always available to offer assistance; they have their own concerns as well, but they could provide indirect access to their own Backgrounds such as Contacts, Influence, or Resources. However, nothing is free. If you draw on favors from your friends, they may ask for a favor in return.

Allies dots may be pooled among a coterie of characters.

- • One ally of moderate influence and power
- •• Two allies, both of moderate power
- ••• Three allies, one of whom is quite influential
- •••• Four allies, one of whom is very influential
- ••••• Five allies, one of whom is extremely influential

Alternate Identity

You maintain a complete alternate identity including proper documentation. In this day and age, that meant business records, church records, and perhaps legal documents. Every region had its own bureaucracies.

- • You are new at this identity game. Sometimes you slip and forget your other persona.
- •• You are firmly grounded in your alternate identity. You are convincing enough to play the part of a doctor, priest, noble, diplomat, or other privileged position.
- ••• You have a fair reputation as your alternate persona and get name recognition in the area where you have infiltrated.
- •••• Your alternate identity has respect and trust within your area of infiltration.
- ••••• You command respect in your area of infiltration, and you may even have accumulated a bit of influence. You have the trust (or at least the recognition) of many powerful individuals within your area.

Contacts

Contacts are people you can manipulate or coerce into offering information. Minor contacts are spread throughout the city. Roll your Contacts rating (difficulty 7) and reach one minor contact for each success. However, you still have to convince them to give you the information. Major contacts can give you accurate information in their fields of expertise and each should be described in detail before the game begins.

- • One major contact
- •• Two major contacts
- ••• Three major contacts
- •••• Four major contacts
- ••••• Five major contacts



Domain

Domain is physical territory your character controls for the purpose of feeding. The local Prince or other Cainite authority acknowledges and supports your claim. You may designate one or more dots to increase the security of the Domain rather than its size. Each dot assigned to security increases the difficulty to intrude into the domain by one, and decreases the difficulty for you to identify and track intruders by one. Each level of Domain reduces the difficulty of hunting checks by one for those allowed to hunt and adds to your starting blood pool. See p. 334 for more information on hunting. Domain can be used with pooled Background points.

- • A single small building, such as a single-family home or a social establishment — enough for a basic haven.
- •• A church, manor, or other large structure — a location with ready (but controllable) access to the outside world.
- ••• A city neighborhood — a location or area that offers areas for concealment as well as controlled access.
- •••• A catacomb, a network of tunnels, the enclave of homes on a hill overlooking the city — a place with inherently protective features, such as bridge-only access or vigilant private guards.
- ••••• An entire neighborhood, an ethnic ghetto, or a whole village.

Fame

You enjoy widespread recognition in mortal society as an entertainer, scholar, warrior, or even criminal. This gives you privileges when moving in mortal society, but can also attract unwanted attention now that you're no longer alive. It's a mixed blessing with prestige on one hand and being recognized at inconvenient times on the other. However, enemies can't make you disappear without causing a stir. Your Fame facilitates hunting in populated areas – reduce the difficulty of hunting rolls by one for each dot in Fame. Your storyteller may permit you to reduce difficulties of certain Social rolls as well.

- • You're known to a select subculture — local artists, scholars, or the nobility.
- •• Random people start to recognize your face; you're a minor celebrity such as a small-time criminal or a local musician.

••• You have greater renown; perhaps you're a successful diplomat or an entertainer who regularly performs for the nobility.

•••• A full-blown celebrity; your name is often recognized by the average person on the road.

••••• You're a household word. People name their children after you.

Generation

This Background represents your Generation: the purity of your blood, and your proximity to the First Vampire. A high Generation rating may represent a powerful sire or a decidedly dangerous taste for diablerie. If you don't take any dots in this Trait, you begin play as a Twelfth Generation vampire. See p. 341 for further information.

• Eleventh Generation: 12 blood pool, can spend 1 blood point per turn

•• Tenth Generation: 13 blood pool, can spend 1 blood point per turn

••• Ninth Generation: 14 blood pool, can spend 2 blood points per turn

•••• Eighth Generation: 15 blood pool, can spend 3 blood points per turn

••••• Seventh Generation: 20 blood pool, can spend 4 blood points per turn and possess Traits at 6 dots

Herd

You have built a group of mortals from whom you can feed without fear. In addition to providing nourishment, your Herd may be useful for minor tasks. However, unlike Allies or Retainers, they are typically not very controllable or skilled. Your Herd rating adds dice to your rolls for hunting. Players may purchase pooled Herd with Background points.

• Three vessels

•• Seven vessels

••• 15 vessels

•••• 30 vessels

••••• 60 vessels

Influence

You have pull in the mortal community through wealth, familial lineage, prestige, politics, blackmail, or supernatural sway. Influence represents the sum of your opinion or policy-swaying power in your community, particularly among law enforcement and bureaucracy. Influence can be used with pooled Background points.

• Moderately influential; a factor in local politics

•• Well-connected; a force in nearby politics

••• Position of influence; a factor in regional politics

•••• Broad personal power; a force in large-scale politics

••••• Vastly influential; a factor in politics of the known world

Mentor

You have a Cainite or group of Cainites who look out for you, offering guidance and aid once in a while. A mentor typically remains aloof, giving useful information or advice but rarely direct aid. If he arrives to pull you from a dangerous situation, you're likely to lose a dot or more in this Background, or be abandoned as an unworthy protégé.

• Mentor is an ancilla of little influence.

•• Mentor is respected: an elder or highly-decorated veteran.

••• Mentor is heavily influential, such as a Prince's advisor.

•••• Mentor has a great deal of power over the city, such as a Seneschal or Sheriff.

••••• Mentor is extraordinarily powerful, perhaps even a Prince.

Resources

Resources are assets your character controls. These may be gold, investments, property, commercial inventories, or even taxes and tithes. A character with no dots in Resources may have enough clothing and supplies to get by, or she may be destitute and squatting. You receive a basic allowance each month based on your rating, so detail exactly where this money comes from. Players may purchase Resources for their characters with pooled Background points.

• Sufficient. You can maintain a typical residence in the style of the working class with stability, even if spending sprees come seldom.

•• Moderate. You can display yourself as a member in good standing of the merchant class, with the occasional gift and indulgence seemly for a person of even higher station. You can maintain a servant or hire specific help as necessary. A fraction of your resources are available in coin or gold, readily portable property (like jewelry), and other valuables that let you maintain a standard of living at the one-dot level wherever you happen to be, for up to six months.

POOLING BACKGROUNDS

Members of a coterie may choose to pool their individual points of Allies, Contacts, Domain, Herd, Influence, Resources, and Retainers.

The Anchor

Players in the coterie choose one Background as the anchor that holds the shared assets together. Any pooled Backgrounds may serve in this roll, but no Background pool can have more dots assigned to it than the Anchor Background does at any time. If the Anchor Background is damaged by events during play or between sessions, other assets drift from the characters' control, and it takes effort to win them back.

Any contributing character may pull his stake out of the pool at any time. The dislocation guarantees some damage; the character gets back one less dot than she put in.

Under normal circumstances, a coterie can't change its Anchor Background, nor can it acquire a new Anchor Background. While it may choose to abandon a certain Background asset over the course of a chronicle (and thus free itself of the limitations of the pooled Backgrounds in question), the fact that Backgrounds change value only as a result of the story's events means that the coterie must acquire new Backgrounds in that manner, rather than through freebie or experience points.

Using Pooled Backgrounds

Pooled Backgrounds are communal property. Anyone who contributes to the pool, regardless of the contribution, has equal access to it. Not everyone can use the pool simultaneously, though. A Herd pool of seven dots can grant access only to the same, finite number of vessels. The allocation of those points depends on the circumstances and agreements between the characters.

Upper Limits

By pooling points, a coterie can get Backgrounds that surpass the normal five-dot limit. This arrangement is normal and reflects the advantages of cooperation. There is no upper limit on the level a Background can rise to, but it's usually best for the Storyteller to impose a 10-dot limit. The Storyteller should take the scaling of Backgrounds into consideration, increasing reliability rather than quantitative value as the ratings escalate among the coterie. This is a question of balancing player expectations with elements of the story, so be sure to set some guidelines for what the shared Backgrounds actually represent before the chronicle begins.

••• Comfortable. You are a prominent and established member of your community, with land and an owned dwelling. You likely have more tied up in equity and property than you do in ready coin. You can maintain a one-dot quality of existence wherever you are without difficulty, for as long as you choose.

•••• Wealthy. You rarely touch gold, as most of your assets exist in tangible forms that are themselves more valuable and stable than coin. You hold more wealth than many of your local peers. When earning your Resources doesn't enjoy your usual degree of attention, you can maintain a three-dot existence for up to a year, and a two-dot existence indefinitely.

••••• Extremely Wealthy. You are the model to which others strive to achieve, at least in the popular mind. You have vast and widely distributed assets, perhaps tied to the fates of nations, each with huge staffs and connections to every level of society through a region. You travel with a minimum of three-dot comforts, more with a little effort.

Retainers

Retainers are servants, assistants, or loyal and steadfast companions. Many vampires' servants are ghouls, ghouled animals, or people whom you've repeatedly Dominated or completely enthralled. Retainers may be useful, but they're never flawless or blindly loyal – if you treat them poorly without exercising strict control, they may well turn on you. With Storyteller permission, a player may create a single more competent Retainer by combining points in this Background. Players can spend pooled Background points on Retainers.

- • One retainer
- •• Two retainers
- ••• Three retainers
- •••• Four retainers
- ••••• Five retainers

Status

You've standing within the local Cainite community. You may derive this standing from your sire's status and bloodline, the reputation of your coterie, or your own individual deeds. High Status may make you a target for those against your faction. When interacting with local Cainites, you may roll your Status in conjunction with a Social Trait to reflect the positive effects of your prestige.

As the lowest of the low, Caitiff characters may not purchase Status during character creation.

- • Known: a recognized neonate
- •• Respected: an ancilla
- ••• Influential: an elder
- •••• Powerful: a widely respected elder
- ••••• Luminary: a Prince or other Cainite leader

Virtues

The Virtues Traits define a character's ethical code and commitment to his chosen morality. They come into play when a character faces an impending frenzy, does something ethically questionable by their morality, or confronts something disturbing and terrifying. A vampire's Virtues are determined by his Road, the particular code of ethics he follows. Characters may have Conscience or Conviction, and Instinct or Self-Control. You can find more about Roads on p. 110. At character creation, a character's Road rating is equal to Conscience/Conviction + Instinct/Self-Control Virtues.

Conscience/Conviction

Conscience is a Trait describing a character's moral judgment and stems from her attitude and outlook. Conviction represents a character's callousness and dedication to a generally inhumane cause. These Virtues prevent a vampire from succumbing to the Beast by defining the Beast's urges as unacceptable. Conscience/Conviction factors into the difficulty of many rolls to avoid committing a transgression.

- • Uncaring/Remorseful
- •• Normal/Righteous
- ••• Ethical/Ethical
- •••• Righteous/Uncaring
- ••••• Remorseful/Callous

Instinct/Self-Control

Self-Control defines a character's discipline and mastery over the Beast. Instinct reflects a character's closeness with her Beast, and ability to work with it to frightening ends. Those with high Self-Control rarely succumb to emotional urges and are thus able to resist frenzy. Those with high Instinct can manage their Beasts and keep them placated until ready to unleash on an unsuspecting world. Instinct/Self-Control forms the dice pool to resist frenzy (see p. 357).

Note: A character may never roll more dice to resist or control frenzy than she has in her blood pool.

- • Unstable/Unstable
- •• Animalistic/Normal
- ••• Bestial/Temperate
- •••• Primal/Hardened
- ••••• Monstrous/Total self-mastery

Courage

Courage is a universal trait, regardless of the Road the character follows. It represents bravery and mettle when faced with circumstances they endemically dread: fire, sunlight, and True Faith. See Rötschreck (p. 357).

- • Timid
- •• Normal
- ••• Bold
- •••• Resolute
- ••••• Heroic

Willpower

Willpower measures a character's inner drive and ability to overcome unfavorable odds. It has a permanent rating and a temporary pool of points. The rating is rolled or tested, while the pool is spent. When a player spends a point of Willpower, mark the expenditures in the pool (the squares) – it will fluctuate a great deal during the course of a story. A character with no Willpower pool is exhausted mentally, physically, and spiritually, and can no longer muster the energy to undertake an action or cause.

For more information on Willpower, see "Spending Willpower" on p. 339.

Measured on a 1-10 scale, a character's Willpower is equal to his Courage at character creation.

- • Spineless
- •• Weak
- ••• Unassertive
- •••• Diffident
- ••••• Certain
- •••••• Confident

•••••••• Determined
•••••••••• Controlled
•••••••••••• Iron-willed
•••••••••••••••• Unshakable

Blood Pool

A character's Blood Pool measures how much vitae the vampire has in his system. The Blood Pool is comprised of a number of individual blood points. When ingested, each blood point corresponds roughly to one tenth of the blood in an average adult mortal (a pint or one-half liter outside of a human). The maximum number of blood points a vampire may ingest is dictated by his Generation, as is the number of blood points he may spend in a single turn. A vampire with zero blood points in his system is ravenously hungry and likely in the throes of frenzy.

More information on the blood pool is available under "Using Blood Pool" on p. 340.

HEALTH LEVELS

Health Level	Dice Pool Penalty	Movement Penalty
Bruised	0	Character is only bruised and suffers no dice pool penalties due to damage.
Hurt	-1	Character is superficially hurt and suffers no movement hindrance.
Injured	-1	Character suffers minor injuries and movement is mildly inhibited (halve maximum running speed).
Wounded	-2	Character suffers significant damage and may not run (though he may still walk). At this level, a character may only move or attack; he always loses dice when moving and attacking in the same turn.
Mauled	-2	Character is badly injured and may only hobble about (three yards or meters/turn).
Crippled	-5	Character is catastrophically injured and may only crawl (one yard or meter/turn).
Incapacitated	—	Character is incapable of movement and is likely unconscious. Incapacitated vampires with no blood in their bodies enter torpor.
Torpor	—	Character enters a deathlike trance. He may do nothing, not even spend blood, until a certain period of time has passed.
Final Death	—	Character dies again. This time, their death is permanent.

EXPERIENCE COSTS

Trait	Cost
Area of Expertise	1
New Ability	3
New Discipline	10
New Path (Necromancy or Thaumaturgy)	7
Secondary Path (Necromancy or Thaumaturgy)	current rating x4
Blood Sorcery Ritual	Rating x 2
Attribute	current rating x4
Ability	current rating x2
Clan Discipline	current rating x5
Other Discipline	current rating x7
Virtue	current rating x2*
Road Virtues	current rating x2
Willpower	current rating
Road	current rating x 2

*Increasing a Virtue through experience does not increase Traits based on that Virtue.

Health

Health measures a character's physical condition. As characters are wounded, they lose health levels. Each of the seven levels of wounds applies a different dice pool penalty to any actions. A point of Willpower can be spent to ignore wound penalties for one turn. A character who is Incapacitated is immobilized and can take no action except healing herself with blood points or swallowing blood that is offered. A mortal is a breath away from death and will die if she takes any more damage. If a Cainite suffers an aggravated wound while in torpor, he dies the Final Death.

Dice penalties from health level loss apply only to actions, not purely reflexive pools such as soak dice, Virtue checks, or Willpower rolls. If a character is Wounded and suffers more non-aggravated damage, she may still soak with her full Stamina (plus Fortitude, if she has it). The health level penalties do apply to damage rolls for Strength-based attacks, but not for mechanical weapons like crossbows. Use common sense and Storyteller discretion when adjudicating when these penalties apply.

Experience

During the course of a chronicle, characters improve themselves. A system of rewards, called experience points, reflects these changes. At the end of each story, the Storyteller awards experience points to each character.

Between stories, players may spend their characters' experience points to purchase or increase Traits. Experience points can be used to improve Attributes, to acquire or enhance Abilities, to raise or purchase Disciplines, or to increase Virtues. Players generally cannot use experience points to purchase Backgrounds, though they acquire Backgrounds through roleplaying if, for example, the character makes a new friend, acquires a windfall, or commits diablerie. However, with Storyteller discretion, they can be purchased at current rating times 2.

Virtues increased by spending experience points have no impact on the character's Road or Willpower. For example, a character who spends experience points to increase her Courage does not automatically increase Willpower. No Trait may be increased by more than one point during the course of a story. Vast changes in Traits take time, and the game should reflect that limitation. In the end, the Storyteller is the arbiter of how many experience points each character receives and which Traits may be raised. A player should never feel as though they have no control over their character's purchases, but changes should reflect what has occurred in the story. If a player wishes to increase a particular Trait, he can express that wish to the Storyteller, who may use that to guide story direction later on.

Awarding Experience

At the end of a game session, the Storyteller awards Experience Points players can use to grow and mature their characters. This depends on the chronicle in question, and how fast you wish to advance characters. A good rule of thumb is, most game sessions should result in about 2-5 Experience Points, with major arcs awarding an additional 3-5 at completion.

When designing your chronicle, consider criteria for which your players can earn Experience Points. Communicate these to the players, and accept their input about what moves their characters forward. Think about what you want to see happen in your chronicle, and reward those behaviors. Here are some examples of things that might earn Experience Points in a chronicle:

- **Automatic:** Players automatically receive one to three points of Experience each session.
- **Learned Something:** The players demonstrate that their characters learned something important.
- **Overcoming Obstacles:** The characters overcame significant obstacles.
- **Taking Risks:** The characters took interesting risks in pursuit of the plot.
- **Creative Solutions:** The players came up with creative solutions for problems.
- **Making Headway:** The characters made progress toward the overarching plot.
- **Connections:** The characters connected with new characters in the chronicle.

After a major arc, you should award a set number of Experience Points to all characters. As a rule of thumb, lesser arcs should award three, and arcs which constitute major chronicle focus should award five.

Maturation

If your chronicle jumps long periods, you can award Experience Points as the chronicle progresses around the characters. As a suggestion, one to three Experience Points per decade passed is a good benchmark. If you wish the characters to advance rapidly into fearsome elders, three is a good idea. If you feel they need to earn their abilities primarily through active play, one is better.



The man sat alone at the fireside, leaning back on one hand. His free hand conjured an image in the air — a tiny bird with bright blue feathers and an orange breast. Ekkehart doubted that the man needed to wave his fingers to work his magic, but it added to the drama for his audience, a group of children who had clustered behind one of the nearby wagons. The rest of the caravaners were asleep, save for one dedicated groom who was brushing down the last of the horses. Outside of the circle and far out of sight to the eyes of the kine prowled something else — a pair of red, glowing eyes like a wolf's that watched Ekkehart's every move.

Ekkehart turned his attention back to the man by the fire. "A kingfisher, isn't it?" he said.

"I don't know what it's called," said the man. "I'm not good with names." He dismissed the image and turned towards Ekkehart.

"I haven't seen a kingfisher in a long time," said Ekkehart.

"I haven't seen you in a long time," the man replied. "Come. Sit."

Ekkehart walked toward the fire. The kindling cracked suddenly, and a shower of sparks flew into the air. Ekkehart felt his blood scream in terror and rage, telling him that he was surrounded by his enemies. He dismissed its voice and crouched near the fire.

The two were quiet for a moment, until Ekkehart gestured to where the children were hiding. "Are they your family?" he asked. "All men are my brothers," the man replied with a grin, but the expression only made his weathered face look more tired. "How did that horse work out for you?"

"He served me well," replied Ekkehart. "He carried me all the way to Jerusalem. I've never had a more trustworthy servant before or since."

"Hmm," said the man, nodding. "How did all of that go? The Holy Land and all that."

Ekkehart stared into the fire. "My sire once claimed that our lineage was so pure that he could sustain himself only with the blood of the truly faithful. He took his sustenance mixed with sweet herbs and the blood of the host," he said softly. "In the Holy Land, things changed. I saw him at Ma'arra, caked in gore, gorging himself upon the flesh of the dead Saracens."

"Hmm," the man replied. "Well, that was centuries ago. I wouldn't hold onto past transgressions."

"Then that is fortunate for me," he said. He remembered how their last meeting had gone — how he'd taken the man's finest steed at swordpoint, berating him for his insolence at charging him what was, in retrospect, a reasonable price. He was of Clan Ventrue, though, and the pagan from the east deserved no better.

"But I didn't learn then," Ekkehart continued. "I stayed in Jerusalem until I could stay no longer, and when the call was raised to take the city again, I went."

"Hmm," the man grunted.

"I saw my sire again, murdering and pillaging in the name of fattening his own purse," Ekkehart continued. "He gorged himself on the ashes of Constantinople just as he had at Ma'arra, though he fed on the gold of Venetian merchants rather than the flesh of the dead."

The man started laughing then, shrill and heartless. Ekkehart felt the heat in his blood rise again. It told him that his was the blood of kings, and that should suffer no insult from a pagan. He fingered his rosary and waited for the urge to pass.

The man shook his head and stared into the fire. "And so now you're here. And for what, Sir Ekkehart? Do you want me to forgive you? I will not." He smiled again. "Go back to your sire and your church. They will forgive you, and you will forgive them. They are your family."

"I didn't expect to hear that from you," Ekkehart retorted. "You haven't been back to your family in a long time."

The man arched an eyebrow. "What makes you say that?"

"These people are kine. Your family," said Ekkehart, glancing in the direction of the pair of shining red eyes watching them in the dark, "would not suffer the presence of a Gangrel in their midst. Or are the stories I've heard of your clan untrue?"

The man clapped his hands. "Astutely observed! The last time we met you called me a Saracen. And yes, neither her kinsmen nor mine approve of our arrangement. But you still haven't answered my question. Why have you come?"

"I wanted to learn your name," said Ekkehart.

"My family called me Dasaratha," the man replied. "But I call myself David now."

"Dasaratha," Ekkehart repeated, testing the foreign sounds on his tongue.

Dasaratha stood up. "I have given you my name," he said, "but I have one question for you in return."

Ekkehart nodded.

"It wasn't your sire who feasted on the flesh of the Saracens in Ma'arra, was it?" Dasaratha asked.

After a long moment, Ekkehart shook his head. "No," he replied. "No, it wasn't."

Chapter Five: Gifts of the Blood

I see my soul as a great god within the boat of Ra on the night of the red star. My soul is in the front among those who sing the songs of centuries. Come; the eye of Horus, the eye which crafts glories upon Ra's brow and rays of light upon the faces of those weak creatures within the limbs of Osiris. You have delivered my soul. Do not shut yourself in my soul, make no effort to imprison my shadow, for you may behold a greater god than you are.

-The Book of the Dead, Ankhet's Translation, Tablet 18

From the moment of the Embrace, Caine's blood within undead veins strives toward an unholy perfection. The blood grows potent, thickening and honing in frightening and often unique ways. In addition to healing and quickening the vampire's natural strengths, vampires learn Disciplines. Disciplines focus the blood to very specific tasks, tricks, and blasphemies. For example, a Ventrue might learn Dominate, which allows her to control the minds of men, whereas a Malkavian can learn Dementation, which shatters those minds in kind.

Learning Disciplines

Each clan and each bloodline shares affinity for three Disciplines. Theoretically, a Cainite may learn any Discipline with time and tutelage. She can learn the three physical Disciplines, Celerity, Fortitude, and Potence, without a teacher. She may also learn her three affinity Disciplines on her own. Other Disciplines require a mentor who knows the Discipline, and the specific level desired. At Storyteller discretion, clan-specific Disciplines such as Vicissitude and rare bloodline Disciplines like Temporis may require the student drink the mentor's blood, establishing a partial blood oath. Alternatively, a vampire who has committed Amaranth against another Cainite may learn his Disciplines without tutelage.

In some Discipline descriptions, particularly high-level Disciplines, specific clans or bloodlines are mentioned. In those cases, the clan or bloodline specializes in that power. Finding a mentor for the power outside that group should be challenging, if possible at all.

High-Level Disciplines

Vampires of the Seventh or lower Generations may learn Disciplines at the sixth dot and beyond. These ferocious elder gifts are unique to a given vampire, and a Cainite may learn more than one ability at each level above five. So a Sixth Generation vampire might have three sixth level Disciplines and four seventh level abilities.

The elder Disciplines listed below are common examples. They're popular, iconic manifestations of the blood. However, players are encouraged to work with the Storyteller to develop appropriate powers if their characters amass these legendary levels of skill. Use the examples as a foundation for level and scope, but use this opportunity to redefine what it means to be Cainite, specific to your characters and chronicles.

Botches on Discipline Rolls

When a character botches a Discipline roll, the Beast goes wild. The Storyteller should come up with some chaotic, overwhelming scenario that shows the Beast's sociopathic, destructive side. Note that this doesn't necessarily mean the vampire doesn't get what she wants. But it comes at a high cost. This isn't inherently violent, per se, but destructive. Always consider the dramatic weight of the moment. Consider tragedy. For example, when botching in a Dominate attempt to tell a loved one to leave the scene before a particularly gruesome fight, the Storyteller might decide that the Dominate works to an extreme. Instead of just leaving, the Beast shatters the mortal's mind, forcing them to flee town, and live the rest of his life perpetually on the run from the vampire.

Combination Disciplines

While Disciplines each contain five specific, tiered powers, sometimes Cainites develop specific applications of the blood. These Combination Disciplines combine the various techniques a Cainite has learned, and merges her capabilities into something new and unique. Each Combination Discipline has two or more Discipline level requirements, and its own experience cost. You can find more on Combination Disciplines on p. 312.

Blood Sorcery

Blood Sorcery is a catch-all term for a series of Discipline-like powers, including but not limited to Thaumaturgy, Necromancy, and Abyss Mysticism. You can find more on Blood Sorcery starting on p. 271.

Abombwe

The Bonsam claim heritage from a hunter possessed by a darkness from a time before the light. It is impossible to trace the veracity of this statement, but the Discipline of Abombwe certainly taps into both primal darkness and predatory prowess.

• Predator's Communion

The Laibon is the greatest predator in his territory and senses whenever a potential ally or rival is nearby.

System: Spend a blood point. For the rest of the scene, the Laibon can sense predators in the area, including vampires, shapeshifters, ghosts, predatory animals, mortals, and ghouls with a Road rating of 4 or less. To pinpoint the location or find a hidden creature, the player rolls Perception + Survival (difficulty 6, modified by the strength of the predator as determined by the Storyteller; stronger predators are generally easier to detect).

•• Invoking the Predator

Sculpting the malleable darkness inside him and pushing it outward, the Laibon can copy aspects of predatory animals.

System: This transformation takes one turn and requires one blood point. The character might grow claws that inflict Strength +1 lethal damage or a tail for balance. Most transformations are automatic, but particularly exotic ones such as poison glands require an Intelligence + Survival roll (difficulty 7). A botch results in a successful transformation, but adds cosmetic changes such as scales or stripes. This power does not suspend the laws of physics; the Laibon cannot create wings or spider webbing strong enough to carry his weight.

••• Unseen Hibernation

The Laibon makes his lair inside natural formations, plants, or earth by melting into the darkness hidden under their surface. A natural object significantly altered or sculpted by man is not suitable for this power; a wooden hut cannot be used, but a tree with carvings on it might do.

System: The player spends a blood point. Unseen Hibernation is automatic and takes a turn to complete. The character falls into a consciousness one step above torpor during this time and his player must make a Road roll (difficulty 6) for the character to rouse prematurely.

The difficulty of rolls to locate the character increase by two. Astral individuals cannot affect him directly, instead meeting with writhing darkness as their hands pass through him.

Violence upon the submerged vampire expels him from the object in a blinding spray (everyone near the vampire, and the vampire are at +2 difficulty on Perception for the turn). The vampire subtracts two from his Initiative for the first turn upon expulsion, but may act normally after that.



•••• Power from Darkness

The Laibon lets darkness flow out and over him like black, clotted blood that clings to his body. This grants him power and special abilities even as the light repels it.

System: This power costs two blood points and is automatic. One transformation may be active at a time, lasting for a scene, during which resisting Rötschreck is at +1 difficulty.

Examples of use are listed below, but players and Storytellers are encouraged to come up with their own changes:

Hands – Punches inflict Strength +1 aggravated damage.

Head – Gain the ability to see perfectly in normal darkness and a -2 difficulty for seeing in supernatural darkness. Spit a toxin by rolling Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 7) that paralyzes any enemy's limbs it touches unless the target succeeds at a Stamina roll (difficulty 7).

Torso – Sprout four spider legs which allow for one additional attack as part of a multiple action in a turn. Climb actions automatically succeed, and attempts to escape by running are at -2 difficulty.

Legs – Kicks inflicts aggravated damage. Leap up to 10 times the normal jumping distance and receive -1 difficulty to landing safely after a fall or jump.

Throat – Emit a primordial roar. Mortals and ghouls must succeed at a Courage roll (difficulty 9) or flee, whilst supernatural beings must succeed at a Courage roll (difficulty 8) or become weak with terror (all dice pools reduced by half, rounded up).

••••• Predator's Transformation

The Laibon slays a predator and consumes a part of it, be it heart, liver, flesh, or blood. He then becomes that creature as his vitae fully absorbs its essence.

System: The player spends one blood point and rolls Stamina + Survival (difficulty 7). If successful, the Laibon physically transforms into the creature. The creature must be predatory in nature and at least the size of a cat. Humans and supernatural beings may be duplicated, but this does not include powers. Predator's Transformation lasts until sunrise or the Laibon ends the power.

A Laibon may duplicate a previous transformation without consuming another creature. This requires a Stamina + Survival roll (difficulty 10) with difficulty reduced by one for each time he has killed and transformed into a creature of that type, to a minimum difficulty of 6. With mortals, vampires, and other humanoids, the Laibon takes on an average appearance for his victim's ethnic group, unless the

player succeeds on the roll at difficulty 9, in which case the previous transformation is perfectly duplicated.

••••• • Incarnate Darkness

Emulating the horror that created his lineage, the Bonsam becomes a mass of darkness, writhing and turning as it tries to emulate predators not known to man. In this form, the Laibon becomes the ultimate hunter: both deadly and unseen.

System: This power costs three blood points, but requires no roll, as the Laibon's blood bursts from his skin and transforms him into roiling darkness. The vampire may take on one of three basic shapes: winged (allowing for flight at 25 mph/40 kph), insectoid (burrowing through earth and rock, and granting automatic success on climb rolls) or brutish (all brawling damage increased by +1 lethal). In addition, his Physical Attributes each increase by three dots, while all Social Attributes drop to zero (however, the vampire may substitute Strength for a Social Attribute for purposes of intimidation). The Laibon becomes the perfect stalker, decreasing the difficulty for all of the Laibon's Perception and Stealth rolls by two. His claws and teeth inflict Strength +2 aggravated damage and inject the victim with an inky poison that causes one level of damage per turn in living victims (see poisons, p. 360) until the toxin is nullified.

Animalism

The Cainite Beast is a primal, animalistic force. While most Cainites will never know their Beasts on a fundamental, such a creature speaks to his own. The vampire with Animalism pushes that to extremes, commanding legions of beasts to do his bidding.

Without the Animal Ken Skill or the Animalism Discipline, animals become uncomfortable in a vampire's presence. Some attack, some run, some cause commotion. Vampires with Animalism present a dominant air, attracting such creatures and cowing them.

• Whispers to the Wild

Whispers to the Wild establishes a foundation upon which all other Animalism powers build. The vampire's Beast reaches out and touches an animal's mind, facilitating communication between the Cainite and the lesser creature. The vampire speaks or imitates the animal's native sounds, and the animal understands. The vampire understands ideas the animal expresses. Additionally, the animal may follow the vampire's wishes, if the vampire makes a compelling command.

System: No roll is necessary to talk with an animal. However, the vampire must make eye contact to initiate Whispers to the Wild. Once she's established the power, she does not need to maintain eye contact for the current scene.

Commanding an animal requires a Manipulation + Animal Ken roll. The difficulty depends on the creature; more complex creatures, particularly predators, are more prone to the vampire's whims. Taking the animal's shape with Protean or Animalism or speaking to the animal using familiar sounds makes such commands easier. Highly dangerous commands are much more difficult. Use the following chart to determine the difficulty.

Situation	Difficulty
Predatory mammal (wolves, cats, bats)	5
Other mammals and predatory birds (rats, owls)	6
Other birds and reptiles (doves, snakes)	7
No current eye contact	+1
Using animal sounds	-1
Currently taking the animal's shape	-2
Dangerous command	+1
Deadly command	+2

While animals may do dangerous or even potentially deadly tasks for the Cainite, they will not commit directly suicidal tasks, nor will they violate their base biological natures. Cowardly animals tasked with guard duty will not engage and combat an invader, for example. They might run to their master and report the threat, however.

Successes determine the animal's dedication to the cause. A single success will ensure the animal's compliance for the current scene. Three successes will guarantee a regular task for a week or more. Five successes will command indefinite loyalty.

•• Call the Wild

With this power, the Beast instills the vampire's voice with a deep affinity for a given animal. She howls, shrieks, caws, or otherwise imitates an animal noise. Any animal of the chosen species within earshot are summoned to the vampire, and some will come, depending on the vampire's raw ability.

Call the Wild only calls animals and makes them favorably disposed to the Cainite who performs it. They will not attack, but will not inherently obey without application of Whispers to the Wild. If the vampire was particularly successful in calling the beasts, Whispers to the Wild may benefit from a decreased difficulty, at Storyteller discretion.

System: Name a type of animal. This can be highly specific or general; the Cainite can call a species, a spe-

cific group (male wolves, for example), or a single, named animal (the rat with which I spoke two nights ago). Roll Charisma + Survival (difficulty 6). Consult the chart below for results.

Successes	Result
1 success	A single animal responds
2 successes	One quarter of the animals respond
3 successes	Half the animals respond
4 successes	Most of the animals respond
5 successes	All of the animals respond

••• Song of Serenity

As Animalism uses the Beast to communicate with animals, this extension of Animalism allows the Beast to express influence over another Cainite's Beast, or a mortal's very will to fight.

Song of Serenity washes away all strong emotions, turning a victim apathetic and listless.

System: Roll Manipulation + Intimidation if asserting dominance through fear, or Manipulation + Empathy to sooth the victim into complacency. Both rolls are difficulty 7. This is an extended action, requiring successes equal to the victim's Willpower dots. Failure negates all previously accumulated successes, and the vampire must start from scratch. A botch renders the victim immune to the vampire's Animalism for the scene.

When a mortal is cowed, he cannot gain or use Willpower. He will not act proactively. He won't even defend himself, unless his life is clearly threatened. In a life and death situation, he can spend a point of Willpower in order to take actions in self-defense. To recover, the player rolls Willpower (difficulty 6) daily until he's rolled successes equal to the vampire's Willpower.

On vampires, the roll to shake the effects occurs every scene. Additionally, effective use of this power allows a frenzying Cainite an additional roll to resist frenzy, identical to their initial resistance roll. Vampires under Song of Serenity cannot be provoked to frenzy.

•••• Subsume the Spirit

By making eye contact, the vampire may force an animal's higher functions aside and possess the beast. The vampire's body falls to a motionless state not unlike torpor, while her consciousness becomes one with the animal's husk.

System: The vampire must make eye contact with the animal. Roll Manipulation + Animal Ken (difficulty 8). The successes allow the vampire access to some of her mental Disciplines in the animal's form.

Successes	Result
1 success	Cannot use Disciplines
2 successes	Can use Auspex and sensory powers
3 successes	Can use Presence and other emotional manipulation
4 successes	Can use Dementation, Dominate, and mental manipulation
5 successes	Can use Chimerstry, Necromancy, Thaumaturgy, and other mystical powers.

After the effect ends, the vampire will display nervous ticks and other behaviors like the animal for a number of nights equal to her activation successes. She may shake this early with a point of Willpower.

At any time, the vampire can snap back to her own body from any distance, ending the power. The power does not end on its own. This allows the vampire limited ability to act during the day. However, the vampire must still roll to remain awake (see p. 360). If the vampire falls to slumber, the power ends. If the animal dies before the vampire can end the power, she snaps back to her body and enters torpor.

••••• Unleash the Beast

With this mastery of Animalism, the vampire's Beast forces outward, forcing a violent rampage in a mortal or Cainite victim. The vampire's Beast rages within the victim, thrusting him into a potent frenzy.

System: The vampire must establish eye contact to eject her Beast. Roll Manipulation + Self-Control/Instinct (difficulty 8). Refer to the table for results:

Successes	Result
Failure	The vampire enters frenzy herself.
1 success	The Beast flees the vampire, instead infecting a random bystander.
2 successes	The vampire is stunned by the effort, and cannot act for the next turn unless she spends a point of Willpower. She transfers her Beast successfully.
3+ successes	The character transfers her Beast successfully.

If successful, the vampire's Beast leaves her body and enters the victim. This is an actual transference of the vampire's Beast; if the victim leaves the vampire's presence before this unnatural frenzy ends, the vampire loses her Beast. While detached from her Beast, she cannot use or regain Willpower. She cannot frenzy. If the victim is a Cainite, his difficulty to resist frenzy increases by two. If the victim is mortal, he becomes prone to frenzy as if he were Cainite.

If the Cainite finds the victim, she may be able to coax the Beast back by behaving in ways that show her the superior host. This doesn't inherently require a roll, but may at Storyteller discretion. Favor roleplaying here, over rules. The character must convince the Beast she's a suitable host. Alternatively, she can kill the current host.

••••• • Animal Succulence

Vampires usually find an animal's blood lacking in sustenance. It tastes repulsive, and it hardly nourishes undead veins. Some elder practitioners of Animalism, however, have developed sufficient affinity for the blood of beasts that they can efficiently sustain themselves from the wild. This doesn't allow an elder to exist solely on animal blood, but allows her to go longer without human or Cainite vitae.

System: No roll is needed; once learned, this power is always in effect. Each blood point taken from an animal effectively becomes two.

This does not replace the Cainite need for human or vampire blood. Every three times (rounded down) the vampire feasts on animals, the difficulty to all Self-Control/Instinct rolls increases by one until she feeds from a human or vampire. This effect is cumulative; for example, if she feeds from an animal seven times, her difficulty on Self-Control/Instinct rolls increases by two.

••••• • The Twin Souls

The Twin Souls allows the Cainite to share minds with an animal she touches. Both she and the animal experience the other's consciousness entirely, which can be overwhelming for both parties. This allows the vampire to make ideal spies and allies. Adherents on the Road of the Beast contemplate the animal soul in order to advance their philosophies.

System: The vampire touches the animal. Roll Perception + Animal Ken, difficulty 6. Maintaining the power requires one Willpower point per turn. Minor perceptions and memories can be gleaned in a turn. Complex memories require three turns. A full, permanent bond with the animal requires ten turns minus the successes rolled. Upon making the full bond, the character must resist frenzy. If she falls to frenzy, she also loses a point of her Road, as the animal instincts conquer her higher thought processes.

Once the full bond is established, the two share memories from that point forward. While concentrating, the vampire may perceive through the animal's senses from anywhere in the world. The animal does not have high functions sufficient to do the same. The difficulty to all Animalism powers the vampire uses against the animal decreases by two. If the animal dies, the vampire suffers frenzy like she did upon forging the bond.

As a side effect, at Storyteller discretion, this power can justify the purchase of certain Merits, or even reduce the cost of dots in Road of the Beast, using the animal as a makeshift mentor. In this case, the successes on the roll determine the animal's effective Road of the Beast dots for the purposes of mentorship. The character must strike a full bond first.

••••• • The Tongue of Beasts

This power expands the gifts of Whispers to the Wild (Animalism 1). Instead of being able to speak to a single animal, the vampire may speak to any and all animals without establishing eye contact.

System: No roll is required. The character can choose one group of animals with which to speak at any given time.

The inherent limitation is that she can only speak to one family of animals at a time. For example, it might work on dogs and wolves, but not cats or bears at the same time. Storyteller discretion defines what groups the vampire can communicate with at any given time. These groups should be thematic and dramatic, less scientific.

••••• •• Beast Shard

With Unleash the Beast, the vampire instills her Beast in a human or Cainite victim, effectively losing it for a time. With Beast Shard, she can break apart her Beast into smaller pieces, infecting multiple characters simultaneously. Characters infected with her Beast are more susceptible to her Disciplines.

System: The character may use Unleash the Beast on multiple characters at a time, and is not limited in further uses. Unlike Unleash the Beast, Beast Shard does not require eye contact. Roll Charisma + Self-Control/Instinct, difficulty 5 + the number of targets. Use Unleash the Beast's success chart (p. 192), but all targets are affected equally. The vampire may choose to infect a victim with her Beast but not inspire frenzy. Cainite victims suffer +2 difficulty to all frenzy resistances. Human victims become prone to frenzy as if they were Cainite. Additionally, the difficulty to all Discipline powers she uses on an affected character decreases by one.

The vampire may have a total number of infected characters equal to her Generation Background dots. If she has that many concurrent victims, she suffers the effects of losing her Beast, mentioned in Unleashing the Beast. To affect further characters, she must first coax a shard of her Beast back, or kill a host.

••••• •• The Devil's Claws

With this level of mastery, the vampire's power over her Beast becomes near perfect. She can wield frenzy like a weapon, much like others may draw and sheath a dagger.

System: Spend a point of Willpower reflexively to enter frenzy. No roll is required. To end a frenzy, spend a point of Willpower and roll Instinct/Self-Control. The difficulty depends on the current factors; calculate the difficulty as if the vampire were being provoked to frenzy that very moment, with a minimum difficulty of 4.

••••• ••• The Beast's Quills

With this power, the elder's Beast stands at ready, prepared to lash out at anyone that would assail it. The Beast infects attackers, particularly so if the vampire loses blood in the attack.

System: Spend a blood point and roll Manipulation + Self-Control/Instinct (difficulty 8) to activate The Beast's Quills for the scene, or until the vampire successfully transfers her Beast through this power.

When the vampire takes a blow in brawling or melee combat, the Beast strikes out. The effect is identical to Unleash the Beast, with successes equal to the vampire's Beast's Quills activation successes. However, if the vampire suffered lethal damage after the soak roll, her blood splashes on her attacker, tainting him with the Beast's fury. The attacker's frenzy difficulty increases by two.

Note that under normal circumstances, this ability only works once per activation. However, if the vampire also possesses Beast Shard (p. 193), it may infect multiple opponents in the same scene.

••••• •••• Plague of Beasts

A Methuselah master of Animalism can bring about plagues of Biblical proportion. Expanding on Call the Wild, the vampire summons forth animals to her. However, instead of calling out in one animal's tongue, the Beast itself cries out over miles or kilometers. This summons every animal to swarm around the Cainite, causing utter bedlam.

System: Roll Charisma + Animal Ken (difficulty 8). Each success extends the radius outward one mile/1.5 km from the vampire. All animals in the area immediately rush in to follow the vampire's bidding. However, with this raw quantity of animals, the vampire may only roughly direct them to simple actions. Most commonly, this involves attacking a target or ravaging a group. They will avoid targets at the vampire's behest as well.

Each turn, more animals arrive to swarm. Begin building a dice pool, which increases by two dice each turn. It continues to increase each turn, for a number of turns equal to the vampire's successes. Each turn, the swarm can make an attack roll against every character in the vampire's vicinity, less the vampire's exempted targets. Use the accumulated dice pool for these attacks. Their damage dice pool is three plus successes, and they cause bashing damage.

Additionally, the difficulty for Perception rolls increases by two for any characters within the swarm created by Plague of Beasts due to the chaos. Swarms are difficult to displace. Often fire will hold them off. But a large swarm acts with relentless fervor against anything that doesn't present a clear danger to the whole.

Auspex

The most discerning vampires see in the dark, hear whispers on the wind and the crash of rats' feet stomping a hundred yards away. They feel the tendrils of fog and know how close warm bodies are. Supernatural levels of sensitivity and awareness blossom further as the vampire develops his gifts. Eventually, he can see the colors of the souls around him, read minds, and pierce the illusions made by other monsters.

For more on using Auspex to pierce Obfuscate and other mental illusions, see the sidebar See the Unseen (p. 195).

Sensory details are of the utmost importance when using Auspex. Storytellers should always add additional and useful sensory details with increasingly successful rolls.

Sudden Revelations

Characters with even one level of Auspex may occasionally get a sense of an impending threat against them. While they are otherwise using any level of Auspex, the Storyteller may choose to roll for a sudden revelation. In secret, she rolls the character's Auspex score. The difficulty varies by Storyteller discretion, as a robber behind an inn door would probably be difficulty 4, while a plot by the Prince's childe to destroy the character that would take decades to unravel would be difficulty 9. Difficulty can also reflect how important it is to the story that the character has a glimpse of what's coming.

Keep in mind though, it is only a brief precognitive glimpse that may or may not make sense before the event unfurls. Divination is not a science; express the revelation in small sensory details or simple gut feelings. "You smell fire with no source coming from the farm house" or "he can't be trusted alone" are excellent examples.

See the Unseen

Anyone gifted with Auspex can see things that are hidden from normal sight supernaturally and pierce supernatural illusions. This might mean Obfuscate, Chimerstry, ghosts, and even the magical tricks of the fae.

• **Obfuscate:** The Obfuscated target and the Auspex user compare total levels of their respective disciplines. If the Obfuscate user has higher levels in Obfuscate than the Auspex user has levels in Auspex, he remains hidden. If the Auspex user's levels in Auspex exceed the Obfuscate user's levels in Obfuscate, or they are evenly matched, the Auspex user rolls Perception + Awareness. Her difficulty is 8. Lower this difficulty by one for every dot of Auspex she has in excess of her opponent's Obfuscate.

• **Chimerstry:** First, the character must believe there is something wrong or false in what she is seeing, and the Storyteller agrees that the character senses this wrongness. Then, the player asserts that she is actively trying to see through any falsehood. At that point, the Auspex and Chimerstry users compare levels as with Obfuscate. If a roll is necessary, it follows the rules outlined for seeing through Obfuscate as above.

• **Other Powers:** It is difficult to predetermine what sorts of monsters will come into conflict with the vampire. With this in mind, brevity is ideal. Make a contested roll, with the Auspex user rolling Perception + Awareness against the other creature's Manipulation + Subterfuge should suffice. The Attribute and Skill used by the adversary can be changed at Storyteller discretion. When in doubt, the Storyteller should favor mystery and ambiguity.

Overstimulation

The pleasure of the experience and the extensive sensory input is sometimes all-consuming. At Storyteller discretion, a character using Auspex nearby or directed toward evocative images may need to resist being consumed by desire to experience the stimulus more. Images of great beauty as well as macabre tableau might pull the character in. A visceral crime scene or reading the mind of a content and creative child can call to the Auspex user with equal appeal. Likewise, sudden or extreme stimuli may shock the vampire's senses. In either of these cases, the player rolls the character's Willpower to keep him focused. The difficulty starts as 4, but should increase by the intensity of the stimulus. Should the roll fail, the character becomes overstimulated, and loses two dice on all actions outside of experiencing the stimulus for 10 minus the character's Willpower in turns (minimum 1). This quirk of the Discipline is rarely perceived as a hindrance by its practitioners, and often grants them special insight through the stimulus that has drawn them in.

• Heightened Senses

The vampire's senses are now exceptional by mortal standards. The range and clarity at which she can see, hear and smell are doubled. Likewise, her sense of touch and taste become superhuman, allowing her to detect the life her victim leads in the way a connoisseur could tell what kind of grass a cow is fed and what direction its pen faces by the taste of the beef. The vampire can feel a draft that no one else notices, leading her to a door that wasn't closed all the way and putting her back on the trail of her quarry. She may utilize the power whenever and for however long as she likes. Of course, having Auspex active leaves her vulnerable to overstimulation, as described above.

Rarely, a vampire utilizing Heightened Senses will get precognitive glimpses of what could be or what might come to pass. There is no real way to control these intuitions, but in time, a vampire can learn to interpret them after they have happened.

System: This power costs nothing, is reflexive, and requires no rolls to use. When activated, any roll related to the sense's use is decreased in difficulty by the character's Auspex dots. A character may utilize one sense at a time, or all of them in any combination she likes.

This power does not allow the character to see in perfect darkness as with Eyes of the Beast (see p. 240).

•• Read the Soul

The true color of the soul is laid bare to the vampire with this level of sight. What she sees is outside of language. She sees strong emotions, lost thoughts, or dark memories that have tinted a person's nature. The practitioner's mind translates the impressions she gets from another's soul as colors, temperatures, or even scents. The impressions and feelings from other souls can be interpreted, but never translated in a repeatable, universal fashion.

Reading another's soul can provide great insight to their emotional state. A well-timed question and a sense that the person is being deceptive can be incredibly useful.

A spark of arousal at the sight of an enemy may indicate a conflict is not what it appears.

The seer can also observe from the soul if the person in question is other than human. A Cainite's soul will register as pale or waning compared to that of a human. A lupine's soul might be vibrant and sharp, jagged at the edges and feeling like moonlight.

System: The soul-gazer must actively and attentively observe her subject, allowing the sense of the soul to wash over her. At the moment she chooses to interpret the state of the soul, the character's player rolls Perception + Empathy (difficulty 8), with each success granting the character more pieces of information about their subject. Consider the chart below for ideas as to what information the Storyteller might communicate.

A failure indicates that the character was unable to interpret the current state of the soul. A botch indicates misinformation or a wrong interpretation. Soul-gazing is not a science.

The chart on the right consists of colors and their suggested interpretations. Interpretations through other senses are also possible. Players and Storytellers should be encouraged to create charts for their characters, unique in its sensory details.

Successes	Results
1 success	Can distinguish only the shade (pale or bright).
2 successes	Can distinguish the main color.
3 successes	Can recognize the color patterns.
4 successes	Can detect subtle shifts.
5 successes	Can identify mixtures of color and pattern.

The ability to Read the Soul does not act as a lie-detector, and absolute truths cannot be determined. It just reveals moments of dishonesty, or flooded feelings of guilt. An exceptional liar may be free of guilt, and a penitent but innocent person may always appear on the edge of suspicion. A talented Auspex user knows this, and will keep it in mind when interpreting what she perceives.

An Auspex user may use Read the Soul to search a crowd or scan an area. She starts out by declaring what she is looking for, such as "a soul stained with Amaranth" or "the most nervous person in the room." Her player then rolls as normal. The information is general, and any more intimate study of a target's soul requires a new roll.

SOUL COLORS AND THEIR INTERPRETATION

Shade	Condition
Orange	Afraid
Purple	Aggressive
Red	Angry
Brown	Bitter
Light Blue	Calm
Pink	Compassionate
Lavender	Conservative
Gray	Depressed
Deep Red	Desirous or Lustful
Light Green	Distrustful
Dark Green	Envious
Violet	Excited
Rose	Generous
Vermilion	Happy
Black	Hateful
Yellow	Idealistic
White	Clear of Conscience
Blue	Lovestruck
Green	Obsessed
Silver	Sad
Gold	Taken by Ecstasies
Dark Blue	Suspicious
Mottled, shifting colors	Confused
Black veins in the soul	Diablerist
Rapidly rippling colors	Frenzied
Soul is pale	Vampire
Pale blotches in the aura	Ghoul
Myriad sparkles in aura	Witch
Bright, vibrant aura	Werebeast
Weak, intermittent aura	Ghost
Rainbow highlights in aura	Fae

••• The Spirit's Touch

Any man or beast that has a soul leaves a trace behind where they have gone and what they have touched. The longer a soul has contact with an object, the stronger the trace that remains. Strong swells of emotional energy or certain pivotal moments in a life (or in the lives of many) can make this trace even stronger.

At this level of proficiency with Auspex, a vampire can read or otherwise experience the traces attached to

a given object when she puts her hands on said object. Anything inert may carry these traces; a dead body would invariably have such traces on it, while a living cat's own soul would make such a reading impossible.

The traces leave only impressions, brief sketches of moments in time rather than fully woven tapestries. These sketches should be memorable, but brief and as unclear as the soul that left the trace behind would be.

System: A player rolls Perception + Empathy. Difficulty varies by age and strength of impression. A stake found in a pile of ash just an hour old may be difficulty 4, a stake that had been in a vampire killed five days ago might be a difficulty 6, and a stake that only carried intent but was never used may yield useful impressions only at a difficulty 9.

Difficulty should only be considered when a challenge and possible failure would add to the story. Sometimes, a Storyteller might choose to forgo a roll entirely when a character attempts to touch an object that is vital to the continuing story or a piece of strong setting importance. If the Storyteller needs characters to know they have a fang pulled from a Methuselah's mouth, or the sword that decapitated the Sheriff, she should forgo the roll and bring on the terrifying visions.

Successes	Information
Failure	No information of value.
1 success	Very basic information: the last owner's gender and hair color, for instance.
2 successes	A second piece of basic information.
3 successes	More useful information about the last owner, such as age and state of mind the last time he used the item.
4 successes	The person's name.
5+ successes	A wealth of information is available; nearly anything you want to know about the person's relationship with that object.

•••• Invade the Mind

The seer now bridges from simple observation to manipulation of the thoughts and minds of those around them. She may glean secrets buried deep in the minds of others and even implant notions that her victim perceives as alien and often unknowable.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Subterfuge, difficulty equal to the victim's current Willpower points. With only one success, she may implant thoughts into her victim's mind. Characters with four or less Willpower points will believe the thoughts to be her own. Characters above four Willpower points will know without a doubt the thought is not her own. It takes an Intelligence + Awareness roll (difficulty equal to the Auspex user's Manipulation + Auspex) to get an idea of where the source of the thought came from, but even then, she may not know how the Auspex user got those thoughts in her head. She may form mundane explanations or jump straight to accusations of witchcraft, depending on the circumstances.

If the Auspex user probes the mind she's invaded, she may pluck out one piece of surface detail per success her player rolled. Deep thoughts or lost memories can only be accessed through five successes or more.

A vampire's mind is particularly hard to probe, and even attempting it requires the Auspex user's player to spend a Willpower point.

The mind is a strange and liquid place. Storytellers should avoid dry recounting of information and instead, present that information as glimpses of thought and memory. Give enough information for players to discern what's going on, but it is better to show than to tell.

••••• Soul's Flight

For witches to fly, they must use magic and toxicology. A master of Auspex requires nothing so vulgar. She may shed her skin and walk about in the twilight of the world at will. Like the stories of witches, the vampire can fly at incredible speeds, and no distance is outside her ability so long as it is above bedrock and below the moon.

She leaves her body behind, in torpor, and is unable to see or sense what happens to it. She remains tethered to it, no matter how far she travels, by a spiritual silver cord. Should that cord be severed, she becomes like a ghost, and may remain as such if she cannot return to her flesh.

System: The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Intelligence + Awareness. Difficulty should reflect the character's ability to bring the place up clearly in her imagination. Thus, a place in sight is difficulty 4, a place distant but deeply familiar would be a difficulty 6, and to fly to an unfamiliar place known about only academically would require an 8 or 9. The successes she receives should reflect her ability to manifest herself in this distant location expediently.

Failure means the character cannot pull herself from her body. A botch could be catastrophic, sending her soul flying in a random direction and distance, perhaps even into some spiritual realm, the nightmares of a sleeping child, or a place on earth where the sun is shining. (The sun would not burn her soul, but would without a doubt require she roll to resist Rötschreck.)

This power requires a Willpower point to activate. Any new scene the character wishes to remain in Flight requires a fresh Willpower expenditure and a new roll.



The character cannot interact physically with the physical world when her soul is freed from her body. At best, she can spend a Willpower point to appear to others as a ghostly apparition and can speak to those present. She can use any mental Discipline at her disposal, including other levels of Auspex.

••••• • Far Sense

The character no longer needs to take to Soul's Flight to observe distant but familiar places and people. She can project her senses to a place in order to stalk any person she is familiar with. She observes her victim while remaining aware of her own surroundings.

System: The player rolls the character's Perception + Empathy, difficulty 6, and describes the person she is trying to spy on. If successful, she may observe her victim and his surrounding area for one turn per success. She may use other levels of Auspex where she is spying. She remains aware of her own situation. While this use of Auspex splits her senses, it does not hamper them.

••••• • The Heart's Desire

Your character can sense exactly what her partner wishes to hear. With this gift, she can sense exactly the right thing to say in a given moment. She reads the subtle cues, shakes, pulse, aura, surface thoughts, and every little bit of her partner in order to find the truth.

System: To activate The Heart's Desire, the player spends a blood point and rolls Perception + Empathy at a difficulty equal to the partner's current Willpower points. The player may spend the successes on The Heart's Desire to add dice or remove difficulty from the next Social action against that character, to a minimum difficulty of 4. This does not include Social Disciplines such as Presence, but mundane Social actions.

••••• • Soul Bond

Your character's mastery of the spiritual allows her to bind herself with a person, place, or thing. Once the bond is formed, she can forever extend her senses to the point of the bond.

System: Spend a Willpower point to initiate Soul Bond. Roll Intelligence + Occult, difficulty 7 or the person's current Willpower points, whichever is higher. Each roll takes one hour of meditation touching the person or thing, or at the place if she wishes to bind herself to a location. The bond forms once five successes are accumulated, or in the case of a person, successes equal to their Willpower dots.

Once the bond is established, the vampire can extend her senses, including her Auspex powers, to the person, place, or thing at any time with simple concentration. Any Auspex power requiring touch can be used at any time at any distance. Additionally, any character using Auspex on the bonded person, place, or thing gets a read as if he used the power on the vampire, as well as the object. However, if the object of the bond is killed or destroyed, the vampire risks her Beast as if she violated a level 1 Road sin.

Additionally, using future Auspex powers on the bonded person, place, or thing is done at a -2 difficulty.

Soul Bond lasts indefinitely unless the vampire ends it voluntarily.

••••• •• Anticipate Victory

The greatest swordsmen in the world have an uncanny ability, they say, to anticipate the outcome of any battle before they even draw their sword. So too, a chess player of exceptional talent can predict their opponents moves with startling accuracy. For the Auspex user, the ability to anticipate is not theoretically occult in nature. It is an expression of Auspex itself.

System: The player spends a blood point and rolls her character's Perception + the combat Ability her opponent is using, or other Ability should the power be used during a game of chance or even during a courtiers' contest of poetry and wit. Her difficulty equals her target's Manipulation + the appropriate skill. Each success rolled becomes an additional die the player can use during her character's next action.

••••• •• Brutal Ecstasy

Your character has mastered her senses to the point where she can reinterpret harmful sensation as empowering and ecstatic.

System: This power does not require activation. Any time your character suffers a wound penalty, reverse it. The penalty dice become bonus dice instead. This power does not help your character act when Incapacitated. However, any time your character takes damage in her Incapacitated health level, she regains a spent point of Willpower.

••••• •• A Gathering of Souls

Your character has progressed beyond The Soul's Flight to the point where she can bring other characters into the flight with her. Willing subjects can be granted the ability to project from their bodies; unwilling victims can be forced from their shells.

System: Gathering of Souls requires the vampire touch the target. This power does not require a roll against willing subjects, but they must spend a point of Willpower. They activate Soul's Flight as if they activated it themselves. Against an unwilling victim, the vampire must spend a point of Willpower to attempt forcing the victim from his body. Roll Intelligence + Intimidation, difficulty equal to the victim's current Willpower points. Every roll takes one turn and a new point of Willpower. The power forces the victim from his body once the vampire achieves a number of successes equal to his Willpower dots. Once forced from his body, he cannot return during the current scene.

••••• ••• Omniscience

The elder vampire can not only hear a victim's thoughts, but she can simultaneously hear the thoughts of everyone in her vicinity, see their auras, and understand fundamental truths about them.

System: Spend a Willpower point to activate Omniscience for the scene. She automatically activates any or all of her first four Auspex powers (Heightened Senses, Read the Soul, Spirit's Touch, and Invade the Mind). If the power requires a roll, roll a single Perception + Awareness roll instead of the normal dice pool. Compare the results to all potential subjects in the vampire's vicinity.

The vampire is able to understand and digest all this information instantly. As Storyteller, when giving such information, focus on the important information only. For example, if this power is used amidst a riot of one hundred peasants, it's not necessary to give every single peasant's surface thoughts one by one. Instead, express the general sentiment and any specific exceptions.

••••• ••• Soul's Sword

It is said that the eldest users of Auspex can kill with a look, a thought, or a sigh. If there is truth to it, it is manifest in the Soul's Sword. The elder inflicts a direct assault from her mind to a victim's, potentially destroying them on the spot. Those she destroys appear outwardly unharmed, perhaps bleeding from the mouth and nose, or in the case of vampires, falling inexplicably to ash.

System: First, the elder must make physical or eye contact with her victim. Then, the player spends three blood points and a Willpower point if she is assaulting a vampire or other supernatural being. She spends only a single blood point to activate Soul's Sword against a human target. Roll Intelligence + Intimidation resisted by the victim's Willpower. The results are based on the net successes achieved on the following chart:

Successes	Results
Failure	The target is unharmed and may determine that a psychic assault is taking place by succeeding on a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 6).
1 success	The target is shaken but unharmed. He loses a temporary Willpower point.
2 successes	The target is badly frightened. He loses three temporary Willpower points and, if a vampire, must roll Courage (difficulty of the attacker's Auspex rating) to avoid Rötschreck.
3 successes	The target loses six temporary Willpower points and, if a vampire, must roll Courage as above. If this causes him to lose his last temporary Willpower point, he loses a permanent Willpower point and suffers three health levels of bashing damage (soaked normally).
4 successes	The target loses all temporary Willpower points and half of his permanent Willpower points (round down). In addition, he suffers three health levels of lethal damage (soaked normally).
5 successes	The target must roll his permanent Willpower (difficulty 7). If he succeeds, apply the effect of four successes. In addition, the target is rendered unconscious for the rest of the night, or sent to torpor if Cainite. If he fails, the Psychic Assault kills him instantly.

••••• •••• False Slumber

Torpor is no longer a torment of nightmares and incapacitation to wait out the eons. The elder may now leave her body behind, walk in twilight, and observe the passage of time alert, aware, and able to take some hand in the goings-on while her body remains hidden and in slumber.

System: No roll is necessary; False Slumber simply activates at the time the elder falls into torpor. She is, in effect, exactly in the same condition as a vampire using Soul's Flight save that she cannot instantly wake her body; awakening from torpor functions normally. If her cord is severed, it is no grueling task to return to her body, but rather, happens gradually over the course of a year and a day. In that time, her body cannot be woken from torpor, no matter what.

Bardo

As the story goes, this Discipline was created by Osiris himself. Tied to the Road of Humanity, a mastery of Bardo does not equal Golconda. Golconda relies on the vampire accepting and transcending what he is, whilst Bardo relies on denying it. If a practitioner of Bardo abandoned the rigorous meditation that accompanies this Discipline, he would be no closer to Humanity than he was before.

The Penitent must maintain Road of Humanity (no other moral code suffices) dots equal to his Bardo level, or else lose any levels in excess of his Road. Lost levels return as the Road increases.

• Restore Humanitas

The Child of Osiris believes that what is lost may be regained. Rather than accept the inevitable slide to inhumanity, the Penitent fights hard to regain any lost Humanity.

System: When the vampire loses a dot of Road of Humanity, he can attempt to regain it without spending experience points. Restore Humanitas must be used within a week of losing the dot and can only restore the last dot lost. The character must take an affirming action appropriate to a character of a superior Road rating, meditate for several hours, and spend all the blood points currently in his body. The player then rolls Conscience (difficulty equal to the level of Road of Humanity being regained). If the roll succeeds, the character regains the dot of Road and (if applicable) the dot of Conscience lost to a botched degeneration roll. If the character also gained a Derangement, this fades within a week.

•• Banishing Sign of Thoth

Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom and magic, taught this power to Osiris, who then passed it on to his followers. Making a mystical sign with his hand, the Penitent may turn aside a mystical effect aimed at him coming from either a vampire or other supernatural being.

System: The player spends a blood point and rolls Dexterity + Occult (difficulty 7). This power can be used to "dodge" any incoming attack of a mystical nature, including any Disciplines that target the character, whether or not they actually inflict damage. Successes the player rolls are subtracted from the successes on the attacker's roll. The Sign does not serve to turn aside magically enhanced physical attacks; a punch from a vampire using Potence still has the full effect. While this can be used reflexively like a dodge, using it and another action in a turn requires multiple actions (see p. 322).

••• Gift of Apis

All vampires must consume blood. Even the Penitents cannot avoid this truth, but they have at least learned to feed off animals instead of humans.



System: Animal blood is just as nourishing to the character as human blood. An animal is considered to have a blood pool equal to the number of health levels it has, rather than the lesser value usually assigned to represent the creature's blood (see p. 396 for drinking from animals). This ability is always active once learned.

•••• Pillar of Osiris

The Pillar of Osiris is a mystical place of peace at the center of each temple where Penitents may meditate to increase their inner calm and magic. The Pillar comes with a hidden drawback though, as the Beast, initially chained by the Pillar, grows in strength while away from it.

System: Creating the Pillar of Osiris requires a night-long ritual, with the difficulty determined by the location; the more remote and free from violence the location is, the lower the difficulty. A cave far from human populations that has never seen violence might be difficulty 5, while the site of a grisly murder-suicide in a city would be difficulty 9. The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Willpower. Success creates the Pillar, which is conceptual rather than physical. The Pillar reduces the difficulties of Discipline use or other mystical activities (including blood magic) performed at the Pillar by three. This benefit only applies to vampires with at least one dot of Bardo. Once a Penitent has created a Pillar, he must visit it at least once a month, or it ceases to function. In addition, for every week he is away from a Pillar (not necessarily the one he created), the difficulties of all rolls to avoid frenzy increase by one.

••••• Revelation

The Penitent shares some of his wisdom, revealing the vastness of the universe and the relative smallness of the target therein. This leaves the target unable to act as she ponders this revelation. Targets retain a healthy respect for the Penitent afterwards, either out of respect for his wisdom or fear of being shown this revelation again.

System: The vampire speaks and his player spends a point of Willpower and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty of the listener's current Willpower). If multiple listeners are present, the player rolls against the highest difficulty. If the roll is successful, the listener is immobilized for the scene as she contemplates what she has heard. Violence towards the victim ends the effect. At the end of the scene, the revelation is gone, though the target

suffers a permanent +1 difficulty to harm or act against the Child of Osiris or a specific subject or group disclosed during the Revelation.

••••• • Boon of Anubis

The vampire cannot undo the terrible undeath inflicted on him, but he can stop it from happening to others. Striking a deal with Anubis, the Child of Osiris can protect a mortal from the Embrace. Should such a mortal appear before Anubis, rather than send her back undead, he will restore her life. The mortal then sleeps for a full night and day, waking sick but unharmed. The Boon of Anubis is enacted by the Penitent kissing the mortal, usually on the forehead.

System: Spend a point of Willpower and roll Road of Humanity. If the roll succeeds, the target is immune to the Embrace for a number of months equal to the successes rolled. The player can spend a dot of Willpower to make the effect permanent. Note that this Discipline does not protect against any other form of death than the Embrace; if a vampire drains the unfortunate victim dry and then decapitates her, she dies just the same. However, the difficulty to avoid degeneration when killing or harming someone under protection of Boon of Anubis is increased by three.

Celerity

Celerity moves a vampire with unholy rapidity and grace. Characters with Celerity move nigh-unseen in bursts of inhuman speed. This allows for remarkable performances, frightening quick assassinations, and travel unlike any in the Dark Medieval World.

System: Characters add their Celerity rating to their Dexterity-based dice pools, including their Initiative ratings. Add her Celerity rating to the number of yards or meters she moves in a turn.

Additionally, they may reflexively spend one point of blood to ignore difficulty penalties for multiple actions up to their Celerity dots for the turn. For example, a character with Celerity 3 makes three actions before suffering +1 difficulty for multiple actions. This does not mitigate the dice pool reduction, however. A number of these additional actions equal to half their Celerity (round up) may be attack actions. See p. 322 for rules on multiple actions.

Lastly, by spending one blood point, she may multiply her movement speed by 1 plus her Celerity dots. In combat, this lasts one turn. Otherwise, it lasts the scene.

Advanced Celerity

Normally, Celerity dots simply make the vampire faster and increase the Discipline's numerical benefits. At elder levels, the character's Celerity may develop normally, or she may progress into more specific powers, like the examples below. As with other elder powers, she may take multiple such gifts; the linear, numerical progression is considered one such option.

••••• • Momentum

A large part of impact comes from the force it moves with, but also with its speed. A master of Celerity can focus her speed all into one forceful instant, allowing her to briefly lift things no human should ever be able to, or to strike with deadly force.

System: Spend two blood points reflexively to activate Momentum. You may add your character's Celerity dots as additional dice on any single Strength-based roll. In combat, this adds Knock Down (see p. 347) to any attack made with Momentum.

••••• • Precision

A master of Celerity with this manifestation can use her immense dexterity to conduct acts of fine manipulation with inhuman precision.

System: Spend a blood point to activate Precision. Add the character's Celerity dots as automatic successes to a single roll requiring fine manipulation instead of adding dice to Dexterity as normal. This does not work only on rolls using the Dexterity Attribute, but Storyteller discretion is required to determine what Precision benefits.

••••• • Projectile

With this power, the Cainite may apply her speed to objects she throws, forcing them forward faster than the greatest longbow.

System: Spend a blood point. Then, choose an amount by which to reduce your character's Celerity for the turn. The character throws a weapon like normal. If successful, add that number of automatic successes to the damage dice pool.

••••• •• Flower of Death

With this monstrous ability, the vampire has mastered using her Celerity in combat situations. Every blow lands exactly where she wishes it to land.

System: Spend four blood points. For the remainder of the turn, instead of adding her Celerity to her Dexterity-based dice pools, the vampire achieves that many

automatic successes on all Dexterity-based dice pools. This includes any multiple actions she takes.

••••• •• Quickness

A character with Quickness breaks normal limitations of speed even for her own Celerity.

System: Spend a blood point to activate Quickness on a turn where you have activated Celerity's normal effect. Quickness offers one additional action beyond what the character receives for Celerity, as if her Celerity were one level higher. She can spend additional blood, cumulatively, for additional Celerity levels that last the turn (see the chart below). Each additional action causes the character a level of unsoakable lethal damage.

Blood	Additional Actions
1	1
3	2
6	3
10	4
15	5

••••• ••• Physical Defiance

Your character's speed has reached a point so unnatural that for brief moments, the fundamental laws of nature cease to affect her. She can move in any direction, in spite of obstructions, in spite of gravity, and in spite of logic. She can run upwards for brief bursts. She can walk through (or on) water. She can walk up walls.

System: Spend five blood points per turn in Physical Defiance. Your character can move through space in any direction up to her full speed (which can be enhanced as normal with Celerity through additional blood expenditure). Wood, stone, water, flesh, or metal will simply give way as she passes through, exploding into splinters and chunks. She suffers no harm from the things she moves through.

If she moves through another character, roll to attack with Dexterity + Athletics, adding Celerity as normal. The other character may attempt to dodge if eligible, but not block or parry. If successful, she fills the opponent's health levels with lethal damage. Vampires must reflexively heal to avoid torpor. Mortals die instantly.

••••• ••• Time Out of Time

At this level, the vampire thinks a moment before everyone around her, and her reflexes carry her vast distances before others can blink. She can bolt out of the way even as a blade grazes her flesh. This makes her nigh-untouchable when she wishes to be.



System: Spend three blood points reflexively to activate this power. It may be activated even after an attack roll is made, but before damage is rolled. Once the power is activated, all action stops and your character can move her full movement speed before the other action resolves. This takes the place of a normal defensive maneuver. This almost certainly prevents the action from taking place, as the vampire appears to teleport out of the way.

Chimerstry

Chimerstry gives the Ravnos control over illusions. Where the power comes from is anyone's guess. Many Ravnos attribute it to the self-enlightened state of seeing past the *maya* of the world. Yet, even those that do not believe in the illusions of reality can easily manipulate illusions. Some European Ravnos believe that the power comes from their founder drinking the blood of fairies, but the veracity of that claim is as ephemeral as the illusions the power controls. Regardless of the truth, the Charlatans use Chimerstry as a potent tool in dealing with the world around them.

The Discipline allows the Ravnos to shape reality to his own vision and will, creating realistic illusions and phantasms to confuse the senses or trick the minds of his victims. Mortals and vampires alike fall prey to these illusions unless the vampire has learned in sufficient levels of Auspex (see p. 195). Victims of Chimerstry can see through the illusions if they can "prove" the illusion's falsehood (e.g. a person who attempts to lean against an illusionary wall and passes through will no longer see the wall at all), and incredible illusions (e.g. monsters rising from the sea, or flying horses) give a chance for the victim to realize their falsehood with a roll of Perception + Alertness (difficulty 6).

• Ignis Fatuus

The vampire can create simple static illusions that can confound a single sense. For instance he can create the sound of horse's hooves, the smell of hay, the appearance of a shining jewel, or even the feel of a hand pushing inside a pocket. While tactile illusions can be felt, they cannot harm anyone nor do any real damage.

System: The player spends one Willpower point, and creating the illusions takes the vampire's action. The vampire can create illusions in an area of roughly 7 cubic meters per dot the vampire has in Chimerstry, and the vampire must be able to sense the area in which he creates the illusion. For example, he cannot create the illusion of a coin inside a box unless he can see or feel the inside of the box, but he can create the sound of coins rattling around if the box is shaken. The illusion remains until the vampire chooses to end the illusion or leaves the area.

•• Chimaera

Chimaera allows the vampire to create static illusions that affect any or all of the senses. The vampire could create the illusion of a bladed weapon that feels hard to the touch, or a soft flower that gives off a sweet perfume. These are just illusions, and a sword will pass right through someone if thrust. An image created in this way can be completely stationary, as with Ignis Fatuus, or it can move naturally as an item can be carried by a person or a sword will look to be hitched to the sword belt.

System: The player spends one Willpower and one blood point to create the illusion. She must choose at the time of creation if the illusion is completely stationary or if it is tied to a person, place, or animal and will remain that way for its duration. These illusions follow the same rules for area creation and duration as Ignis Fatuus illusions.

••• Phantasm

Phantasm allows the vampire to give motion to an illusion created with Ignis Fatuus or Chimaera. Thus the user can create images of a roaring fire, a living moving being, or even a flag fluttering in the wind.

System: After creating an illusion with Ignis Fatuus or Chimaera, spend one blood point to make the illusion move. As long as the vampire concentrates on the illusion, he can make it move in any way he wishes, within reason. He can make an illusion of a person appear to move and talk as though she was real, or he can make the illusion of a sparkling ballroom with billowing drapes and flickering candelabras. If the vampire wishes to take any complicated action besides maintaining the illusion, he must first succeed on a Willpower roll. If the roll fails, the illusion will dissipate completely.

Once the creator stops concentrating on the illusion, it can continue in simple repetitive motions that could be described in a simple sentence, such as a horse nervously pawing at the ground. After that, the illusion cannot be controlled by the creator. He can allow it to move as he last directed, or dispel it as with Ignis Fatuus.

•••• Permanency

Like Phantasm, this power is also used in conjunction with either Ignis Fatuus or Chimaera. It extends the duration of the illusion indefinitely, even when the vampire is not around to maintain it. In this way, the Ravnos could create elaborate illusions of stately affairs with guests and dancing in a small run down building, without even having to be there to witness his victim's impressions.

System: The player spends one blood point to make the illusion permanent until dismissed (this includes illusions "programmed" with Phantasm).

••••• Horrid Reality

The vampire now has the ability to refine her tricks into very realistic pervasive illusions that affect only one person. The illusion is so real that the victim believes completely in its reality, even to the point of taking damage from it. As such, an illusionary wall would prevent a victim's escape and an illusionary fire would burn a victim. This power only affects one person, but everyone can see the illusion he suffers from. Other people may attempt to convince the victim that the illusion is not real, though he has a hard time believing them. A victim with Auspex can still attempt to see through the illusion (p. 195).

System: A Horrid Reality illusion costs two Willpower points to create and lasts for an entire scene. The player must declare a victim when the illusion is created. If the user is attempting to injure her victim, her player rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty the victim's Perception + Self-Control/Instinct). Each success inflicts one health level of lethal damage on the victim that cannot be soaked. If the user wishes to do less damage or bashing damage, she can declare a maximum amount of damage or the type of damage before rolling dice. Secondary effects (such as frenzy rolls for illusory fire) may also occur.

The victim can escape the terror of the Horrid Reality if he can be convinced the illusion is not real. This requires at least two successes on a Charisma + Empathy roll (difficulty equal to the Maniuplation + Subterfuge of the vampire using Horrid Reality). If the target is convinced the illusion is not real, the terror of the illusion no longer affects him. Illusory walls no longer stop him, and all damage is healed. If the target took damage from an attack due to Horrid Reality, he must be convinced of its illusory nature within 24 hours of the attack. Otherwise, it becomes too well established in his mind and he must heal it with blood (if a vampire), or over time (if mortal).

This power cannot actually kill its victim. A victim "killed" by an illusory attack loses consciousness or enters torpor.

••••• • Fatuus Mastery

The vampire's understanding of reality has given her mastery over the creation of illusions. The Ravnos has no limit to how many times she can create illusions with the first



three levels (Ignis Fatuus, Chimaera, and Phantasm) and can maintain her illusions with minimal concentration or fatigue.

System: Fatuus Mastery negates the Willpower and blood cost for using the first three levels of Chimerstry. In addition, the Cainite is able to direct the movement of a number of illusions equal to her Intelligence without intense concentration. She can maintain her illusions as long as they remain within her Willpower rating in miles (1.5 times rating in km). However, she cannot make them react to events around them if she has no way of perceiving those events.

••••• • Shared Nightmare

Though everyone can see the illusion created with Horrid Reality, it only physically affects one person. With this level of Chimerstry, a Ravnos can inflict an entire crowd with her illusions.

System: To use this power, the player must spend two Willpower points plus one blood point per target. The player then rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge once, with a difficulty rating of the target's Perception + Self Control/Instinct. The player compares their result against each target individually.

••••• •• Blade of the Demons

With extreme concentration the Ravnos creates an illusionary blade that seems real and can inflict terrible wounds on her enemies. Ravnos from the East use these blades to fight demons in their homelands. European Ravnos find the blade equally useful to deal with their own demons.

System: To create a Blade of the Demons, the player must spend one Willpower point and one blood point per die of damage the weapon inflicts (in addition to the wielder's Strength). The blade appears instantly in the vampire's hand and she can use it during the same turn. The blade lasts for a scene and inflicts aggravated damage. Once the blade is created, the vampire cannot spend any more blood to increase the damage dice of the blade. Also, the created blade can inflict no more than one die of damage than a normal blade of that type (i.e. a knife cannot inflict more than Strength + 2). If the blade is knocked from the vampire's hand, she must spend a blood point to prevent the illusion from dissipating. The expenditure of blood will cause the blade to reform in her hand. Damage from the blade does not fade when the illusion of the blade fades.

••••• •• Far Fatuus

The vampire can project his illusions into any space he can see or imagine. Usually, the vampire must see or be able to visualize the location in some way to project an illusion there. The vampire may project illusions based on a description, painting or drawing, though this is much more difficult to accomplish.

System: The difficulty for using Far Fatuus is based on the user's familiarity with the location. The player must roll Perception + Subterfuge to affect the location. If the roll is successful, the Ravnos may then use any other Chimerstry power within the location.

Difficulty	Familiarity
6	As familiar as one's haven; currently viewing with another supernatural power
7	Visited three or more times
8	Visited once; viewed from the memories of someone else who is very familiar with it
9	Described in detail; seen it in a detailed painting

••••• •• Interrupt Reality

A Ravnos with this power can make a normal ordinary object or person look as though it is extraordinary, inspiring doubt about its reality. For example, the vampire could make a normal sword shine with a brilliant light, causing onlookers to doubt that what they are seeing is anything more than a stick changed by a trick of the light or a hallucination. More elaborate uses can make a man look and sound unrealistic, to the point where people he interacts with refuse to believe that he is really there. The vampire can make a simple object appear unreal, or even entire groups of people.

System: To use Interrupt Reality, the player must roll Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 7). The number of successes determines how many and the type of targets the vampire can make look unreal. The illusion lasts for an entire scene, and anyone who sees them will write them off as mere hallucinations. Auspex will show the objects in question to be an illusion unless the user's Auspex rating is high enough to penetrate the vampire's Chimerstry.

Successes	Result
1 success	One inanimate object
2 successes	Several inanimate objects, one conscious target
3 successes	An entire area, a small group of conscious targets
4 successes	All inanimate objects in an area including the area around them
5 successes	An entire crowd of people

••••• ••• Visions from the Asura

The vampire is capable of inflicting constant illusions on a victim, working subtly within her mind to make her

question everything. The victim experiences random illusions (affecting all senses at once) of normal everyday occurrences. For example, when the victim is walking through town, she may be stopped by a hawker, she may feel someone attempt to pick her pocket, or she may hear someone call out her name. These images always fade the moment the victim reacts to them, showing her that it was only an illusion. From time to time, the illusion depicts something horrible, such as a nearby building catching fire or an attack from a hated enemy. In the end, the victim begins to wonder if anything she sees is real.

System: To use Visions of the Asura the player spends one Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty equal to the victim's current Willpower). If the target has any Derangements, the difficulty increases by 1. The effect lasts for one night per success. At the end of each night of Visions, the victim loses one point of Willpower. If he has no Willpower left, he gains a Derangement instead.

Victims with Auspex may suspect that certain events are illusions and can attempt to see through them as per normal. Ideally, the nature of the illusions will prompt the victim to use Auspex to see if everything she encounters is an illusion, as she is uncertain what is real and what is not.

●●●●● ●●● Synesthesia

A Ravnos with this level of mastery over Chimerstry can rearrange a victim's senses to suit her preferences. She can select one target and inflict a serious, all-encompassing case of synesthesia on him, making it impossible for her to interact with the world in any meaningful way for the power's duration. The vampire has complete control over the victim's senses and can change them around to suit her needs. For example, she may make a victim see sounds as blinding flashes of color, or make all touch sensations register as soft notes of music. If used against a crowd, sensations are exchanged at random, so one man may see what a man nearby would normally see, and feel what a woman down the road would normally feel. The result of the exchange is disorienting to everyone involved.

System: When used against a single victim, the player must spend one Willpower point and roll Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty is the victim's current Willpower points). For use against crowds, the difficulty is 7, and the power affects everyone within the vampire's line of sight. This power subtracts one point of Perception from the target(s) per success rolled. Victims whose perception has been reduced to zero can only sit and wait until the disorientation passes. Duration against a single victim is determined below, while against a crowd it lasts until sunrise.

Successes	Result
1 success	One week
2 successes	One month
3 successes	Six months
4 successes	One year
5 successes	Permanent

●●●●● ●●●● Fabrication

At this level, a Ravnos can directly adjust or create real objects or creatures, although the effect only lasts for a short duration. A vampire with this power can alter the substance of a sword, making it soft and useless, or transform water in a fountain into a fine mist. Though it is much harder, a vampire could even use this power to force an object out of existence by converting it into air, leaving behind no trace of its former reality.

System: To use this power, the player must spend 5 blood points and one Willpower point, then roll Manipulation + Subterfuge. The difficulty for the roll to affect inanimate objects is 6. To affect conscious targets, the difficulty is the target's Willpower rating. The power can affect anything within several miles of the vampire as long as he is aware of the target in some way. If used with Far Fatuus, the effects are centered on the chosen location. This power can affect a number of conscious targets equal to the Cainite's Willpower per use.

The duration for the change is always a scene, regardless of the number of successes rolled. Successes indicate how drastic the alterations to reality the character can perform, and the power affects any objects of a chosen type within the vampire's targeted area.

Successes	Result
1 success	Render an object harmless (blades dull, swords won't cut), create a large volume of obscuring smoke
2 successes	Change one object into another object (turn rocks into dogs, etc.)
3 successes	Render an object insubstantial, make insubstantial things (e.g. smoke, mist) solid
4 successes	Cause drastic changes (wood becomes impervious to fire)
5 successes	Cause the environment to behave illogically (gravity pulls sideways, rivers stand still, trees flow across plains)
6 successes	Remove any type of inanimate material from existence. This effect is always permanent. To use this on conscious targets, use the system below.



When using this power on conscious victims, the table above dictates alterations by success, such as turning a person insubstantial or forcing her into another form. If using the power to negate the victim from existence, the power deals two levels of aggravated damage per success. If the power doesn't kill the victim, subtract one dot of Strength and Stamina per success. The damage must be healed normally, but the lost Attributes return at the end of the scene. Victims of the power look transparent and insubstantial. Victims destroyed with this power simply vanish.

Daimonion

Ripped from the whispers of those bound to the earth, a voice torn from the throat of the first sorcerers who called to the Abyss sings through Baali blood. Damionion is a cry across Creation, stretching from this world to a place forsaken, and power comes along the echo that returns. Someday, the Baali bloodline will scream, and that shout will shatter the world. For now, they use Daimonion to softly lull others to sleep and bid them dream of fire and darkness.

Characters with True Faith are more resistant to the Baali's darkness. Subtract a victim's True Faith rating from all rolls to activate Daimonion powers against her. This includes secondary targeting rolls, such as the roll to hit with Tormented Essence.

• Sense the Sin

Every jewel has a fault, and every man has a vice. The best way to shatter a jewel is to strike that fault, and the best way to shatter a man is to hammer his vice. This power allows the Baali to find a target's particular vice and glean their secrets with a glance.

System: Roll Perception + Empathy against living or undead beings; the difficulty is equal to the subject's Self-Control or Instinct +4. Success indicates the Baali has gleaned insight into the subject's weakness. With one success, this is information like a low Virtue, weak Willpower, or recent actions that violated the subject's Road. Two successes might yield a beloved vice or casual secret. Three or more yield a central Derangement or formative trauma from the subject's past.

•• Fear of the Void

Once you know a subject's vices, manipulating them is easy. Converting vices of pleasure into waves of existential terror is a greater trick. Speaking in soft tones of primeval horror, the Baali inflames her victim's traumas.

System: The Baali must first successfully use Sense the Sin or another method to learn the target's secrets or fears. She must then speak to the target, mocking his insecurities with her tone. A successful Wits + Intimidation roll (difficulty of the subject's Courage +4) drives the victim into furious fits of terror. Two successes causes panicked flight similar to Rötschreck, while three causes an inflamed Derangement (Storyteller's choice) and four or more causes catatonia. All effects last for the remainder of the scene. Mortals and supernatural creatures bound to strong emotions (such as fae or ghosts) may not contest this roll; other supernatural creatures may make a contested Courage roll (difficulty of the Baali's Willpower).

••• Tormented Essence

The Baali know their place in the universe and within the hierarchy of their masters. Suffering trickles downward, and the Baali stand within that torrent. Calling on the torment in their blood, the Baali may hurl a blazing bolt of infernal pain at their enemies. Nerves cry out, wood turns to ash, stone melts, and flesh disintegrates utterly.

System: Spend a blood point. The character gathers infernal pain into their hands; most commonly this manifests as a bolt of black flame, but sickening-hued lightning or slick black tentacles are just as common. Regardless, the power creates a missile that inflicts one die of aggravated damage. More blood points may be spent to increase the size and damage of the missile, for one die per point. The player rolls Dexterity + Occult (difficulty 6) to hit the target, who may dodge as normal. As with any normal attack, successes add to the damage dice pool. Vampires confronted with this power make Rötschreck checks (at difficulty 8), regardless of the power's form. Interestingly, this power is doubly effective against demons and other spirits, whose corporeal forms react poorly to the stuff of torment. Against such creatures, each blood point becomes two dice of damage instead of one.

•••• Psychomachia

Prudentius was a Roman poet who wrote the Psychomachia – "the Battle of Souls," describing the struggle of faith against idolatry and vice. Baali know this game, and they play to win. With this power, the vampire combines the ability to read a victim's psyche with the ability to rend spiritual matter. Psychomachia breathes infernal life into the target's vice, forcing the victim to act the hero and literally battle her inner demons.

System: After successfully using Sense the Sin, the vampire forces the target to roll his lowest Virtue (difficulty of the Baali's Willpower). Failing this roll brings any Derangements the target possesses to the fore, pitting them against a personified apparition of the victim's vice summoned from her darker self. A botch indicates the target has been overwhelmed and frenzies — or becomes possessed by his dark passenger. A failure results in a literal fight between the two, though this may take the form of any conflict, such as an abusive argument rather than a physical battle.

The assailant is a Storyteller character with traits equivalent or slightly inferior to the victim's. Targets with a low Road score face significantly more powerful opposition (+1 to all traits for every level of Road less than 5). The wounds inflicted by the mind are illusory, though they can force a mortal into catatonia or a vampire into torpor upon a phantom "death." The phantasm vanishes on their defeat or the Baali's loss of concentration.

••••• Condemnation

The Children of Baal relish the opportunity to importune dark energies into the waking world. With this power, the Baali levies a curse upon her victim, drawing upon the tormented might of their blood to work their will upon fate.

System: An Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty equal to the subject's Willpower) dictates the length and

CONDEMNATION

Successes	Duration	Example
1 success	Up to one week	"Your lightest footfalls are as childish stomps." – All Steath rolls are at +3 difficulty.
2 successes	One month	"Sicken and wither, and feel the weakness of your blood." – The difficulty of all Stamina rolls increases by two, or vampire loses four soak dice.
3 successes	One year	"Live forever in fear: those you respect seek your betrayal." – The vampire suffers increased Social roll difficulties, or the character cannot benefit from Allies or Contacts.
4 successes	Ten years	"Feel the godling in your veins crushed, and your future progeny vanished." – The character cannot Embrace childer or create ghouls.
5 successes	Permanent	"Doom will be upon you, and your missteps become fatal and final." – Simple failures are considered botches.

severity of the curse. Successes must be split between both these effects, as per the sidebar below.

Curses with zero successes allotted to duration last for one night. The Baali may choose to end the curse at any time, but they rarely do so. Storytellers should feel free to invent creative or story-appropriate curses. At five successes, a Baali may rip a demon out of a mortal host or relic and fling it back to Hell, but they only do so against the most recalcitrant.

••••• • Hell-Born Investiture

The power inherent in the Baali's blood becomes manifest, and the Devil takes his place as a Lord of Hell. The Investiture remakes the Baali in the form of the Outer Dark as befits their needs. Some Baali are transformed into monsters on the purchase of this power, but others find themselves a vision of beauty and perfection — the perfect lure.

This power may be purchased multiple times, each purchase conferring a different Investiture.

System: The most typical manifestation of this power incorporates immunity to the damaging effects of fire, though other powers are available. Many of these tributes take on glorious miens that cannot be hidden or denied when applied to the Baali. This Discipline cannot overcome three of the banes of vampirism — piety, sunlight, and blood for sustenance. In the end, what the Baali receives is up to the discretion of Storyteller and player.

••••• • Lure Diabolik

The Baali focuses the weight of Hell on her victim, leaving him forever scarred and tainted from the overwhelming exposure. This strips down his fundamental identity and leaves him impure and weak. This also leaves him particularly vulnerable to the Baali's dark temptations.

System: The Baali must speak the dark truths of the void to her victim. As she opens her mouth, out comes the language of Hell. It is indecipherable by mundane methods, and even the Baali herself does not truly know of what she speaks. Spend a point of Willpower and roll Manipulation + Empathy at a difficulty equal to the victim's current Willpower points. Each turn, you may make an additional roll by spending additional Willpower. Lure Diabolik takes effect once you have rolled a number of successes equal to the victim's Willpower dots.

Once successful, the victim loses a dot of his Road. Put a mark next to that lost Road dot. So long as the Road remains lost (e.g. the character has not regained it the way he would normally raise his Road), the difficulty of all Mental and Social rolls the Baali makes against him decreases by one. This is cumulative if the Baali strips further Road dots from the character.

••••• •• Bring the Plague

A Baali with Bring the Plague calls down a Biblical plague on her enemies, cursing them with a highly infectious disease that plagues mortal and Cainite alike. It causes virulent, painful boils that look like bleeding burn wounds when they burst. The target attracts swarms of insects and vermin wherever he goes as they wait for his inevitable death and their inevitable feast.

System: The Baali must touch the initial victim in order to Bring the Plague. The player spends five blood points and roll Manipulation + Occult, contested by the victim's Stamina + Fortitude. If the character rolls more successes than the victim, the plague sets in.

A victim with the plague cannot heal by any means, naturally or with blood. Every day, he loses one health level

Sample Investitures

Fire Immunity: The Baali's skin takes on a bronze glint. He is totally immune to flame, suffering no damage from it. He is also immune to fire-triggered Rötschreck.

Infernal Wings: A pair of stunted, scaly wings erupts from the vampire's back. She gains two free dots of Flight and retains it as an in-clan Discipline.

The Demonic Form: The vampire develops a leathery hide, sinewy alien musculature, and razor claws. The vampire gains claws that inflict Strength +2 lethal damage and benefits from a -1 difficulty reduction to all Physical rolls.

Unholy Communion: The Baali forges a direct telepathic link to the dukes of Hell. He immediately gains three permanent dots of Contacts and may purchase Thaumaturgy dots and rituals without further tutelage.

The Chained Beast: Demons in the breast are nothing next to the Lords in Hell. The Devil loses her Road and aura, but gains immunity to frenzy. The Beast is totally under control of the vampire and may be called into frenzy like an obedient hound for as long as the character desires. The Devil still possesses Virtues.

as an unsoakable aggravated wound. He may resist the damage with a Stamina roll (Fortitude does not apply to this roll) at a difficulty equal to the Baali's Daimonion dots. Once the victim achieves a cumulative number of successes equal to the Baali's Daimonion dots, he shakes the plague entirely. Characters affected by the plague lose one dot of Appearance. Characters Crippled by it lose two Appearance dots, and characters Incapacitated by it lose three. Vampires may heal the Appearance dots as they eventually heal the health levels, but mortals are forever scarred.

Characters in contact with the victim must roll Stamina at a difficulty equal to the Baali's Daimonion dots to resist the plague. It can spread by touch, by breath, or by any bodily fluids. This includes drinking blood. In fact, the difficulty to resist blood-borne transmission is two higher than resisting infection by other means.

Characters with True Faith are not only immune to Bring the Plague, but if they touch a victim of the power, the victim ceases to be contagious. In addition, add the character's True Faith to all the victim's subsequent Stamina rolls to resist further harm.

••••• •• Demonic Servitor

With this power, the Baali summons forth a demon to serve her wishes. The demon embodies one of the seven deadly sins.

System: Spend one or more blood points and a single Willpower point to call forth the Demonic Servitor. Using the baseline below, choose one of the seven deadly sins to complement the base demon template. Each additional blood point spent beyond the first adds a single dot to any Attribute or Willpower, up to the vampire's Generational maximum.

The Disciplines listed are not Cainite Disciplines; they're approximate powers. Use Willpower in place of blood points for activation. A demon might appear in any form appropriate to its particular sin. If the vampire wishes, the demon may look human, but by default, demons are completely inhuman in appearance. Some of the demons gain Backgrounds. These reflect influence in the mortal world that should be appropriate to the vampire's stated needs.

The Demonic Servitor will act in the vampire's favor unless it believes its existence is in danger. It will also commit petty acts of rebellion in accordance with its choice sin. It remains in the vampire's control for one night. However, the vampire can opt to not regain Willpower normally as she slumbers in order to maintain control over the demon for another night. She may only have one Demonic Servitor at a time.

Demonic Base Template

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Perception 3, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1

Abilities: Alertness 1, Animal Ken 3, Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Brawl 1, Intimidation 1, Subterfuge 3, Occult 3

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Daimonion 3, Flight 2, Fortitude 3, Obfuscate 2, Potence 3

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK, OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Virtues: Conviction 5, Instinct 3, Courage 1

Special Abilities: Demons can become insubstantial at will with one turn of concentration. Demons can create natural weapons that cause Strength + 1 aggravated damage. Manifestations of True Faith against demons are doubled in potency. Demons may spend one Willpower point to recover a point of bashing or lethal damage, and recover one point of aggravated damage per day.

Sin Templates (Add to the base template)

Greed: Wits +1, Manipulation +1, Appearance +1, Intimidation +2, Leadership +2, Subterfuge +2, Commerce +4, Resources +5

Pride: Charisma +3, Manipulation +2, Appearance +3, Brawl +2, Subterfuge +1, Etiquette +4, Performance +3, Allies +3, Dominate +3

Wrath: Strength +2, Dexterity +1, Stamina +2, Alertness +4, Athletics +3, Brawl +3, Intimidation +3, Melee +4, Courage +3 Celerity +1, Fortitude +2, Potence +3, +3 OK Health Levels

Sloth: Dexterity -1, Intelligence +2, Wits +2, Perception +2, Allies +2, Herd +3, Resources +2, Animalism +2, Fortitude +5, +5 OK Health Levels, +10 Incapacitated Health Levels

Gluttony: Strength +2, Dexterity -1, Stamina +4, Intimidation +4, Herd +1, Resources +3, +2 OK Health Levels

Envy: Wits +1, Perception +2, Commerce +2, Subterfuge +2, Auspex +3, Flight +3, Quietus 1

Lust: Wits +1, Charisma +3, Manipulation +3, Appearance +3, Empathy +3, Expression +2, Leadership +2, Subterfuge +2, Presence +3, Serpentis +1

••••• ••• Call Forth the Herald of Hell

Whereas Demonic Servitor calls forth a demon to serve the vampire's whims, Call Forth the Herald of Hell calls forth

something greater still that is far beyond the vampire's control. Call Forth the Herald of Hell rips a hole in reality through which a demonic prince can emerge and wreak havoc.

System: To activate Call Forth the Herald of Hell, the player spends five blood points and roll Manipulation + Occult, difficulty 7. Each success causes the vampire one health level of unsoakable aggravated damage as reality itself fights back against the vampire's blasphemy. After the roll, roll a single die. If the result is equal to or less than the number of successes rolled, the power is successful. Otherwise, the Baali's cry to Hell goes unanswered and she must risk activating the power again if she wishes to open the gate.

Once the creature comes forth, it suffers one unsoakable level of aggravated damage per hour as it fades back into Hell. It causes massive destruction and devastation, devouring everything in its path. The creature can appear however it wishes. Usually, it takes the form of a massive cloud of writhing tentacles and otherness.

Mortals witnessing the Herald of Hell lose one permanent *dot* of Willpower per turn. Once reduced to zero dots, they fall to a gibbering mass. Characters with True Faith are immune to this effect. In fact, the effects of True Faith are *tripled* against the Herald of Hell. This includes the activation dice pools for all True Faith abilities.

The vampire is by no means protected from the Herald of Hell. She should flee immediately if she intends to survive use of the Discipline.

Herald of Hell

Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 5, Perception 7, Strength 7, Dexterity 2, Stamina 9, Charisma 5, Manipulation 7, Appearance (irrelevant, 0, or 9)

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 7, Intimidation 7, Subterfuge 5, Animal Ken 1, Occult 7

Disciplines: Animalism 5, Daimonion 6 (Hell-Born Investiture, any and all effects), Flight 5, Fortitude 7, Potence 7, Presence 5

Willpower: 12

Health Levels: OK x10, -1 x 5, -3 x 5, -5 x 3, Incapacitated

Virtues: Conviction 8, Instinct 8, Courage 10

••••• ••• Adramelech's Wrath

With this power, the vampire calls down the power of Adramelech, a demon associated with the sun. This curse plagues a Cainite victim with the pain of the sun as if the full weight of noon bore down on him.

System: Spend a point of Willpower to activate Adramalech's Wrath, and spend three blood points per turn you wish to keep it active. The Baali must scream a call to Adramelech upon activation. Roll Intelligence + Occult at a difficulty of the victim's Road dots. Each success allows for one turn of the Adramelech's Wrath at most. The vampire suffers sunlight damage as if she were standing outside at high noon. This also causes Rötschreck.

The Baali must keep the vampire in her sight while the power is in effect. While she's not affected by the power, the victim glows white hot, and the Baali must resist Rötschreck while maintaining the curse.

Adramelech's Wrath not only does not work on characters possessing True Faith, but the power also backfires, bearing the sun down on the Baali for one turn per dot of True Faith.

••••• •••• Spew Wide the Pit

This pinnacle of Baali power is similar to Call Forth the Herald of Hell, but greater still. The Methuselah sacrifices herself to the darkness, and opens a gate to the beyond. What comes forth devastates and leaves irreparable damage across wide swaths of population. It is a being of hate so pure that it cannot exist in our reality for more than a few scant moments.

System: There's no system for Spew Wide the Pit. The vampire dies upon activation as the monster rips forth from her body. The creature is massive and beyond reality in every way imaginable. It cannot be destroyed by any reasonable means. Fortunately for the Earth, it only remains for one minute per dot of the Methuselah's Road before reality collapses upon it, forcing it back to the beyond.

The creature summoned from using Spew Wide the Pit does not use normal game statistics. A lord of the Pit is beyond normal dice mechanics and exists as a plot device. Characters encountering such a monster can only hope to run and perhaps save some of those nearby from the resulting destruction.

Dementation

If madness shatters the soul, Dementation is the hammer to the fracture point. If madness frees the mind, Dementation is the key to the cage. The Discipline allows a vampire to focus insanity and channel it to those around them. Malkavian clan elders claim the conscious mind is a pleasing and soothing mask, and that the Discipline never creates a madness that wasn't already there. Instead, it crumbles the barriers of self-control and consciousness to unleash the deep, dark insanity that dwells beneath. Viewed in this light, Dementation does not corrupt the mind of the victim—it unmasks their mind's truth for all to see.

Each level of Dementation may only be used once per night on a victim. While Malkavians are the natural masters of this Discipline, it's usable by any vampire who possesses a Derangement. Vampires learning Dementation will gradually develop a Derangement; if this Derangement is cured by means magical or mundane, their knowledge of Dementation becomes unusable academia. Dwelling on this knowledge presages a relapse into madness.

• Incubus Humor

The vampire can inflame the humors of a victim within line of sight, eroding the victim's self-control and amplifying his temperament to a fevered pitch. The vampire may select one of the four humors that govern the body and induce the emotion associated with it. Thus, the flames of mild irritation may be fanned into a rage with an inflammation of yellow bile, or brief melancholia into crippling depression with an inflammation of black bile. Inflaming phlegm, on the other hand, completely deadens the victim's emotions. These inflammations can last for days or even weeks.

System: Roll Manipulation + Empathy against a difficulty of the target's Road score (for vampires) or Willpower (for mortals). Each success extends the duration of the inflamed humor. Effects might include one- or two-point changes to difficulties of frenzy or Virtue rolls, rolls to resist Presence powers, etc. Respite comes only if the humor imbalance is properly diagnosed and treated (Intelligence + Medicine, difficulty 8) — every success on the treatment roll cancels one of the Malkavian's duration successes.

Humors	
Sanguine	Courage, Hope, Lust
Yellow bile	Anger, Hate
Black bile	Melancholia
Phlegm	Unemotional
Successes	**Result**
1 success	One turn
2 successes	One hour
3 successes	One night
4 successes	One week
5 successes	One month
6+ successes	Three months

•• Soul Haunting

A brief speech to a target allows the vampire to touch the sacred or profane within her victim, destroying the banal concerns that keep those urges from making themselves known. These urges manifest as visions, scents, and sounds of divinity revealing themselves in the most mundane of places. Victims report that these images tend to follow a general theme: angels or demons (or a culturally appropriate religious figure, including ancestors) dramatically recounting and reenacting the victim's greatest fears and repressed secrets.

Even if the victim ignores these visions, more insidious is the subtle altering of their senses — a prince's genuine sympathy can become mocking pity, while the false lust of an Alamut *houri* ghoul becomes all-consuming passion. Even if visions are ignored, the victim's trust in their senses is utterly compromised.

System: The vampire spends three turns speaking to the victim, after which the player spends a blood point and rolls Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty of his victim's Perception + Self-Control/Instinct). The number of successes determines the length of the visions.

Successes	Result
1 success	One night
2 successes	Two nights
3 successes	One week
4 successes	One month
5 successe	Three months
6+ successes	One year

Precisely when they manifest or what form the visions take is up to the Storyteller, but they inflict a -2 penalty to all dice pools for two turns after manifestation.

••• Eyes of Chaos

Fleeting clarity hides within insanity; a shattered mirror reflects more than one unbroken one. This level of Dementation is responsible for the Malkavians' reputation of gleaning hidden truths, and their tendency to speak those truths to power. She may scrutinize the "patterns" of personal interaction or even random events in nature itself in order to reveal a hidden truth about the situation she's in. The character need not ask a question — the patterns are obvious at even a moment's glance.

System: This power may only be used when scrutinizing a complex pattern or event, such as the interactions of a vampiric court or the clash of an army. Analyzing the blood spatter flicked from one's fingers or the spill of entrails works just as well, however. Roll Perception + Enigmas; the difficulty varies based on available information and the vampire's familiarity with the situation. A court in the vampire's home culture and domain might be difficulty 5, while a foreign court

(or the clash of two foreign armies) is difficulty 7. A completely alien encounter (encountering one of the mysterious Cathayan vampires, or even just meeting an Anda) would be difficulty 9.

The player asks the Storyteller a direct question about the situation at hand. This can be virtually anything related to hidden truths. The answers are related to the player directly and to the character via metaphors and imagery, with more successes providing a clearer and more complete answer. Failure produces imagery unrelated to the matter at hand, while a botch on the roll relates a *completely* untrue but nevertheless believable answer, which may explain some of the more radical Malkavian behavior. Viable questions include, but are not limited to:

- What's this person's Nature and Derangements?
- What's the worst choice I could make?
- What's the safest choice?
- Is this person being controlled by another?
- What's the underlying or hidden message here?
- How relevant to our overarching goals is this scene?

•••• Fire Voice

Fire is coming. Deep in their dead hearts, every Malkavian knows this. One must be adept at fleeing when it does. By merely addressing a crowd, the vampire can put the fear of fire into them, forcing the listeners to abandon reason and higher thought. The demons of their mind take on a terrifying fiery mien, and they cannot help but run.

System: This power is a focused, more potent Soul Haunting. The vampire still rolls Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty 7); success on the roll now allows the vampire to affect one target per success, although all potential victims must still be listening to the vampire's voice for three turns. Affected victims immediately fly into a Rötschreck–like blind fear. Vampires (or other creatures capable of frenzy, such as lupines) may make a Rötschreck test (Storyteller's choice as to how others are affected) at +2 difficulty to resist the power. Mortals are automatically affected and don't remember their actions while frightened. The frenzy or fear lasts for a scene, with the Soul Haunting effect lasting for an additional night thereafter (and with especially fiery imagery). Vampires and others may test as usual to break their frenzy.



Storytelling Eyes of Chaos

Eyes of Chaos is a major reason for the Malkavian reputation as seers and prophets — it's carte blanche for the player to ask a direct plot question of the Storyteller. It's an equally effective tool for a Storyteller to import overlooked clues, foreshadow important events, communicate critical or plot-altering information without any other context, or convey a hidden advantage or *faux pas* that may not be readily apparent — if the prince's loyal Cappadocian chamberlain is to be assassinated by Giovani, the worst thing would to be publicly praised by the chamberlain, tying the coterie to this doomed vampire.

While the player's question is direct (and not necessarily one asked by the character, or even considered at all), and the Storyteller's answer to the player should be equally direct ("The worst thing to happen to you would be for the chamberlain to praise you, which he's about to do"), the character must interpret the relevant imagery. It's not possible to grasp the logic behind secrets revealed to madmen or relate their reasoning to others. Meaning is filtered through meaninglessness, couched in symbols, allegory, and impossible intuition. Storytellers should prepare a short list of appropriate visions ahead of time. "The chamberlain's words are spittle flecked with sweet-smelling honey, but it burns as it spatters across your face," means the character recognizes the danger in the words, but further successes reveal, "Worse, he doesn't seem to notice the acid eating at his throat and jaw as he sincerely praises you," which more clearly indicates his words are unknowingly damaging.

The vampire using Fire Voice must also test for Rötschreck upon invoking this power, though his difficulty to resist is one lower than normal. If the initial roll to invoke this power is a failure, however, the difficulty of the roll to resist the frenzy increases by one instead. If the roll to invoke this power is a botch, the Rötschreck response is automatic.

••••• Shedding the Mask

Malkavians learn to hide their insanity, lest it make them a target. Others don't have that practice. At the apex of Dementation mastery, the vampire may overwhelm their victim with insanity, shattering their conscious mind and warping their personality to serve the whims of madness.

System: The vampire must gain her target's undivided attention for at least one full turn to enact this power. The player spends a blood point and rolls Manipulation + Intimidation (difficulty of her victim's current Willpower points). If the roll is successful, the victim is afflicted with five Derangements — a Lunacy Derangement and the Four Humor imbalances. The number of successes determines the duration.

Successes	Result
1 success	One turn
2 successes	One night
3 successes	One week
4 successes	One month
5+ successes	One year

On a botch, the vampire suffers all of the Derangements intended for the victim. A minimum of six Derangements may well reduce the vampire to catatonic torpor.

The victim (or the target of a botch) can spend a number of Willpower points equal to the successes rolled to end the duration prematurely.

••••• • The Call

Malkavians say that Malkav speaks to them. Unlike the reasoning from Eyes of Chaos, this isn't without justification. Malkavians are linked on the subconscious level, somehow, by their shared blood. Even without a shared language or differing Derangements, Malkavians can often come to a mutual understanding with frightening rapidity. The exact nature of this link is hotly debated, the secret closely guarded. In nights hence, savvy Seers will call this the Madness Network.

Those with of low Generation can directly call upon this link, communicating with and or summoning their lesser. The ancient Iktomi uses this to call from a land unknown to all contemporary Malkavians, save a few raving madmen in the old Danelaw.

System: To Call, a Malkavian (and *only* a Malkavian) names another Malkavian of equal or lesser Generation, then rolls Perception + Empathy (difficulty 6). Success within the allotted range establishes a pseudo-telepathic communication with the named target, so long as she is in range. The catch is that the communication must be verbal, carried on as if the participants are standing next to one another. A Malkavian in a quiet chamber room must loudly shout to talk to the Malkavian on the battlefield, while the latter need only whisper to be heard.

If no target is named, this power instead sends out a general pulse to those in range, carrying with it a one-word feeling of intent. This can be a call to convocation (these nights, that's tantamount to invitation for battle with the Brujah) or a beacon of distress. Other clan members hear and attend if they so choose. The Call merely conveys an impression, and a feeling of a place and time. The Call is instinctive, such that an Iberian Malkavian visiting London would be able to follow his impressions and visions to the gathering place as readily as any native Cassandra.

Successes	Range
1 success	Malkavians in 1 mile/ 1.5 km radius
2 successes	3 miles/ 5km
3 successes	10 miles/ 15 km
4 successes	A city
5 successes	A city-state
6 successes	300 leagues (or the Astral)
7 successes	A continent (or the Underworld)
8 successes	The Known World
9 successes	The Unknown World

••••• • Stain the Soul

This gift allows for a less directly demolishing manipulation than Shedding the Mask. However, its power lasts indefinitely. The Cassandra speaks to her victim a truth beyond truth, and the victim never recovers from the experience.

System: The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Empathy at a difficulty equal to the victim's current Willpower points. The victim may spend Willpower points, one for one, to cancel the vampire's successes. This ignores the normal per turn limitations for Willpower. Choose a Derangement. If successful after the victim's resistance, the victim gains that Derangement permanently and may not spend Willpower to ignore it. The only way a character may shed a Derangement gained through Stain the Soul is by changing his Road – a Path change alone is insufficient.

A given character may only be subject to Stain the Soul once per story.

••••• •• Cobble the Road

The Dionysian walked many Roads in his long unlife before coming to rest in Sin. He developed this power millennia ago to facilitate changes in himself, but elder Malkavians are easily capable of replicating his feat. This power rends at the deep-seated aspects of a vampire's morality, altering personality on the deepest level — a victim's memories remain intact, but her outlook on life fundamentally changes in response to a crisis of faith.

System: The Malkavian must lock eyes with the target. The player rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge, difficulty equal to the target's Wits + Subterfuge. If the user can achieve success equal to or greater than the target's Instincts/Self-Control, he may alter one of the target's Virtues to whatever he desires, potentially prompting an incompatibility with the victim's current Road. The victim cannot raise her Road rating and faces a degeneration check every night; the degeneration stops at a Road rating of 3, allowing the victim to change her Virtue back by studying with a tutor and questing to reaffirm their commitment to their Road. In this case, she rapidly restores her lost Road rating. Otherwise, this effect is permanent and can only be reversed with another application of Change the Soul, Brother's Gift, or with the Healer Valeren power Unburden the Bestial Soul. A botch alters one of the vampire's Virtues, though he may use this power on himself willingly.

••••• •• The Sword of Malkav

With this terrifying Discipline, the Malkavian wrecks a victim's very sense of reality. She changes one fundamental truth for the victim, and the victim cannot fathom a world in which that false reality is challenged or untrue.

System: The Sword of Malkav requires eye contact and a point of Willpower. The Malkavian must speak one truth she knows the victim believes. She then warps that truth and speaks a replacement. Roll Intelligence + Intimidation at a difficulty equal to the victim's current Willpower points.

If successful, the victim's belief, perceptions, and understanding shift in order to facilitate the falsehood. He believes the false truth before all; it becomes a piece of his very being while the power lasts. If he hears solid evidence that the truth is false, he suffers one health level of unsoakable aggravated damage per turn as every ounce of his identity fights the "falsehood". If the victim is a Cainite, revelation that this truth is false becomes a frenzy provocation, at +3 difficulty to resist. Acting against that false truth becomes a level one sin against his Road.

Successes	Duration
1 success	One turn
2 successes	One scene
3 successes	One day
4 successes	One week
5 successes	One month
6+ successes	One year

••••• ••• Prison of the Mind

Insanity is the root of inspiration. Some Derangements trap the afflicted in a world of their own mind. While Malkavians so touched rarely last long, the powerful amongst them share a deep sympathy. The elder can create a small patch inside their subconscious clan link and trap the victim there, creating realistic yet delusional environment for the victims' mind.

System: The Malkavian must touch the subject with a bit of her vitae — feeding works best, but a smear will do (a Brawl attack). She then makes eye contact and concentrates completely on the victim for a full turn. The player rolls Charisma + Intimidation in a resisted roll against the subject's Wits + Courage (difficulty 8). Success indicates that the victim no longer senses the real world, and interacts entirely with phantom people and illusionary events within his own soul, trapped in the shared cobweb of Malkav's brood. As long as the target's mind is locked in this cell, his body ceases all but the most rudimentary functions in order to maintain life (Cainites enter torpor).

The length of time spent in the mental prison is determined by the successes obtained:

Successes	Duration
1 success	1 week
2 successes	1 month
3 successes	6 months
4 successes	1 year
5 successes	1 decade
+1 successes	+1 decade

Vampires with Eyes of Chaos can always sense a victim afflicted by this power; an Auspex 4/Dementation 3 Combination Discipline can insert the vampire into the victim's dream world, allowing them to interact with a semblance of normality (and find a way out, at the Storyteller's discretion — though if that's the case, the elder who afflicted the victim is immediately Called to the location of the meddling vampire).

••••• •••• Brother's Gift

This power baffles those few who've heard of it, for it seems totally at odds with Dementation. Brother's Gift frees the subject from all Derangements, granting total lucidity. The ancient Malkavians know the truth; Brother's Gift was a trick Malkav himself learned while studying with his brother Saulot. Malkav could not heal his own pain like Saulot could, but he could shunt it elsewhere, a task that became easier as his brood grew. Malkav poured his madness into the blood, which now carries his madness in the veins of all Malkavians.

System: The Malkavian places her hand upon the face of the target, and the player spends a Willpower point. Brother's Gift then washes away any and all Derangements and anything else influencing the target's mind at that time. The target immediately regains all temporary Willpower, and for the next week, she has one additional die to all Mental dice pools. The Blood Oath, Dominate or Presence influences, psychotropic drugs — all vanish into the infinite madness of Malkav, saved to afflict some future recipient of the blood.

Alternately, the vampire may bury the victim's Derangements until a set time (specified by the vampire), at which point they come roaring back in full force. Thereafter, the victim may never be allowed a moment of lucidity. Brother's Gift cannot cure a Malkavian's clan Derangement. It can alleviate it, though—an application of this power to a Malkavian grants them a small boon, permitting them to shunt their own madness into their blood (allowing them to benefit from a moment of lucidity by spending Willpower).

Dominate

Cainites with Dominate embody every legend about vampire hypnotism. With a simple glance, a master of Dominate breaks wills, enslaves minds, and robs both identity and memory from her victims.

While Dominate is among the fiercest weapons in a vampire's arsenal, it possesses three inherent weaknesses. First, one cannot Dominate another Cainite of thicker blood, which is to say, characters cannot use Dominate on characters of lower Generations. Second, Dominate requires eye contact, with a brief moment where the vampire's gaze can catch a glimpse of her victim's soul. Characters avoiding the vampire's gaze can roll Willpower, difficulty equal to the vampire's Manipulation + Intimidation. Levy a -1 to the difficulty if he tries to hide his eyes, -2 if they're obscured, or -3 if his eyes are fully covered or not at all present (ripped out, for example). Finally, the vampire must be able to communicate her wishes in a way her victim understands. If they do not share a language, she may use gestures or imagery for simple commands. Dominate difficulties are equal to the victim's current Willpower points unless otherwise noted.

• Command

Seizing the gaze of her target with a powerful look, the vampire speaks a single, simple word which her target



must obey. This command cannot be directly harmful, so a vampire cannot command her target to kill himself or anything else similar. Her chosen command word may be concealed within the context of a sentence. For example, take the command, "Stop". A blatant usage within a sentence is, "Stop doing that!" A subtler usage is, "I told him to stop crying, but he sobbed like a wee bairn."

System: Roll Manipulation + Intimidation, with a difficulty equal to the victim's current Willpower points. The more successes achieved on this roll, the better the effect takes hold. A single success may result in the target having only a hazy impression of the command, or the command may activate infrequently, while three or more successes indicate that the command's roots probe deeper and more frequently into the subject's mind. Attempting to force a victim to perform an action that would be contrary to his Nature results in an immediate failure. Giving conflicting or indirectly harmful orders to a victim (such as commanding a target to sleep while in the middle of a duel) adds +1 to +3 to the difficulty, depending on the severity of the order. A command with a difficulty of 10 or more is impossible.

•• Subjugation

With this ability, the vampire may give a more complex command to her target by encoding it into the victim's subconscious. To do this, the vampire must spend a period of time with her subject, during which she must maintain concentration and eye contact. If this mesmerizing session is interrupted, the vampire must find another time to try again. This period of time lasts as long as it takes to implant the suggestion. The wording of this suggestion must be specific ("place poison in the duke's cup" or "dispose of the bodies"). The vampire may also choose whether or not her victim acts upon the suggestion immediately or if it will trigger at a later point in time. Subjugating alters the target's subconscious processing and does not create false memories or illusions. A subject may only follow one set of Dominated instructions at a time.

System: Roll Manipulation + Leadership. The number of successes achieved indicates how well the instructions will hold. One success indicates a weak impression, while five or more successes indicate that your very words have been carved into the target's thoughts. This ability still cannot be used to force a target to directly harm himself or to defy his Nature. Adding a new command using Subjugation before the

old one expires requires a comparison of successes between new and old. The command with the higher number of successes wins. In the event of a tie, the new command overrides the old.

••• The Forgetful Mind

When the vampire learns this ability, she gains the power to reshape her victim's memories. She may erase or recreate a memory entirely, but does so through subtle manipulation as opposed to direct, telepathic alteration of the brain itself. The more thorough the vampire is with the manipulation of her target's mind, the more effective the changed memory will be. For example, "you returned home from Mass in the company of your wife, did your chores and retired to bed early" is more effective than "you went to bed early and saw nothing strange." As an additional benefit, the vampire may also use this ability to discern whether a target's memories have been altered.

System: Roll Wits + Subterfuge. Consult the table below to determine the result.

Successes	Result
1 success	Remove a single memory; lasts as long as one day.
2 successes	Permanently remove, but not alter, one memory.
3 successes	Make slight alterations to the subject's memory.
4 successes	Alter or remove entire scene from the subject's memory.
5 successes	Wholly reconstruct a period of the subject's life.

•••• Conditioning

Through application of subtle (or perhaps, very direct) mental pressure, a vampire wholly controls the mind of her target. This also strips the subject of his personality, rendering him into little more than a puppet. Fortunately, this indelibly ties the puppet to the vampire and makes it nigh-impossible for others to poach her mindless servant.

System: As an extended action, roll Charisma + Leadership. The total number of successes needed is equal to 5 times the target's Self-Control or Instinct. A subject can shake off Conditioning if he is separated entirely from his master for weeks equal to the subject's permanent Willpower. Any contact in the mean time reasserts her dominance instantly. Provided he avoids the vampire for the given period of time, the subject retains his former individuality. A Conditioned character can be Dominated without eye contact. The vampire can use other Dominate powers on him at -2 difficulty. Other characters attempting to Dominate him use his Willpower or his master's, whichever is higher. He can spend a point of Willpower to reinterpret another's Dominate command to be contrary to his Nature.

••••• Possession

At this level of mastery, a vampire may supplant her consciousness into the body of another and assume direct control over her host. While she does this, her own body becomes an empty shell, left immobile and vulnerable where she stood. After the possession, the victim is dimly aware that his body is moving and functioning on its own, but has no power to stop it. This ability may not be used on another supernatural creature, nor on another vampire unless the two share a Blood Oath; it is always easiest to hurt those you hold close.

System: The vampire and the target have a clash of wills. The vampire rolls Charisma + Intimidation and the subject rolls Willpower, each at difficulty 7. The net successes reduce the target's Willpower. When the target's Willpower is reduced to 0, the vampire invades her target's mind. Roll Manipulation + Intimidation and consult the chart below to determine the strength of her grip on the target's body. If the Cainite's original body is destroyed, she may stay in her host body indefinitely, though she remains trapped in the weak prison of flesh. At each sunrise, she must roll Courage at difficulty 8 or be forcefully ejected from the host. If she fails this roll, her soul falls into the astral plane and is permanently lost. While walking about in a mortal's shell, the vampire cannot be "re-Embraced." Any attempt to do so sends her directly to the Final Death.

Successes	Result
1 success	Cannot use Disciplines
2 successes	Can use Auspex and other sensory powers
3 successes	Can also use Presence and other powers of emotional manipulation
4 successes	Can also use Dementation, Dominate, and other powers of mental manipulation
5 successes	Can also use Chimerstry, Necromancy, Thaumaturgy, and other mystical powers

••••• • Chain the Psyche

With this ability, the vampire exacts obedience from her thralls with the currency of pain. At her command, a disobedient subject is wracked with terrible pain until they become compliant again.

System: Spend a blood point and roll Manipulation + Intimidation against a difficulty of the target's Stamina + Empathy. Each success is a turn the target spends writhing, screaming, and weeping, mechanically unable to take any other action. Each such turn causes one level of unsoakable bashing damage.

••••• • Obedience

As a permanent upgrade to her abilities, the vampire no longer needs to make eye contact with those she wishes to subjugate. All this requires is momentary physical contact wherein skin must touch skin.

••••• • Loyalty

The mind-pawns of the vampire become slavishly loyal, clinging to her every word as law and disregarding orders from any outsider.

System: Increase the difficulty of any attempt by another vampire to command, control, coerce, or apply Dominate abilities to those already in the character's control by three. If the Difficulty is 10 or more, the action is simply impossible.

••••• •• Mass Manipulation

The scope of the vampire's command over others transcends the immediately personal, allowing her to apply her Dominate abilities to small groups.

System: Declare the Dominate ability you wish to use and roll against the strongest person in the crowd (by difficulty). For each success achieved, the effect spreads to one additional person in the area. Eye contact is only required for the strongest target.

••••• •• Still the Mortal Flesh

The elder vampire can reach with fingers of the mind, ensnare the functions of a victim's body, and temporarily disable them, up to and including instantly slaying a victim by forcing his heart to cease beating. Despite its title, this ability may even be extended to other supernatural creatures, making a master of this ability a being to be truly feared.

System: Roll Manipulation + Medicine with the difficulty of the victim's current Willpower points + 2. If this total exceeds 10, the attempt is impossible. The effect lasts one turn per success and the player must determine what bodily function he or she is altering or shutting down before he or she makes this roll. Obviously, different alterations affect targets in a variety of ways; shutting down a vampire's heart is a momentary inconvenience but is certain death for a mortal, or anyone else who needs a beating heart.

••••• ••• Far Mastery

With this ability, the vampire shakes off the shackles of intimate, personal contact previously required. No one familiar with the vampire is safe from her mental predations, for now she can snare and control the minds of anyone she knows, regardless of the distance between them.

System: Spend a Willpower point and roll Perception + Empathy at a difficulty of the target's Wits + Stealth. Upon passing this roll, the character may use any Dominate ability on the target as if eye contact had been made. This may be used on other supernatural creatures, but requires the expenditure of an additional point of Willpower.

••••• •••• Speak Through the Blood

Vampires who have reached the pinnacle of this Discipline can spread their influence through the stilled blood of their descendants. Over the course of decades, the targets of this ability gradually shift their goals and machinations to match the impossibly subtle influence of the elder. So imperceptible is this power that targets rarely recognize it for an outside influence, instead often believing that their own tastes and desires have changed with time.

System: The elder vampire expends a permanent Willpower and rolls Manipulation + Leadership at a difficulty of 4 plus the number of Generations to which the command must be passed. When the difficulty exceeds 10, each amount above 10 requires another success to make the command take hold. For example, passing a command to a Tenth Generation character would be difficulty 13 and would require a minimum of 4 successes made at difficulty 9. Unless an elder vampire is specifically aware of where her descendants are at all times (not an impossible task for creatures of such power), she can only pass along general commands, such as "work for the glory of Clan Lasombra," or "destroy those who would stifle knowledge." A vampire currently resting in torpor can still use this ability. If a vampire has reached Golconda, she is unaffected by this power. However, her childer are not as fortunate unless they have also attained enlightenment. Ghouls of the victims of this power are also affected, but feel the inexorable pull of the elder's command at a comparatively glacial pace.

Resisting Dominate

Not all are completely defenseless in the face of a vampire's mind control. This list enumerates what other beings must do to defend themselves.

Mortals: Dominate is intended to prey upon the mortal mind by design. A mundane person must be extraordinarily strong of will, deeply faithful, or perhaps empowered beyond the norm to combat its effects.

Vampires: A vampire cannot use Dominate abilities on another vampire if the target's Generation is lower than hers.

Nature: A target's Nature can make controlling and manipulating him easier or harder, on a scale of +/- 1 to 3 difficulty. A character with a cowardly Nature is much harder to urge into an aggressive action, for example.

Flight

Gargoyles are, after a manner, composite creatures, built from the corpses of other vampires, most often Nosferatu, Gangrel, and Tzimisce. Their bizarre heritage seeps through, causing the Grotesques to express all manner of unusual traits: uncanny appearance, claws and fangs, stone-like flesh, and most distinctively, wings. Not every Gargoyle possesses wings, and not every Gargoyle who has them can fly, but a great many can, and while Flight is a simple Discipline, it is arguably their most powerful.

One Dot: The Gargoyle cannot fly, but she may glide. She can gently descend from any height, and strong winds may provide enough lift to carry her great distances. However, carrying more than 2 lbs./1 kg will cause the Gargoyle to plummet like a rock.

Two Dots: The Gargoyle can fly up to 30 miles per hour/45 km per hour and carry up to 20 lbs./10 kg safely. At this level, his ability to maneuver is still quite undeveloped; to do much more than fly in a straight line, the Gargoyle must make a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty varies depending upon what's being attempted), and dice pools to dodge lose two dice while flying.

Three Dots: The Gargoyle can fly up to 45 miles per hour/60 km per hour and carry up to 50 lbs./25 kg, if her Strength allows for it. She only needs to roll for the most difficult of maneuvers (difficulty 5) and her normal Dodge dice pool is fully available to her.

Four Dots: The Gargoyle can fly up to 60 miles per hour/90 km per hour and carry up to 100 lbs./50 kg, if his Strength allows for it.

Five Dots: The Gargoyle can fly up to 75 miles per hour/120 km per hour and carry up to 200 lbs./100 kg, if her Strength allows for it.

Fortitude

All vampires shrug off wounds that might kill mortals. But vampires with Fortitude become veritable juggernauts, unstoppable by anything but fire and sunlight. Every vampire manifests Fortitude differently. Some simply possess too solid flesh; nothing punctures their statuesque beauty. Others ignore the trauma: their bodies continue to move regardless of the harm caused. No matter how Fortitude manifests, it's a frightening prospect to any mortal witness.

System: A character's Fortitude rating adds to all her Stamina-based dice pools, including her soak rating for bashing and lethal damage. A vampire may use her Fortitude dice as a soak pool against aggravated wounds, which vampires typically have no recourse against. Once per turn, she may spend a blood point to automatically soak her Fortitude in damage, instead of adding it to her Stamina. This can be used to soak aggravated damage as well, but not damage from fire or sunlight.

Advanced Fortitude

As with Celerity, an elder with six or more dots of Fortitude may continue progressing numerically into greater levels of Fortitude, or she may instead choose to take specific, unique powers for her higher dots.

••••• • The Knight's Bane

The advanced practitioner of Fortitude's flesh stands as indiscernible from wrought iron. When mortal weapons strike her, they shatter on impact. When mortal hands strike her, the mortal's bones and flesh suffer as if his blow hit armor.

System: Spend two blood points to activate The Knight's Bane for the scene. When struck with a weapon, if your soak roll reduces damage to zero, The Knight's Bane destroys the weapon. Additionally, when struck by an unarmed attack, apply your soak successes as bashing damage to the attacker.

••••• •• The Blessing of Vitality

This ability, developed by a Salubri warrior, allows a master of Fortitude to bless another with her preternatural resilience. To give the blessing, she paints a small mark of blood upon her subject's forehead, on the seat of the third eye.



System: To activate the power, the vampire spends one blood per dot of Fortitude she wishes to bestow upon another (up to a limit of her own dots), and a single point of Willpower. Roll Stamina + Survival, difficulty 8. Consult the below chart to determine the duration:

Successes	Duration
1 success	One Turn
2 successes	One Scene
3 successes	One Night
4 successes	One Week
5 successes	One Month
6 successes	One Year
7 successes	Indefinitely

Note that this can bestow Fortitude beyond the subject's normal trait limit. This replaces any Fortitude the subject already has; it does not add to any Fortitude the subject possesses.

••••• ••• Armored Flesh

At this phenomenal level of Fortitude, your character's skin is like steel, and is just as durable. She can touch white-hot metals without suffering harm, and her hands and legs are as unto warhammers.

System: Spend two blood points to activate Armored Flesh for the scene. Outside of combat situations, your character suffers no damage from mundane temperatures, blades, or impacts. While a tongue of flame will still affect her, she can forge softened metals with her bare hands. Her unarmed attacks cause Strength + Fortitude in bashing damage. Lastly, she may block any bashing, lethal, or aggravated attack with her bare hands.

Mytherceria

As ambiguous and mysterious as the strange mix of fae magic and vitae that is the Kiasyd's blood, Mytherceria simultaneously obscures and reveals the truth. This Discipline is rarely taught to non-Kiasyd, as the luckless Weirdling needs every advantage she can get.

• Folderol

The Kiasyd's existence itself is a lie, making her hyper-aware to lies told by others. Whenever someone deliberately tells a lie, the Kiasyd's body reacts to it in a unique way; one might experience bleeding from the eyes or ears when she hears a lie, whilst another Weirdling's eyes glow.

System: The Kiasyd knows when a target is deliberately lying. No roll or expenditure is necessary, but the character

must expressly activate it, which may be done with a turn's action. This power does not provide any insight into what the truth might be.

•• Fae Sight

The Kiasyd is a creature born of two worlds, and this allows her to single out those who share a heritage akin to hers. She can also recognize magic that is grounded in life, though not magic born of death. This ability works differently for every Kiasyd; to some, changelings might smell like apples, whilst to another magic appears like fireworks.

System: The Kiasyd sees faeries and other fae-touched mortals for what they are, with no roll required. Additionally, she can detect magic that does not stem from ghosts or the undead, including from mages, werewolves, and other such sources. She can recognize these phenomena for what they truly are, provided she has seen similar effects before.

••• Aura Absorption

Many legends tell of fae feeding on emotions. Subconsciously tapping into her fae-touched heritage, the Kiasyd can absorb emotions and impressions off objects and places, allowing her to relive them while she ingests them. She touches the object, and removes its identity.

System: The player makes a Perception + Empathy roll, with a difficulty determined by the Storyteller based on the age of the impressions and the mental and spiritual strength of the person who left them. One scene-type image and one aspect of the person's identity (Nature, Demeanor, aura, name, sex, or age) is revealed for each success garnered on the roll. Subsequent uses of Aura Absorption or The Spirit's Touch on the same object have their successes penalized with the first Kiasyd's successes.

•••• Changeling Ward

Externalizing her emotional confusion, the Kiasyd creates a ward that disorients and befuddles anyone who sees it. She can inscribe such a ward on an object, a location, or a person. Kiasyd can be very clever using this power; one story tells of a Weirdling that drew a ward on an enemy's shirt as dawn approached, then watched as the unfortunate vampire burned in the sun, unable to remember which way to run.

System: The vampire inscribes a ward symbol in a visible location and the player rolls Intelligence + Legerdemain (difficulty 7 for inanimate objects, or the subject's current Willpower +2). Anyone entering the warded area or touching the warded object loses two dice from his Intelligence dice pools as long as he maintains contact or proximity to the ward. Additionally, anyone seeing the ward becomes disoriented unless he succeeds on a Wits + Investigation roll (difficulty 8). The Kiasyd is immune to her own wards. The ward lasts for a duration indicated by the number of successes on the Kiasyd's roll.

Successes	Duration
1 success	One hour
2 successes	One night
3 successes	One week
4 successes	One month
5 successes	One year

••••• The Riddle Phantastique

The Kiasyd draws on the mystery of her existence to create a riddle for her victim which will completely consume his attention. The victim is so focused on solving the riddle himself that he shuts out anyone trying to tell him the answer.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty of the victim's current Willpower). After a successful roll, the victim can do nothing but sit and ponder the riddle until he accumulates three times the Kiasyd's successes. The subject rolls Wits + Occult (difficulty 8, plus or minus the number of Derangements the victim has, at the Storyteller's discretion). He makes this roll as soon as he is told the riddle, and then once per hour until he has gathered enough successes. Should the victim botch on a roll to solve the Riddle, he takes one level of lethal damage as the mystical enigma racks his body and loses all successes from the accumulated total. This damage cannot be healed until the riddle has been solved. The Kiasyd can end this trance by telling the victim the answer, but no one else can.

••••• • Steal the Mind

The fae are infamous for stealing people's minds and memories. The Kiasyd have developed a similar power. The Kiasyd may even keep these stolen memories, if she's willing to pay the price for them.

System: The player selects a target and rolls Perception + Subterfuge (difficulty equal to the target's current Willpower). Upon success, the Kiasyd "steals" the target's mind (though she retains her own consciousness) and has complete access to all his thoughts and memories. The victim has no knowledge that he has been affected in this manner, though any attempt to harm him — by the Kiasyd or anyone else — returns his mind immediately. He has no access to his Knowledges while this power is active, but Talents and those Skills that work on muscle memory are still present. The Storyteller decides which Abilities are lost. The number



of successes determines the duration of the effect, though the Kiasyd may return the subject's mind at any time before the duration expires. If the victim dies before the memories return, the Weirdling keeps them. If the Kiasyd kills the target to keep his memory, the character may need to roll for degeneration (see p. 114) depending on what Road they follow — Kiasyd on Road of Humanity must always roll.

Successes	Duration
1 success	10 minutes
2 successes	One hour
3 successes	One night
4 successes	One week
5 successes	One month

Obfuscate

To many common men and women living in the 13th century, the Devil lurks in every shadow and hides behind every corner. Evil is ever-present and a threat that can rarely be seen with your eyes.

In the case of those Cainites who have mastered Obfuscate, this paranoia is justified. While evil may be debatable, Obfuscate makes it so that a gifted vampire could be lurking in the darkness ready to strike or flee at any time. The monster must be close at hand to accomplish this, no more than five meters per dots of Wits + Stealth from their would-be victims.

Most mortals, even those trained in Awareness, cannot pierce the monster's deception. Some unique individuals may be able to see straight through these lies; children, horses, dogs, some cats, and very few religious visionaries are unaffected by Obfuscate, but this is all at Storyteller discretion.

Cainite with the Discipline of Auspex may be able to pierce a Cainite's Obfuscate. For more, see Auspex on p. 195.

Most Obfuscate powers last a scene once activated, unless willed away by the Cainite. They take no particular concentration to uphold once raised.

• The Silence of Death

At this rudimentary understanding, the Cainite can make things around them fade to silence, although sounds from beyond the vicinity filter through, anything in the immediate area fades into nothingness. In most cases, this nimbus moves with the Silence of Death.

System: There is no roll. The power creates a zone of absolute silence around the character, with a maximum radius of 7 meters. No sound occurs inside this zone, though sounds originating outside the area of effect may be heard by anyone in it. Additionally, if the player spends two blood points and the character spends five turns in concentration in a room or enclosure, the silence remains in it after the character leaves the room and lasts until she wills it to end. A character can't create more than one zone of silence, so if she wishes to use Silence of Death on herself (or curse another room), the zone in the first room fades automatically.

•• Unseen Presence

At this point, the Cainite can now move about unseen. Shadows cling to her, and kine and Cainite alike look away, their minds not allowing them to see the shadowy monster that lurks in their periphery. While the Discipline protects her from being seen or heard in casual progress, any direct interaction with the world shatters the illusion. Kine will step aside, unknowing, to let an Obfuscated Cainite pass them, but should the Cainite crush a bed of roses, kick a sleeping hound, or pull on a tapestry by passing too close to it, she is outed.

System: There is no roll necessary to conjure an Unseen Presence. Should a Cainite draw attention to herself by sneak attack, blunder, or speech, accidental attention will call for a Wits + Stealth roll, difficulty from 5 to 9, based on the amount of noise or calamity the Cainite has caused. Willful attempts to violate the secrecy of Unseen Presence while still maintaining it may call for a high difficulty and multiple successes. For example, whispering to an enemy without giving away her location would require three or so successes at a difficulty of 7.

Even when seen or unseen, a secondary use of this power allows a Cainite to conceal small items already on her person, or with a successful Manipulation + Subterfuge from 5 to 9, based on the amount of observation she can grasp and conceal an easily moved item.

••• Mask of a Thousand Faces

At this point, the vampire can trick the minds of her victims to hide her face in plain sight. That is to say, she may stand face to face with her victim and not have



Mask of a Thousand Faces

Successes	Results
1 success	The vampire's mass remains the same. She cannot be taller or shorter or much bulkier, but she may change enough features so as to be hard to recognize (though she might be mistaken for a blood relative). A Nosferatu, for example, can appear as a perfectly believable, albeit tragically hideous human.
2 successes	Her appearance is now a complete mask, and she resembles herself in no way, should she wish. She could not be mistaken for her own blood relative even in strong lantern light. She can now change how others perceive her gender.
3 successes	Her intention is made complete, and she wears the mask she intends to wear. Her face is her own canvas.
4 successes	The illusion is now so complete that the victims will imagine the vampire to sound exactly as the mask suggests. If it is a specific person, the illusion forces the victims to imagine the vampire is performing the correct twitches and physical mannerisms of the person they are mimicking.
5 successes	The transformation is complete. Even age and size no longer hold the vampire back. She can make her victims see her as anyone she wants, just by willing it so.

their true visage revealed. By force of mind over mind, the vampire forces her victim to see a face not her own.

This may be a newly imagined character nothing like the vampire at all or slight changes to the Cainite's own features. She may appear taller, of another region or she might even appear as a man. This ability does not confer on the vampire any special talent for imitation or acting as the face she creates; that is on the vampire's talents alone.

System: To create this guise, the player rolls Manipulation + Performance at a difficulty 7. To mimic the face of another, the vampire must have a good look at them. The Storyteller might raise the difficulty on the roll if the vampire has only briefly seen the person they wish to mimic. How successful the disguise is depends on the chart at the top of the page.

Should a vampire wish to create a face much more appealing than her own, she must spend a point of blood for every dot of difference from her Appearance to that of the disguise.

While fooling acquaintances may require only a look at the target and clever crafting of the mask, fooling someone intimately connected to the target is another matter. That requires actual familiarity with the target, and perhaps other rolls to keep the illusion going.

•••• Vanish from the Mind's Eye

The vampire now has so much control over what her victims can and cannot see that she can vanish from plain sight and other senses. Standing before her victims, she wills it so, and she simply vanishes.

This can have serious ripples on those who witness the event. Vampires startle when another of their kind simply vanishes from before their eyes. Humans will actually forget that the vampire was there to begin with. Particularly weak-willed humans will panic and flee the area, though they may or may not recall the reason for their panic (at Storyteller discretion).

System: The player rolls her character's Intelligence + Stealth against their victim's Wits + Alertness. If there is more than one victim, use the highest pool to resist. If the player rolls one to three successes, the vampire fades but does not vanish, appearing ghost-like and translucent. With more than three successes, the vampire vanishes from her victim's senses entirely. If the player achieves more successes than the victim, the victim forgets that the vampire was there to begin with, and tends to not reflect on any conflict in memory that might cause.

It is possible to interact with a ghosted vampire, though difficult. A player tracking such a vampire rolls Perception + Alertness at a difficulty of 8. On a successful roll, the character can interact normally with the ghostlike vampire, though they are likely to be disturbed by his ethereal presence. On a failure, the character loses two dice on any roll to interact with the ghostlike vampire, from attacking them to following them to seducing them.

After witnessing a vampire vanish before their eyes, the player of any other character present must roll Wits + Courage. For humans, this is difficulty 9; for Cainites, difficulty 5. If the player succeeds, the character may act as expected in the situation. A failure on this roll means that the character is beside themselves and unable to act for two turns, unless that action is to flee.

••••• Cloak the Gathering

Now the vampire extends his lie to his companions, and fools his victims to see what he wants for a group instead of simply for himself.

If a character under this cloak does something to expose himself, such as with Unseen Presence, that individual falls out of the ruse. If the vampire who created the cloak exposes himself, all members of the cloak are exposed.

System: For every dot of Stealth the vampire has, she may add one additional person to her cloak. The cloak extends any single Obfuscate power the vampire already has to any character in the cloak. Large objects such as horses or houses may be added at the "cost" of an additional dot of Stealth. All members of the cloak must behave under the limitations of the power extended to them, and will drop out of the cloak should they breach the power's requirement. If the vampire creating the cloak fails to uphold the power's requirements, the whole cloak falls.

••••• • Mask the Devil

Now, the vampire can hide not just her presence to the senses, but hide her soul from the sight beyond sight. Her aura becomes so plain and dull as to go unnoticed, taking on the generic appearance of the average aura around her. Even her soul blends with the crowd. Furthermore, this power disguises her Beast entirely. It simply is not there for anyone with the ability to detect it. For all purposes, the vampire is a run-of-the-mill human.

System: The vampire wills herself to become nothing, and her soul responds. Furthermore, because the Beast appears to be gone, any and all abilities, vampiric or otherwise, that might target the Beast such as the Animalism power Song of Serenity (see p. 192) fail, regardless of rolls.

••••• •• Fortress of Silence

This subtle but potent power cuts the vampire off from unwanted disturbance, allowing clarity of thought and heightened awareness of self. Elders employ it as a way of isolating themselves to regain lost mental fortitude and quickly craft elaborate plans. Fortress of Silence can also be used on others; when used offensively, it causes escalating delirium and confusion as it locks a victim into the deafening and maddening thrum of their own blood flowing in every vein and artery, debilitating even the sturdiest opponents to the brink of insanity.

System: Spend one blood point. Upon activation, this power inverts the effects of Silence of Death, simultaneously cutting a character off from external distractions while inwardly quieting peripheral subconscious background noise and chatter. The difficulty of all Perception-based rolls for characters meditating through Fortress of Silence is increased by two. This focused control over his own thoughts, however, allows him to reinvigorate his will, rejuvenating one lost Willpower point every 15 minutes. After a character ceases meditating and emerges from Fortress of Silence, the difficulty of all rolls involving Mental Attributes and Willpower is decreased by one for the remainder of the evening.

To target an opponent with this power, the player spends one blood point and rolls Stamina + Occult (difficulty equal to the opponent's Willpower). The target acquires a Derangement if the character achieves more successes on the roll than the target has permanent Willpower. With 3 or more successes, this Derangement is permanent; otherwise it lasts for the duration of the night. For the duration of the scene, the amount of successes equal the number of Dexterity and Mental Attribute dice the target is prevented from accessing for any rolls. A target may spend Willpower on a one-for-one basis to regain dice lost through use of this power.

••••• ••• Reaper of the Heart

Many masters of Obfuscate have a reputation for omniscience with the secrets they gather through creative uses of this power. Reaper of the Heart mystically probes a subject's subconscious to adorn a character with the semblance of an individual whom the victim has a strong emotional attachment. This power assuages any doubts the subject might have to the validity of the disguise by forming itself from the most visceral and raw emotional memories associated with the identity.

System: Activate Mask of a Thousand Faces (difficulty equal to the target's Wits + Awareness, maximum 9). Success on the roll transforms the character's countenance into a deeply rooted significant other tied to the target, appropriate to the emotion and relevant to the situation the vampire is seeking to manipulate. The character need not be familiar with or know the significant other in question, or even have seen their face. For the duration of the scene, each success on the roll adds two dice to all of the character's applicable Social rolls against the target and increases the difficulty of all the target's Social rolls involving the character by two. This power doesn't necessarily render the user's appearance into someone still among the living or unliving; long-dead friends and enemies are just as likely, and in such cases the subject remembers the encounter as a dream, a vision, or a ghostly visitation.

••••• •••• Obscure God's Creation

Obscure God's Creation allows a vampire to remove all memory of her existence from reality. That some Methuselahs might be able to achieve such an effect is purely theoretical. Cainite scholars point out (often fearfully)

that if this power does exist, there's absolutely no way to verify it, given that there's no record.

System: The character first enters a place of total isolation from observation, such as a coffin. Roll Wits + Subterfuge (difficulty 9) and spend one dot of Willpower. With a single success, the memories of characters directly associated with the vampire are removed or forgotten, leaving blank and often fragmented recollections that confuse characters attempting to remember events related to the vampire.

With two or more successes, the memories of characters directly associated with the vampire alter within their minds to associate themselves or others (even conflictingly) with actions undertaken by the vampire.

With three or more successes, portions of direct accounts (written or otherwise) that include the vampire erase and disappear from existence. Only glaring holes once occupied by the character's deeds remain, leaving only indirect allusions contained in legends, rumors or myths surrounding the vampire intact in reality.

With four or more successes, any and every trace of the vampire is obliterated from existence entirely. Written documents and memories containing the vampire rewrite themselves to construct verifiable gaps that may occur when this happens (this does not destroy the vampire, only evidence of its existence). Only traces of her existence that the vampire willfully chooses to display appear in history or remain intact in the minds of others.

Obtenebration

Obtenebration, the power to control and manipulate shadows, is the Discipline from which the Clan of Shadows takes its name. Initiates of the Discipline can use it to move and manipulate shadows to their advantage, while masters can give shadows form, substance, and a semblance of life.

The nature of the source of this power causes no end of disagreement among Lasombra. The most ancient elders of the clan claim that the darkness is itself a primal entity, equal and opposite to the force of creation that bears the world into being. Influenced by Zoroastrianism, the eldest usually call this dark force Ahriman. Other Lasombra believe that Obtenebration draws its power from a realm of shadow rather than an entity. Lasombra who look to one of the Abrahamic faiths might call it Hell, while an adherent of the ancient Greek or Roman gods might call it Tartarus.

In more recent nights, the rise of science and scientific thinking has caused many younger Lasombra to eschew the mysticism surrounding Obtenebration. These young Lasombra insist that Obtenebration is simply the manifestation of their Cainite nature. They dismiss talk of shadow realms and dark gods as superstitious, insisting that the secrets to their power can be unlocked through scientific thought and careful study.

Whatever its origin, Obtenebration is wholly unnerving to those who see it in use. It evokes terror in animals or mortals who see the Discipline in use. Even Cainites, whose very existence defies explanation, tend to see Obtenebration as an affront against the laws of nature.

• Shadow Play

While this ability does not allow characters to create shadows that do not already exist, it allows one to manipulate, move, and animate ambient shadows. This can grant social effects, such as using shadows to make yourself more imposing, or shape an environment to suit your needs, creating areas of shadow in which to hide a person or object.

System: Spend one blood point to add one die to a character's Intimidation and Stealth dice pools for the remainder of the scene. While this power is active, characters may also move, change, and animate shadows, which can include separating them from their original source. This can include moving shadows in such a way as to allow the character to see better, which reduces any penalty incurred by darkness by the amount of the character's Obtenebration rating.

Mortals find this power terrifying to behold and must pass a Courage check of 7. If they fail, their Social dice pools are reduced by one when they see this power in use.

•• Nocturne

By concentrating on summoning forth darkness, Lasombra with this ability can summon a writhing cloud of supernatural darkness to engulf an area and obscure all sources of light. The darkness is a manifestation of the Abyss that muffles sound and sight and smothers the life out of the weak. The character who summons it must actively maintain it; the cloud dissipates as soon as the character's concentration is broken.

System: To use this ability, roll Manipulation + Occult with a difficulty of 7. Success results in a cloud of impenetrable blackness 10 feet (or three meters) in diameter anywhere within 50 yards/meters of the character. Each additional success may add ten feet/three meters to diameter of the cloud, at the caster's discretion. The caster may choose to affect an area not in his line of sight, but at a difficulty of 9, and they must spend one point of blood.

All Perception pools are reduced by five dice and the difficulties of all rolls from characters within the cloud are increased by two. Characters with supernatural



methods of enhancing Perception, such as Heightened Senses (Auspex 1) or the Merit Darksight take only a two-dice penalty to their Perception. Additionally, the cloud is a breach of the Abyss into the material world; let loose into the world of the living, it will attempt to drain the life from any beings caught in it. Characters inside the cloud have their Stamina pools reduced by two. For mortals, if this reduces their Stamina pool to zero or lower, they suffocate.

••• Arms of Ahriman

With this ability, a Lasombra shapes the darkness into tentacles that can attack, restrain, and grapple foes.

System: Using this ability requires a roll of Manipulation + Occult, difficulty 7. Each success allows a character to create one tentacle six feet in length that must originate in a source of shadow within 20 feet/ 7 meters of the caster, with Strength and Dexterity ratings equal to the caster's Obtenebration rating. If the caster desires, they may spend blood to increase Strength and Dexterity at the cost of one blood per point increased; they may also increase the length by spending one blood per six feet/ two meters of length per tentacle.

Each tentacle has four health levels, does not take wound penalties, and soaks non-aggravated damage by rolling Stamina + Fortitude equal to the caster's rating. Aggravated damage may not be soaked. Tentacles may attack characters by using Dexterity to attack for Strength + 1 points of bashing damage. Controlling the tentacles requires a moderate amount of concentration on the part of the caster. The tentacles receive one independent action; they act in concert as the caster directs.

•••• Nightshades

This ability allows Cainites to craft lifelike images and illusions out of darkness that are nearly indistinguishable from reality.

The created illusions are still shadows, and last only so long as your character concentrates on them. They can create silhouettes and shades, but are quickly rendered unbelievable in any strong lighting.

System: The player rolls Wits + Occult, difficulty 7. For each success, the character may create one image that the size of a human or smaller, or they may pool their successes to create one very large illusion. Characters who see these illusions must pass a Perception + Alertness roll with difficulty 9 to see through the illusion.

Alternately, the caster may fill an area up to 10 meters per success with primordial visions of chaos, dark reflections of the Abyss and its denizens. This breach of the Abyss causes fear in all who behold it. Characters without Obtenebration have all dice pools reduced by two and their Initiative reduced by three.

••••• Tenebrous Avatar

The Cainite uses her mastery of darkness to become darkness itself, a living reflection of the void of the Abyss. In shadow form, Lasombra are virtually indestructible and may pass through even the smallest of openings.

System: A character with this ability may spend three blood points and spend three turns to metamorphose into a creature of shadowy horror. In this form, vampires may not deal or receive physical damage. They may summon Arms of Ahriman using themselves as an origin by spending the additional blood to activate this power. They may also choose to engulf a victim in shadow, reducing all of their victim's dice pools by an amount equal to their Obtenebration rating. As with Nocturne, mortal characters suffocate if this reduces their Stamina to zero.

While in shadow form, characters take twice the aggravated damage from fire and sunlight and add 1 to the difficulty of checks against Rötschreck.

•••••• The Darkness Within

This power allows the Cainite to call forth the darkness contained within her. Upon activating this power, a night-black cloud escapes the vampire, perhaps seeping from her pores, flying from her mouth, or even bleeding from her eyes and ears. The shadow-cloud engulfs a chosen target, burning it with cold of the abyss, and painfully draining away its blood in moments.

System: The player makes a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) and spends a blood point. The resulting shadow envelops the target and strikes terror within him. Individuals observing the Darkness Within, whether as targets or onlookers, may suffer from intense fright. Any character with fewer Courage dots than the vampire's successes flee, cow in terror, or – if Cainite – must roll to resist Rötschreck.

Individuals touched by The Darkness Within lose two points of blood per turn, though targets may resist this effect by succeeding on a Stamina roll (difficulty 6) each turn he remains in contact with the cloud.

If the vampire is attacked, the darkness immediately returns to her through whatever orifice it originated. The Cainite can summon the darkness back at any time, gaining a number of blood points equal to the number the shadow siphoned from its victims. Taking blood from another in this fashion is similar to drinking from that vampire, and blood bonds may result. Additionally, The Darkness Within may take blood from only one individual per turn, though it may be in contact with many. The vampire may decide, turn by turn, who is the target.

•••••• Walk the Abyss

By traversing the Abyss, this ability allows a character to enter a patch of darkness and emerge from a second patch of darkness within eyesight. Characters may also use this ability to extend their reach into a shadow and grasp something within reach of a second shadow.

System: Both entry and exit points must be large enough to actually contain a person, even if the character is only reaching through the shadows. The character rolls either Intelligence + Stealth (to pass from one shadow to the other) or Intelligence + Brawl (to grasp a distant object), difficulty 7.

Traveling through the Abyss is not for the faint of heart. The character using this ability must pass a Courage check of 5 (difficulty 7 for vampires pulled through the Abyss not of their own volition). Failure results in immediate Rötschreck on emergence from the shadow, while a botch results in the character becoming lost between shadows and trapped in the Abyss. They must make another Intelligence + Stealth roll to open a gateway from the Abyss back into the material realm, with the destination of the new portal to be determined by the Storyteller.

•••••• Shadow Twin

The vampire's control over darkness has progressed to such a degree that he may bestow a limited degree of sentience upon it. By animating his own shadow or that of another, the Cainite can actually "free" the shadow cast by light. While this power is active, the subject casts no shadow, as it has left to pursue the vampire's commands.

This power can unnerve mortals and superstitious vampires alike. The Cainite wielding Obtenebration commands the individual's shadow; some vampires report having seen mortals literally scared to death as their shadows leapt away to taunt or menace them. These shadows cannot come from inanimate things. To be the vector for a Shadow-Twin, the victim must have a soul. (Or something reminiscent of a soul.)

System: The player spends a blood point and makes a Willpower roll (difficulty 8). If the roll succeeds, the shadow is liberated for one hour per success. Sunrise disperses the animated shadow, regardless of successes. The Shadow Twin has Attribute and Ability ratings equal to half those of its parent body (rounded down). The Shadow Twin has an

Obtenebration score equal to one-half of that of the vampire who animated it (rounded down). Mortals and vampires without dots in Obtenebration require a Courage roll upon witnessing this, as per earlier Obtenebration powers.

The twin may separate itself from its source and travel up to 50 feet (15 meters) away, crawling through crevices or sliding up walls. It may attack and be attacked, though it takes and does only half damage (again, round down). Flame and supernatural attacks (such as vampire fangs, mystical powers, etc.) do full damage to the Shadow Twin. If the Shadow Twin is killed, its parent loses half her Willpower points and must roll to avoid Rötschreck (difficulty 9).

••••• ••• Oubliette

The vampire wraps her soul's darkness around a victim and dangles him halfway into the Abyss from where her power comes. In this halfway state, the victim is helpless and can be released only by the vampire who captured him. There is no air, light, or forgiveness in the Abyss, and mortals suffocate quickly while vampires pray for death or madness to free them. To the outside world, the victim is gone, and only a deep shadow remains where they once were. To the inside, there is only a terrible void.

System: The vampire need only spend a blood point to create the Oubliette. To actually create the Oubliette around someone requires a contested Wits + Intimidation roll against the target's Dexterity + Occult (difficulty 7 for both rolls). Mortals suffocate within a number of minutes equal to their Stamina (though the Lasombra may choose to leave their heads exposed or trap a quantity of air inside as well), while vampires are simply suspended impotently in darkness and may not use Disciplines or take other actions. The Oubliette vanishes instantly when touched by sunlight or when the vampire chooses to dismiss it. A vampire may maintain only one Oubliette at a time (which can only contain one victim at a time), which leads some Cainite philosophers to argue that it is a prison inside the vampire herself and not some distant Abyssal nightmare.

••••• •••• Ahriman's Demesne

With a flick of her wrist, the vampire opens up the world to the Abyss, creating a terrible, spherical void in the air. When it closes, friend and foe are wounded and perhaps destroyed. Those who have been killed (or nearly killed) are carried off into nothing. All traces of them are simply gone.

System: The player spends two points of Willpower and concentrates for three turns. During this time, the blackness billows out of the character's hand, growing to fill the area. At the end of the third turn, the player rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 6). Everyone in the darkness' area suffers that many health levels of damage (aggravated, if the victims are vampires) outright — six successes yield six levels of damage, not six dice of damage. After Ahriman's Demesne does its damage, it collapses, taking with it the bodies of any who died and mortals reduced to one health level when they came in contact with the dreadful shadow. For any living thing the Demesne drags off, still alive and screaming, the vampire regains a Willpower point.

Ogham

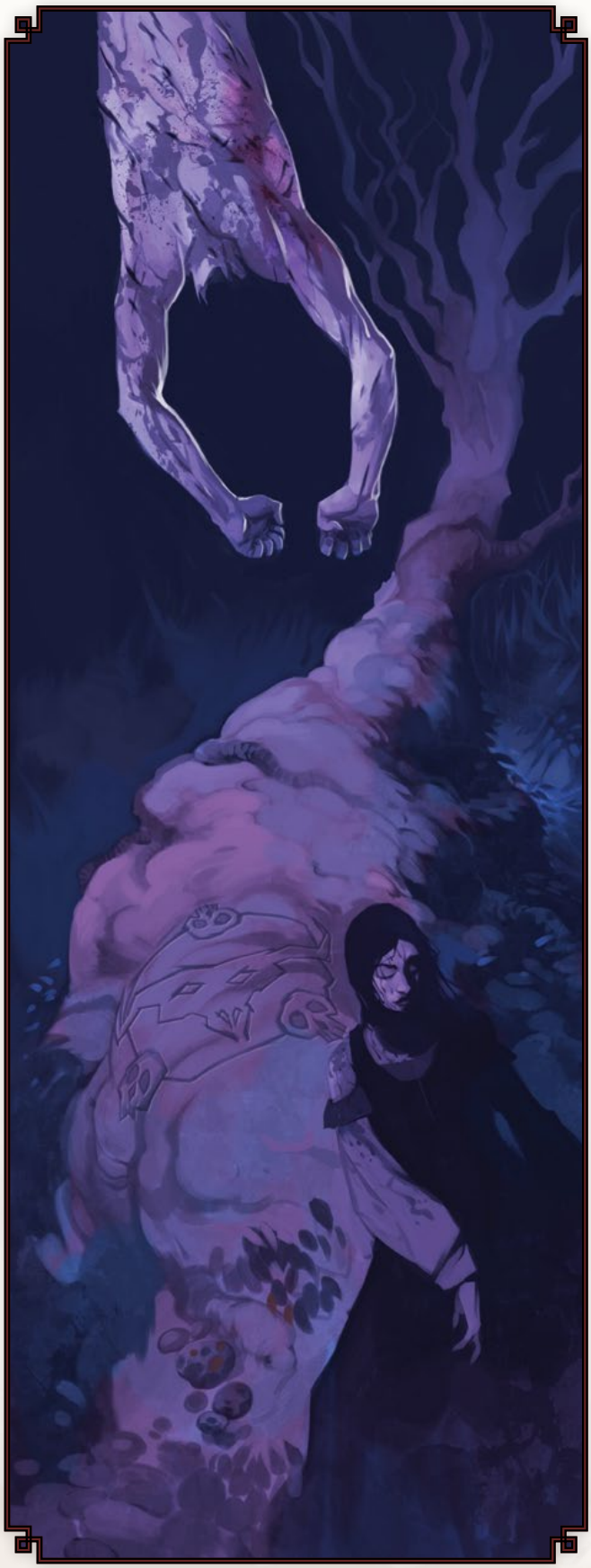
The Lhiannan practice a variant form of Koldunic Sorcery they call Ogham (See Koldunic Sorcery, p. 275), named for the ancient script essential to coaxing the Discipline's force. All within the bloodline bear a shard from a dark, powerful spirit of the land who was once quite vast. Ogham draws from the strength of that spirit and is uniquely found among the Lhiannan; it can only be taught to those suffering the curse of their lineage. Unlike traditional koldunism as practiced by the Tzimisce, Ogham is an innate in-clan Discipline for the Lhiannan. Like the kraina of their koldun cousins, a Lhiannan may learn the Genius Loci kraina (which they refer to as ta-lamh, meaning "earth") as a secondary path of Ogham.

To cast their magic, a Lhiannan must offer up a mortal sacrifice and then roll Attribute + Occult against a difficulty of the power's level + 4.

Lhiannan gain certain benefits depending on the circumstance surrounding their sacrifices:

- If the sacrifice is committed within twenty feet of an oak tree, the Lhiannan may stab the diaphragm of the victim and read omens in the patterns the blood takes as it flows from the wound, granting her the Oracular Ability Merit (see p. 426) for the rest of the evening.
- If the sacrificial victim is of special import (such as a noble or other person of some renown), the Lhiannan gains the Celestial Attunement and Eidetic Memory Merits (see p. 422) and may also predict the weather and celestial phenomena (like eclipses, and comets or meteors) with perfect accuracy for the rest of the remainder of the night.

Ogham is strongest within the wild; the difficulty to cast any Ogham power is reduced by two if the Lhiannan is a mile (1.5 km) away from, and increased by 1 if within



half a mile (1 km) of an inhabited community or cultivated area of land (like a farm or a village). Unless otherwise noted, Ogham powers last for one scene.

• Consecration of Esus

Through the spirit-shard in her blood, a Lhiannan awakens plant life to act in her defense; roots and grass entangle feet, and trees creak and stir unnaturally to block her foes.

System: This power takes a scene to prepare, requiring a mortal sacrifice and a living tree with a branch capable of sustaining the weight of a human adult. The Lhiannan carves the symbol of Esus (three skulls forming a triangle surrounding the head of a bull) into the trunk of the tree. She feeds a mortal sacrifice one point of her blood and hangs the victim by the neck or ankle with a rope suspended from the branch of the tree, and then flays the victim to death. As the victim spins, his blood paints a spiral pattern on the foliage below. Tracing the area takes one turn and rouses all plant life within a 3 yard/meter diameter, centering on the victim. Lhiannan often hang multiple victims at appropriate intervals to extend the area of this power.

When the blood has been sown for all sacrifices, the player makes the activation roll (Attribute: Dexterity). If the roll is successful, the plants remain slumbering indefinitely until triggered by a mortal or Cainite entering the area affected (animals and Lhiannan do not awaken the plants). When activated, those in the area except any Lhiannan suffer a -2 penalty to all dice pools from distraction and physical interference, and are reduced to half their movement speed. Additionally, victims must make a Dexterity + Athletics roll each turn to avoid three dice of bashing damage as the plants spring to life, tripping, clutching, and assaulting those within their wake.

•• Woad of Teutates

By illustrating mystical runes on her sacrifice's body in vitae, a Lhiannan can invoke spirits of war to infuse her, direct her Beast, and gird her for battle.

System: This power takes a scene to prepare and requires a mortal warrior. The Lhiannan feeds the warrior a handful of soma (psychedelic mushrooms), then waits an hour for the soma to take effect. Next, she traces the symbol of Teutates (a serpent knotted into figure eights, surrounding a triangular spiraling triple knot) onto the warrior from head to toe, with woad mixed with blood. The Lhiannan slices open her wrist to drown the warrior in one blood point of her vitae before decapitating him. Make the activation roll (Attribute: Stamina). If successful, the woad freezes like hoarfrost, then begins to flicker with a baleful blue sheen. The woad remains active for up to a scene. While the

Lhiannan carries the severed head, the vampire enjoys a handful of advantages:

- Ignore all dice pool penalties inflicted by injury.
- Add the number of successes achieved to any damage dice pools inflicted by the Lhiannan against an enemy. For example, three successes would add three dice of damage to each successful attack.
- The first time the Lhiannan takes damage in the scene, downgrade a number of health levels equal to her successes in activating Woad of Teutates. For example, with two successes, if the Lhiannan suffers three lethal damage after soak, it would become one lethal, two bashing. If she suffered seven aggravated damage, it would become five aggravated and two lethal damage. Rather than downgraded, bashing damage is simply ignored.
- Subtract the successes from difficulty rolls for Rötschreck.

••• Mallacht of the Cyoeraeth

The Lhiannan inflicts a mhallacht (curse) upon an enemy by etching her target's name into the body of one beloved by him.

System: This power takes a scene to prepare and requires a mortal friend or close relative of the target. The Lhiannan restrains the target's companion onto a dolmen she has erected (or found), then slices open her wrist and feeds one blood point and a handful of mistletoe berries to the companion. The Lhiannan then uses a sharp instrument to repeatedly carve the name of her target in the Ogham language across the entirety of the companion's body and winds a metal torc around his neck. Once the ceremony is complete, make the activation roll (Attribute: Charisma). If the roll is successful, the companion's skin changes color to a sickly green and a thick fog (three yards/meters high and twenty yards/meters in width) forms around the companion, following him when he moves. Upon entering it, the fog obscures all normal vision within five feet/two meters. The Lhiannan releases the companion, who runs terrified toward the location he believes the target to be, while continually screaming the target's name in a shrill tenor. The companion will search day and night until he finds his target (or is destroyed in the interim), needing neither food, water, nor rest.

The mhallacht takes effect when the target sees his name inscribed on the companion's body. He does not need to understand the language used. As soon as the mhallacht takes hold of the target, the companion's heart explodes from fright (killing him), and the target loses the power of speech; he can grunt or moan, but cannot say any words. Additionally, the target becomes ill and weak and parts of his mind become disconnected from one another. All difficulties on Physical rolls increase by two, all wound penalties are increased by one die, and he must spend one Willpower point (on top of any other cost) in order to attempt a Knowledge roll or use any magical ability or Discipline, even if the power is innate. This Willpower doesn't buy him a success on that roll; it simply allows him to make the attempt. If the target is a Cainite, he cannot spend blood while this power is in effect. The effects of Mhallacht of the Cyoeraeth last for twenty-four hours after finding its target.

Supplementary to the standard effects, should the mhallacht be enacted on dates corresponding to the Yule (20th-23rd of December), Imbolc (2nd of February), Ostara (19th-22nd of March), Beltane (1st of May), Midsummer (19th-23rd of June), Lughnasadh (1st of August), Mabon (21st-24th of September), or Samhain (1st of November), the Lhiannan may commemorate Cernunnos by bolting and tying a pair of stag's antlers to the companion's head. When the power takes effect, the target must succeed in a Courage roll (difficulty 8). If the target is a mortal and fails the roll, he is overcome by fear and flees in the opposite direction of the companion until he collapses from exhaustion. If the target is a Cainite and fails the roll, all difficulties to avoid frenzy increase by two.

•••• Woad of Taranis

Through burning an effigy to the Sky God and marking his chest with an ancient sigil, a Lhiannan is partially warded from the fiery curse of flames and the sun.

System: This power takes three evenings to prepare and requires one mortal victim. During the three nights of preparation, the Lhiannan must construct a twenty-five foot/ eight meter tall Wicker Man. Once constructed, the player spends five blood points during the course of five turns while the Lhiannan cuts his wrist and splatters his blood over the effigy. The Lhiannan restrains his mortal sacrifice within the effigy, then lights it on fire. The Wicker Man burns to ash, which takes about three hours. If the Lhiannan has a container of some kind, he may save the ashes collected for later use. Next, he mixes a portion of the ashes with woad and takes one turn to paint the symbol of Taranis (an eight-spoked wheel) onto his bare chest. After the symbol has been traced, the player makes the activation roll (Attribute: Stamina). If successful, the symbol sears into his flesh amidst a clap of thunder, causing one level of unsoakable



aggravated damage and leaving a charred, dull grey scar. While this power is active, the Lhiannan is immune to Rötschreck, and all damage from fire and sunlight is considered lethal and may be soaked normally. Only one use of the Woad of Taranis may be drawn from the ashes of a single Wicker Man.

••••• Thirst of Donn

Thirst of Donn allows the Lhiannan to drain the very blood of the earth through her spirit-shard. They often use this power to ruin crops and spread desolation into civilized communities.

System: This power takes a scene to prepare and requires a minimum of one mortal sacrifice. The Lhiannan restrains the sacrifice onto a dolmen she has erected (or found), then slices open her wrist and feeds one blood point to the victim(s) before plunging a sharp instrument into his diaphragm. The player then makes the activation roll (Attribute: Strength), with each victim sacrificed beyond the first reducing the difficulty by one (minimum 4). If successful, the Lhiannan suffers from the Touch of Frost Flaw (see p. 426), but gains the ability to consume the spiritual energy of the land itself for the remainder of the evening. Each "drink" takes one turn and allows the Lhiannan to regain one point of Willpower and one blood point by depleting an area's energies, turning a ten-foot radius tract of land into a barren wasteland incapable of sustaining life for an entire year. If Thirst of Donn is performed within an area of special power and significance (such as the Giants' Dance), the Lhiannan permanently gains a Spirit Mentor (see p. 426) if she doesn't already have it.

Potence

Vampiric Potence is Caine's fury running through undead muscles. A master of Potence can lift many times her weight, shatter stone with a punch, and leap across a churchyard the way a child might over a creek.

System: For each dot of Potence the vampire possesses, add one die to all Strength-based dice pools. Spend one blood point reflexively to turn those dice into automatic successes for the turn. In hand to hand combat, this means automatic successes on the damage roll.

Advanced Potence

As with Celerity and Fortitude, masters of Potence can choose between increasing their raw ability and adding specific gifts at each level above five.

••••• • Crush

The vampire with this refined application of Potence knows just how to apply her deadly strength to destroying inanimate objects.

System: Spend two blood points to activate Crush for the scene. With a successful attack against an object, your character automatically destroys it. In the case of weapons or armor on active combatants, this may mean a targeted attack. If you choose to destroy a victim's weapons or armor, they take no damage from the attack.

••••• •• Brutality

With this level of power, the Cainite's hands move through flesh the way a mortal's moves through packed sand.

System: A character with Brutality causes lethal damage with her unarmed strikes. Her unarmed strikes may only be dodged, not blocked or parried, as her punches move weapons and shields aside effortlessly. This power does not require activation, and is considered "always on" unless the user wills it.

••••• ••• Aftershock

The eldest practitioners of Potence can infuse the power of their blood to delay the physical devastation of her attacks. Instead of destroying an opponent immediately, she stores her Potence in their body for later effect.

System: Make an attack normally. Spend three blood points and do not add Potence to the damage pool. If the attack causes the victim one point of damage after soak, Aftershock takes effect. Instead of adding Potence as dice or automatic successes to the damage pool, Aftershock "stores" those automatic damage levels for later. Specify any time in the next 24 hours. At that time, the victim suffers lethal damage equal to your character's Potence to the victim. A character may only have one instance of Aftershock "storing" damage at a time.

Presence

Presence is the Discipline of emotional manipulation. A vampire with this power can change how others feel about her. It ranges from the most subtle nudge to a storm of emotions. It can inspire everything from passionate love to mind-numbing terror.

Presence has three advantages. First, a Cainite may use Presence on crowds, not just individuals. Second, it is subtle. A vampire can manipulate the emotion of others without giving away her nature. Third, it transcends all barriers: gender, class, age, religion, even supernatural nature. This power affects mortals and vampires alike, as well as other supernatural beings.

However, the drawback is that Presence controls the emotions of its targets, not their actions. Unless Presence is combined with an understanding nature of the target and subtle manipulation, it is a blunt and unpredictable tool for control.

Anyone can resist Presence for one scene by spending a Willpower point and then succeeding on a Willpower roll (difficulty 8). The affected individual must keep spending Willpower points until he is no longer in the presence of the vampire (or, in the case of Summon, until the effect wears off). Vampires three or more Generations lower than the wielder need only spend a single Willpower to ignore the Presence for an entire night. In this case, no Willpower roll is needed.

• Awe

Awe lets a vampire capture the attention of those around her. The victims are drawn to the vampire and can't help themselves from trusting her laughing at her jokes. The vampire commands their attention and shapes it to suit her needs.

While Awe is most effective for first impressions it also affects those who already have an opinion of the vampire. If someone thinks the vampire is treacherous liar, then Awe alone is not enough to change his mind, but it can be enough to make him consider that perhaps, just this one time, the vampire is telling the truth.

Awe doesn't override self-preservation. If danger strikes, it breaks the spell of fascination, as does leaving the area. The memory of the meeting remains, however, and the target remembers how he felt about the vampire, which will influence future interactions.

System: The player chooses what impression she wants to make. The impression should be simple, something that can be summed up in one or two words. Honest, competent, or dangerous are good examples. The player then spends a blood point and rolls Charisma + Performance (difficulty 7). The number of successes rolled determines how many people are affected, as noted on the chart below. If there are more people present than the character can influence, Awe affects those with lower Willpower ratings first. The power stays in effect for the remainder of the scene or until the character chooses to drop it.

Successes	Result
1 success	One person
2 successes	Two people
3 successes	Six people
4 successes	20 people
5 successes	Everyone in the vampire's immediate vicinity

Those affected can use Willpower points to overcome the effect, but must continue spending Willpower every scene for as long as they remain in the same area as the vampire. As soon as an individual spends a number of Willpower points equal to the successes rolled, he shakes off Awe completely and remains unaffected for the rest of the night. The character gains additional dice equal to her dots in Presence to any action that would foster or take advantage of the chosen reaction against an affected individual.

•• Dread Gaze

Like how a spark can light a forest fire, Dread Gaze lets a vampire take a spark of fear and turn it into paralyzing terror. By revealing her predatory nature, such as baring her fangs, snarling, displaying her claws, or crying for blood, Dread Gaze inflames that natural reaction into mindless terror. Victims flee recklessly, freeze with fright, or cower and beg for mercy.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Intimidation (difficulty equal to the victim's Wits + Courage). Success indicates the victim is cowed, while failure means the target is startled but not terrified by the sight. Three or more successes means he runs away in abject fear; victims who have nowhere to run claw at the walls, hoping to dig a way out rather than face the vampire. Moreover, each success subtracts one from the target's action dice pools for the next turn. The character may attempt Dread Gaze once per turn against a single target, though she may also perform it as an extended action, adding her successes in order to subjugate the target completely. Once the target loses enough dice that he cannot perform any action, he's so shaken and terrified that he curls up on the ground and weeps. Failure during the extended action means the attempt falters. The character loses all her collected successes and can start over next turn, while the victim may act normally again.



••• Entrancement

With Entrancement, a vampire binds a victim into her service. Entranced individuals have their feelings twisted so that they want to serve the vampire. They want to heed her every wish, need, or desire, believing that they do so out of true devotion.

Since only the target's emotions are snared, not their minds, they are free to use their skills in the vampire's service, but it makes them unpredictable.

Also, since Entrancement is temporary, a smart Cainite always has a plan on how to deal with the servant once the effect wears off. Servants might react with anger, horror or hatred if they understand that they have been bewitched. Some vampires prefer to dispose of them, while others bind them permanently with a blood oath.

System: The player spends a blood point and rolls Appearance + Empathy (difficulty equal to the target's current Willpower points); the number of successes determines how long the subject is Entranced, as per the chart below. (Subjects can still spend Willpower to temporarily resist, like any other Presence power.) The Storyteller may wish to make the roll instead, since the character is never certain of the strength of her hold on the victim. The vampire may try to keep the subject under her thrall with further blood and further rolls.

Successes	Result
Botch	Subject cannot be Entranced for the rest of the story.
Failure	The power fails.
1 success	One hour
2 successes	One day
3 successes	One week
4 successes	One month
5 successes	One year

•••• Summon

This impressive power enables the vampire to call to herself any person she has ever met. This call can go to anyone, mortal or supernatural, across any distance within the physical world. The subject of the Summoning comes as fast as he is able, possibly without even knowing why. He knows intuitively how to find his Summoner — even if the vampire moves to a new location, the subject redirects his own course as soon as he can. After all, he's coming to the vampire herself, not to some predetermined site. Although this power allows the vampire to call someone across a staggering distance, travel is slow in the Dark Medieval World, so it is most useful when used locally. Even if the desired person books the fastest ships or rides expertly, travel can take days, weeks, or months. Obviously, the individual's financial resources are a factor; if he doesn't have the money to travel quickly, it will take him a far greater time to get there.

The subject thinks mainly of reaching the vampire, but does not neglect his own well-being. This is less of a consideration if he only has to cross a room, unless he must get through a gang of brutes set on beating him to a pulp to do so. The individual retains his survival instincts, and while he won't shirk physical violence to reach the vampire's side, he won't subject himself to suicidal situations.

The Summoning dissipates at dawn, unless extra successes have been spent to prolong it. Still, as long as the vampire is willing and able, she is assured to greet her desired subject some night — as long as nothing happens to him along the way, of course.

System: The player spends a blood point and rolls Charisma + Subterfuge. The base difficulty is 5; this increases to difficulty 7 if the vampire only met the subject briefly. If the character used Presence successfully on the target in the past, this difficulty drops to 4, but if the attempt was unsuccessful, the difficulty rises to 8. The vampire can allocate successes either to make the subject make haste or to prolong the duration of the Summoning.

Successes	Result
Failure	Subject cannot be Summoned by that vampire for the rest of the night.
1 success	Subject approaches slowly and hesitantly.
2 successes	Subject approaches reluctantly and is easily thwarted by obstacles.
3 successes	Subject approaches with reasonable speed.
4 successes	Subject comes with haste, overcoming any obstacles in his way.
5 successes	Subject rushes to the vampire, doing anything to get to her.

You can also spend extra successes to prolong the Summoning. If you summon a mortal, one success can be spent on prolonging the Summoning by one day. For vampires, two successes need to be spent to prolong the Summoning by one night. Both mortals and vampires alike will seek rest and shelter when they feel that it is needed.

••••• Majesty

At this stage, the vampire can augment her supernatural mien a thousandfold. The attractive become paralyzingly beautiful; the homely become hideously twisted. Majesty

inspires universal respect, devotion, fear — or all those emotions at once — in those around the vampire. The weak scramble to obey her every whim, and even the most dauntless find it almost impossible to deny her. Affected individuals find the vampire so formidable that they dare not risk her displeasure. Raising their voices to her is difficult; raising a hand against her is unthinkable. Those few who shake off the vampire's potent mystique enough to oppose her are shouted down by the many under her thrall before the Cainite need even respond.

Under Majesty's influence, hearts break, power trembles, and the bold shake. Wise Cainites use this power with caution against mortal and immortal alike. While Majesty can cow influential politicians and venerable primogen, the vampire must be careful that doing so doesn't come back to haunt her. After all, a dignitary brought low before others loses his usefulness quickly, while a humiliated Cainite has centuries to plan revenge.

System: No roll is required on the part of the vampire, but she must spend a Willpower point. A subject must make a Courage roll (difficulty equal to the vampire's Charisma + Intimidation, to a maximum of 9) if he wishes to be rude or simply contrary to the vampire.

Success allows the individual to act normally for the moment, although he feels the weight of the vampire's displeasure crushing down on him. A subject who fails the roll aborts his intended action and even goes to absurd lengths to humble himself before the vampire, no matter who else is watching. The effects of Majesty last one scene.

••••• • Kingmaker

The power called Kingmaker lets the vampire extend her Presence to another individual and grant them social graces that normally is beyond them. The most clueless brute can gain an understanding of human nature, the most obnoxious brat can transform into a perfect example of grace and virtue, and the shyest wallflower can become the charismatic heart and soul of the feast. Yet, Kingmaker is even more powerful when turned on an already competent individual. An already competent speaker can with the blessing of Kingmaker hold a speech that will be remembered for millennia. A skilled singer will be able to sing with the voice of an angel. A charming smile can be made so radiant it melts the blackest of hearts.

To use this power, the vampire must be within line of sight and earshot of the target, and must remain in the target's presence at all times.

System: The player chooses a target within line of sight and earshot of the vampire. The player then spends a blood point and rolls Manipulation + Empathy. The normal difficulty is 7, but if the vampire and target know each other well, the difficulty is reduced to 5.

A success lets the vampire add as many bonus dice as she had dots in Presence to all the target's Social rolls. Every 2 successes also lets the vampire reduce the difficulty on the target's Social rolls. A failure means that the vampire can no longer assist the target. The power remains in effect for a scene, or until the vampire decided to no longer uphold it.

••••• • Love

The blood oath is one of the most powerful tools in an elder's inventory. However, many young vampires have been warned of the dangers of being blood bound, so alternatives are needed. The Presence power called Love is one such alternative, as it simulates the bond without any of the messy side effects. While not as sure a method of control as a true blood bond, nor as long-lasting, Love is still an extremely potent means of command.

System: The player spends a blood point and rolls Charisma + Subterfuge (difficulty equal to the target's current Willpower points). Success on the roll indicates that the victim feels as attached to the character as if he were blood bound to her. Each success also reduces the victim's dice pool by one die for any Social rolls to be made against the vampire. This power lasts for one scene and can be applied to the same victim over multiple scenes in the same night.

••••• • Paralyzing Glance

Some elders have honed their mastery of Dread Gaze to such a degree that they are said to be able to paralyze with a look. The power's name is something of a misnomer, as victims of this power are not precisely paralyzed in a physical sense, but rather frozen with sheer terror.

System: The character must make eye contact with her intended victim. The player then rolls Manipulation + Intimidation (difficulty equal to the target's current Willpower points). Success renders the victim so terrified that he falls into a whimpering, catatonic state, unable to take any actions except curling into a fetal position and gibbering incoherently.

The condition lasts for a length of time determined by the number of successes rolled. If the victim's life is directly threatened (by assault, impending sunrise, etc.), the poor wretch may attempt to break out of his paralysis with a Courage roll (difficulty equal to the character's Intimidation + 3). One success ends the paralysis.

Successes	Result
1 success	Three turns
2 successes	Five minutes
3 successes	Remainder of the scene
4 successes	One hour
5 successes	Rest of the night
6+ successes	A week (or more, at Storyteller discretion)

••••• • Spark of Rage

A vampire possessing this power can shorten tempers and bring old grudges and irritations to the boiling point with a minimum of effort. Spark of Rage causes disagreements and fights, and can even send other vampires into frenzy.

System: The player spends a blood point and rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 8). The successes rolled determine the number of victims affected. If this power is used in a crowd, the people in closest proximity to the character are affected. A vampire affected by this power must spend a Willpower point or roll Self-Control/Instinct (difficulty equal to the character's Manipulation + Subterfuge); failure sends the target into frenzy. If the character using Spark of Rage botches the activation roll, he immediately frenzies.

Successes	Result
1 success	Two people
2 successes	Four people
3 successes	Eight people
4 successes	20 people
5 successes	Everyone in the character's immediate vicinity

••••• •• Cooperation

Peaceful coexistence is not a common tenet of vampiric society. With that in mind, this power can nudge those affected by it into a fragile spirit of camaraderie.

Some cynical (or realistic) Ventrue claim that their clan's mastery of this Presence effect is the sole reason that anything grand is ever accomplished. Others retort that is the only way arrogant and pompous Ventrue ever gets anything done. Few dispute that Cooperation can wield frightening, effective results.

System: To invoke Cooperation, spend a blood point and roll Charisma + Leadership (difficulty 8). The number of individuals affected is determined by how many successes the player rolls. Cooperation lasts for the remainder of the scene in which it is invoked, though particularly strong users of Presence may create longer-lasting feelings of non-aggression by spending a Willpower point once per scene. While this power is in effect, all those under its influence are more favorably disposed toward one another and are more willing to extend trust or make cooperative plans.

Players should simply roleplay Cooperation's effects, but there are some concrete ramifications to the power's use. For example, Self-Control/Instinct difficulties to resist frenzy in response to insults from within the target group are decreased by three, and certain Social Flaws may have less of an impact for the duration of Cooperation. Other effects may rise at Storyteller discretion.

Successes	Result
1 success	Two people
2 successes	Four people
3 successes	Eight people
4 successes	20 people
5 successes	Everyone in the character's immediate vicinity

••••• ••• Ironclad Command

Any individual can normally resist the powers of Presence for a brief time through an effort of will. Some elder Toreador and Ventrue have developed such force of personality that their powers of Presence cannot be resisted without truly heroic efforts.

System: After a character learns this power, it is always in effect. A mortal may not spend Willpower to resist the character's Presence (for purposes of this power, the definition of "mortal" does not include supernaturally active humans such as ghouls or those who possess True Faith). A supernatural being must roll Willpower (difficulty of the character's Willpower + 2; difficulties over 10 mean that the roll cannot even be attempted) the first time he attempts to spend a Willpower point to overcome the character's Presence. For the rest of the night, the maximum number of Willpower points he can spend to resist the vampire's Presence powers is equal to the number of successes he rolled. A botch doubles the character's Presence dice pools against the hapless victim for the remainder of the night.

••••• •••• Pulse of the People

A vampire who has developed her Presence to this terrifying degree can control the emotional climate of the entire region around her, up to the size of a large city or, in less populated areas, whole regions encompassing several towns and small villages. This power is always in effect on a low level, attuning those who dwell in the area to the Cainite's mood, but it can also be used to project a

specific emotion into the minds of every being in the area. Pulse of the People affects residents much more strongly than travelers, and also has a significant impact on those individuals who might be elsewhere at the time but who still have strong ties to the affected place.

System: The character must be present in the place in question, and have at least a casual, personal knowledge of its people and customs. The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Charisma + Leadership (difficulty 9, though specializations or Storyteller fiat may decrease this difficulty if the character is intimately familiar with a particular place). The number of successes indicates how long mortal residents are affected by the particular emotion that the character broadcasts; visitors with no ties to the area and supernatural beings are affected for a duration one success step lower. The character can choose to terminate this effect at any time before it expires.

Pulse of the People can be used by a character in torpor.

Successes	Result
1 success	One minute
2 successes	10 minutes
3 successes	One hour
4 successes	One day
5 successes	One week

Protean

The vampire does not change the Beast, but the Beast does change the vampire. There is no greater demonstration of the mutative ability of the vampire than the Discipline of Protean. The vampire physically expresses the wildness in her nature and the dangers of the Beast by shapechanging, brutal natural weaponry, and many other signs of the mythological vampire made manifest.

While the forms are wild and the changes dynamic, some rules apply almost universally.

Vampires can use other Disciplines while transformed from their average shape, though the Storyteller may take exception to this in logical cases. Without eyes, one cannot use Dominate, for example.

A Cainite's clothing and adornments transform with her, absorbed into her body when she undergoes a dramatic change. Armor and other protective items may be absorbed but will provide no boon. Protean does not provide the ability to change anything not tight to the skin or larger than a hip bag. Even a large winter cloak might be left behind, or anything bigger than a dagger. A staked vampire remains staked no matter what form she is in. There are stories of elder levels of Protean that can repulse a stake over time, but that's an exception.

• Eyes of the Beast

The Damned's eyes glow and she can see even in pitch blackness.

System: No roll is necessary. The vampire simply wills herself to see in the darkness. A vampire with this power ignores blind fighting penalties (p. 346). When Eyes of the Beast is active, dealing with humans is complicated. In addition to likely accusations of witchcraft and demonic possession, Eyes of the Beast reduces the dice pool to most Social rolls with kine by one while the power is active. However, the dice pool for Intimidation rolls increases by one when the power is active.

•• Feral Weapons

The Damned are creatures built to destroy everything around them, and Feral Weapons may be the clearest example of their innate tendency toward destruction. With effort, the vampire forces bone or cartilage talons to rip through their fingertips, nail beds, or even finger pads in some cases. These talons differ from vampire to vampire in appearance, but never in violent potential. They are especially good at incising tender flesh and supernatural meat. Similarly, they rend metal and cleave stone with considerable ease.

System: The character spends effort to force the claws through her skin. They may erupt from hands, feet, or perhaps even her face like tusks or horns. Her player marks off a blood point spent. The transformation is reflexive and lasts for the scene.

Her claws deal Strength +1 aggravated damage. The dice pool for climbing rolls increases by two when using Feral Weapons in the hands and feet.

••• Earth Meld

The transformative becomes the transcendental given enough time and practice. The Damned with this level of Protean may, with effort, force her body down into the earth to slumber in a space somewhere between the earth, heaven, and hell. A vampire interred in the dirt, then, enters an ecstatic state just above torpor where they remain vaguely aware of the environment above them, though often the slumber seems more important than the outside world at the time. This may be why it is rumored the Eldest of the old choose to slumber in soil.

System: To enter the soil, the vampire spends a turn joining her flesh with the dirt. Her player spends a blood point and at the end of the turn she is gone.



Sample Animal Forms

Wolf: A vampire in wolf form does +1 Strength aggravated damage with tooth and claw. Difficulties of any Perception roll are reduced by two. The vampire can run at twice her running speed.

Bat: As a bat, the vampire's Strength is reduced to 1. She can fly at speeds up to 20 miles per hour/30 km per hour. Hearing-based Perception rolls have their difficulty reduced by three. Any attempts to attack the bat are reduced by two dice due to the bat's small size.

Rat: The rat form is small and swift, so the vampire's running speed is doubled. Her strength is reduced to 1. Her bite deals Strength aggravated damage. Attacks against her small form are are reduced by one die.

If there is danger in the vampire's proximity while she sleeps, the player rolls her Road rating (difficulty 6) to pull her from her state and arise from the dirt.

Disturbing the soil where the Damned sleeps is both difficult and dangerous. The act requires a Strength 5 Feat of Strength roll to interrupt the sleeper's bond with the earth. Worse, when the sleeper dislodges, she is forced out of her ecstasy fully awake and angry. Always angry.

•••• Shape of the Beast

The Damned reaches a plateau of symbiosis with the night when she expresses Shape of the Beast. She finds a unique fight and flight form to take in keeping with the mythological associations for the Damned in her region. In most of Christendom, a vampire with this power becomes a bat or a wolf, though local mythology dictates other forms in other parts of the world, such as vultures and jackals or crow and tigers.

System: Changing forms takes three

full turns and costs a blood point. The vampire can reduce that time by spending additional blood points to reduce the process by a turn per point, to a minimum potential reflexive change with four blood points. He remains in this form until the next twilight unless he chooses to leave the form.

A vampire may use any Discipline in animal form that he possesses and has the physical capacity to practice. For example, complicated Thaumaturgical rituals would be impossible for a wolf, and Dominate commands would be impossible to deliver as a bat.

The vampire gains benefits common to the animal form he takes. Storytellers and players should agree on the ability of any non-standard animal forms.

••••• Lurking Mists

At this point, the vampire's body and soul are united in purpose, and even becoming insubstantial is only a matter of desire. The vampire can become as mist, moving as a brisk pace and able to slip herself through narrow cracks under doors, through arrow slots and along the narrowest ledges. A strong enough wind can blow her mist form off course temporarily, but she cannot be blown apart. She can get to her prey, no matter where they hide.

System: No roll is needed; expending a blood point activates this power. The transformation takes three turns, though as with Shape of the Beast, that time may be reduced by spending additional blood points. A vampire in who is mist form may use any Discipline she has the physical capacity to use.

Mundane physical assault does nothing to the Lurking Mists. Assailants must utilize supernatural means or aggravated damage to harm the Cainite. Even then, fire and sunlight do one less die of damage to a vampire who is so changed. The mist cannot physically attack anything either, including another in mist form.

••••• • Adaptation

Your character's body can shift in subtle, rapid ways to deflect the irritations and threats of her immediate environment. She can adapt her senses to make due with differences and absences.

System: Spend a blood point to activate Adaptation. The transformation takes one turn to complete. Aside from sunlight and fire, she suffers no harm from her environment, nor does she suffer environmental penalties. This includes damage and penalties from the weather, extreme temperatures, falls, and natural disasters.

••••• • Earth Control

At this elder level of power, her union with the soil is no longer static. As her flesh has become mutable, changeable and perfect in its expression, the soil that she joins with is like water to her. She moves through it, albeit slowly. The soil is simply an extension of her musculature.

System: No additional rolls or expenditures are necessary to move through the soil. The elder cannot see, per se, but gets a supernatural awareness of the space around herself up to 50 yards/meters. When moving, she slides through the soil at half her walking speed. She may move through any natural material, not just soil.

••••• • Ephemeral Slumber

With this power, the Gangrel sleeps in the Lurking Mists form. This renders her almost invulnerable to daytime assault from anything short of fire or sunlight.

System: Spend a Willpower point when activating Lurking Mists to activate Ephemeral Slumber. Your character remains in Lurking Mists form through the entire day. She still sleeps normally, but gains the inherent invulnerabilities of her form.

••••• • Flesh of Marble

The blood provides, and the body hardens. When she wishes, the elder's skin becomes like fine, solid stone: cool, smooth, and incredibly difficult to penetrate. The degree to which the skin changes varies from elder to elder, but there is always some sort of evidence that her skin has changed in nature. For example, it may become hard to the touch, poreless and smooth, or the color of onyx.

System: Spend three blood points. The transformation is reflexive. Damage dice pools to inflict physical harm on the vampire are reduced by half, round down. Fire, sunlight, and other supernatural means of aggravated damage cut through Flesh of Marble.

••••• • Loki's Gift

A Gangrel with this gift may assume the form of the last thing she fed upon, be it human, Cainite, or animal. She does not gain any powers, knowledge, or skills from her victim, just the appearance. If she takes the appearance of a human or animal, though, she sheds all signs of her Cainite heritage.

System: After a vampire drinks from a victim, she may assume the victim's form. The transformation costs two blood points and takes two turns to complete. An additional blood point makes the change occur in a single turn. The change lasts until reverted. However, once reverted, she can change again, until she feeds from something else.

A vampire trying to break the ruse compares Auspex or other perception powers with the vampire's Protean, per the See the Unseen sidebar on p. 195.

••••• • Reversion to the True Form

With this power, the vampire forces a shapeshifting creature to return its true form. Gangrel shift from animal to vampire, lupines take their human forms, and other shapeshifters find their default shape with a simple touch.

System: The vampire must touch the victim's flesh. This can be done as part of an attack. Spend a point of Willpower and roll Manipulation + Animal Ken at a difficulty equal to the victim's current Willpower points. Success forces the victim to his true form, and forces him to keep that default form for one turn. Additional successes add additional turns where the creature is denied his shapeshifting abilities.

••••• •• Death's Hidden Crawl

Your character may use this subtle application of Protean in order to subvert one of her greatest weaknesses: torpor. While she still suffers torpor and still remains largely an immobile corpse in the long sleep, she can move slowly across the ground when nobody is looking.

System: This power requires no roll. It cannot be used while any sentient characters watch your character. When she has no witnesses in torpor, she can move no more than one meter or yard per hour. She may use Death's Hidden Crawl any time she enters torpor, even during the daylight hours. She does not walk, or even properly crawl. Her body tenses and retracts like a worm in order to pull her slowly.

••••• •• Shape of the Beast's Wrath

The elder's form transmutes once more, but not merely into the animal she once became. Now, she becomes a great beast, somewhere between her own dangerous form and a giant humanoid version of the beast she has the strongest affinity for. Great winged crow-men, a rampaging wolf woman, or a horde of rats the size and shape of a ten-foot-tall giant are all possible.

System: The player spends three blood points to trigger this change. It takes three turns, but a player can reduce this time as with Shape of the Beast. The vampire may stay in this terrible form until the next sunrise, or until she chooses to revert to her usual form.

Her new form gains a total of seven extra dots of Physical attributes, with one going to Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina. The remaining four points can be distributed among any Physical Attributes the player wishes.

The vampire does Strength +2 aggravated damage with her bite or claws. She gains an additional Bruised health level, and her running speed is doubled.

Her senses are supernaturally sharp. She is assumed to have Eyes of the Beast active, and additionally gains the benefits of Heightened Senses while in this form.

There are natural and logical drawbacks being a giant man-beast. At Storyteller discretion, Social rolls may be heavily penalized, or fail automatically.

All difficulties to resist frenzy while in this form increase by two, and Willpower cannot be spent to mitigate or resist frenzy.

••••• •• Spectral Body

The vampire's body is so completely controlled that she may appear to be herself, and yet, have no substance at all. After taking the Spectral Body, she behaves much as she did as a Lurking Mist, only with added benefits. She may simply walk through walls, sink through floors, and otherwise move as she wills it.

System: The power requires an expenditure of three blood points, and is instantaneous. A vampire elder may go from substantial to insubstantial with none the wiser. She cannot interact physically with any objects. She ignores gravity, and moves in any direction she wishes as fast as she could normally walk or run.

Damage from any physical means is nullified, and her soak dice for resisting fire and sunlight are doubled. Should she be able to remain awake, she would appear pale and almost ghostlike if viewed in the sun for as long as she can resist its killing rays.

••••• ••• Purify the Impaled Breast

The eldest of Clan Gangrel cannot be staked. This power is the reason why. With effort, the vampire's own body rejects any foreign objects within it. Expediently.

System: The player spends one blood point and then rolls the character's Willpower score (difficulty 8, if expelling a stake). One success is sufficient to remove any foreign objects. To keep some foreign objects in, like a hook hand or an earring, require an expenditure of Willpower at the time of the roll.

••••• •••• Draught of Phoenix Blood

The story goes that if a Methuselah can manifest this power, it is because she drank the blood of some long-forgotten mythical monster and it somehow changed who and what she was. But since that taste, she has become literally unkillable. Anything that causes her death will result in a complete resurrection, though she will be young, fresh, a new face and body, with only an incomplete picture of who she was. The only thing she recalls with any certainty is who killed her the last time.

System: There are no rolls necessary. If a vampire of this level of power is reduced to Final Death, no matter the means, she turns to ash that scatters like any other vampire. For a number of nights equal to the vampire's Generation, she is dead and gone. At the end of that period, her ash gathers on the back of the wind or is pulled up from the soil and she is reborn in blood and dirt and screaming. She has a new face, a new body, and is one Generation higher than before. Any abilities she may have above her ability cap are lost, save for this power, which the vampire retains regardless of her new Generation.

Quietus

The signature power of Clan Assamite actually comprises two distinct Disciplines, both known colloquially as Quietus by not only those practicing the arts, but by those merely aware of them. Scholars of Alamut recite that their founder Haqim developed the twin Disciplines of Quietus to harmoniously complement one another when he first divided the Warriors and Viziers and assigned them duties within the tripartite society of his clan. Though traditional Assamites generally prefer to utilize the original Phoenician name of "Abed Dume" or "destroy blood," its Latin name "Quietus," or "settling of debts" (especially as relates to death) is most common in discussion – in no doubt due to the epithet evoked by coupling the name with either of its branches.

The Children of Haqim have ever seen themselves as pure and fierce judges of the righteous use of blood, separate from Caine's other get. The Warrior Discipline Cruscitus (translated from the Phoenician "Hikmat Dume" or "blood wisdom," defined in Latin as "the science of murder through blood") revolves largely around the use of blood poisoning to kill. Whereas, the Vizier Discipline Hematus (translated from the Phoenician "Minhit Dume" or "blood offering," defined in Latin as "an offering of blood") makes use of subtle ways to manipulate vitae in aid to the tasks of mystic exploration and governance. When paired with their parent name, both Disciplines delineate their respective craft: Quietus Cruscitus as "the settling of debts by the science of murder through blood" and Quietus Hematus as "the settling of debts by an offering of blood."

If your character already has one form of Quietus, the other type costs new rating x 4 XP to learn. It requires a teacher with that style of the power.

Quietus Cruscitus

Quietus Cruscitus is Haqim's gift to his Warrior Assamites.

• Blood Essence

This power provides definitive proof of a vanquished foe. Terrifying to behold, Blood Essence demonstrates one of the most frightening aspects of this Discipline: the ability to distill the essence of what Cainites refer to as the "heart's blood," the holy or unholy life force that contains a being's soul.

System: Functioning even on mortals, the character must exsanguinate his victim of all but one blood point (or drain all blood points entirely if the victim is a Cainite). He then pricks his finger and marks the victim's bare chest, near the heart, with a speck of his vitae. The player spends one blood point, spurring the speck of vitae to seep into the target's skin. Then make an extended Willpower roll (difficulty 9) imposing a level of unsoakable aggravated damage to the victim per success. As in diablerie, if the victim remains alert during process, she can fight back. Should a vampire fail on the roll, he must pause, but can continue again next turn. With a botched roll, the effort fails (however, the vampire can still attempt traditional diablerie if the victim is a Cainite). Once all health levels have been exhausted, the vampire tears open the victim's breast, moving past the rib cage to extract the heart. The vampire's own blood has calcified the heart into a semi-translucent grayish-white flask known as a "Debitum." The Debitum enshrouds the spiritual essence (the "heart's-blood") of the victim – which, if examined in detail, can be seen encased within, swimming in despair. Heart's-blood preserved in this way endures indefinitely. If vampiric fangs pierce it, the heart reanimates, pumping a cupful of celadon-colored, aqueous, non-burning flame vaguely resembling the victim into the vampire's maw. If the victim is a Cainite, upon devouring the essence, the vampire reaps all benefits and potential pitfalls of successfully diablerizing the victim, without risking the blood oath. A Debitum crumbles to ash if left vulnerable to fire or sunlight, or when emptied of its contents.

•• Scorpion's Touch

A variation of the Hematus power: Blood Tempering, Scorpion's Touch is derived from isolating the mechanism inherent within vampiric blood's function of converting regular blood into sustenance. In this case, the Assamite transmutes the properties of her vitae into a powerful venom that strips prey of its resilience.

System: The player spends the number of blood points (up to her Generational per-turn limit) that she wishes to convert to poison. Roll Willpower (difficulty 6). If the roll is successful, the poison remains potent until used, but harbors a vampire's susceptibility to fire and sunlight.



A botch renders the blood spent inert; it cannot be used to augment Attributes, heal the vampire, or fuel Disciplines. The poison looks and smells like normal blood and a Cainite is immune to her own poison, but not that of others utilizing this power. She may retain an amount of poisoned blood up to her maximum Generational spending limit per turn in her blood pool for later use, though any blood points converted to poison are inert for any other purpose. If the vampire is in danger of someone attempting to drink blood from her, she may rush any stored blood points to the surface as a defensive action, which may be used reflexively even if in slumber or torpor. A Cainite may also bite her tongue or lip to pool the poisoned blood in her mouth for a "kiss of death." Likewise, she may cut her flesh to smear the poison on a pointed or edged weapon, or even place it in food, on a cup, utensil, or other seemingly innocuous item.

Spend one blood point and one turn per cubic foot/30 liters that her chosen weapon occupies (minimum 1). A dart, arrowhead, or dagger requires a blood point and a turn to lightly coat it, while the average sword or axe may need three turns. Weapons remain poisoned for an amount of attacks equal to the Cainite's initial Willpower roll; an envenomed weapon that is swung or fired loses the potency of its poison at a rate of one success per attack until depleted (whether it's dodged, parried, deflected by armor, misses, or hits). Envenomed weapons bathed in water, or open to the mercy of heavy wind or rain, lose the potency of their poison the turn after exposure, while those passing through fire or sunlight lose it instantly and appear dusted in a fine ash.

In order to be effective, the poison must be ingested or enter the target's bloodstream, usually through drinking or being pierced by a bloodied weapon. Once the poison is delivered, the target immediately rolls Stamina (plus Fortitude, if any). At the end of his next turn, he loses a number of Stamina points equal to the number of successes on the Cainite's Willpower roll minus successes on the target's Stamina roll. If a living being's Stamina falls to 0, he dies. If a vampire's Stamina falls to 0, the vampire enters torpor and remains that way until his Stamina points return to a minimum of 1. As a defensive action vampires and ghouls may spend a blood point to heal normally and completely purge the poison from their system

before the effects take hold. This defensive action may be used reflexively with a successful Wits + Alertness roll (difficulty 6). Without vampiric blood healing, damage from Scorpion's Touch is permanent.

••• Dagon's Call

With the slightest scratch delivering a dab of blood to mingle with that of the target's, Dagon's Call twists a victim's vitae against him. The target's eyes swell and take a deep burgundy hue, muscles seize and veins bulge beneath the skin, and thin trickles of vibrant scarlet bleed into tiny rivers from all openings in the anatomy. This nightmarish affliction persists until the target collapses in agony or death throes, leaving no trace of the attacker's presence.

System: In order to use this power, the character's blood must first be ingested or enter the target's bloodstream, usually through drinking (even from a ghoul belonging to the character) or being pierced by a bloodied weapon. The character waits a minimum of one hour for her blood to be fully absorbed, entering the circulatory system to securely grip the victim deeply. After a moment's concentration, the vampire bursts her target's blood vessels, internally constricting the target's whole body by flooding it with ruptured hemoglobin that strangles him from within. To activate this power, the player spends one Willpower point and rolls Perception + Awareness (difficulty equal to the vampire's current proximity to the target or the amount of time elapsed since she touched the target, whichever is greater).

Difficulty	Distance or Time Passed
6	Within an hour or a few feet/a meter of the target
7	Within a day or a mile/half a km from the target
8	Within a week or ten miles/fifteen km from the target
9	Within a month or 100 miles/150 km from the target
10	Over a month or 100 miles/150 km from the target

The player and target make contested Stamina rolls (difficulty of each roll equal to the opponent's Willpower). The target suffers levels of unsoakable lethal damage equal to the number of successes on the player's Willpower roll minus successes on the target's Willpower roll. To continue rending her opponent from within, the player may spend additional Willpower each turn after the first, accompanied by further contested Stamina rolls, until she is defeated on a roll. A botched roll results in the vampire suffering an amount of lethal damage equal to her failures on the roll.

•••• Baal's Caress

A refinement of Scorpion's Touch, Baal's Caress allows a vampire to transform her blood into an acidic toxin that burns any living or undead flesh, usually accomplished by licking a blade to lubricate it before assaulting an opponent. Commonly, warriors will spit the hateful ichor or cough it forth and vomit voluminous streams of vitae that corrode their enemies into heaps of bubbling sludge.

System: Aside from the following exceptions, this power otherwise works according to the rules for Scorpion's Touch. Rather than attacking a target's Stamina, the stinging venom generated through Baal's Caress only necessitates skin contact and afflicts caustic burns. Touching the caustic blood causes one level of aggravated damage per Willpower success on the initial activation. If ingested, the damage is unsoakable. Prolonged touching of envenomed objects, through holding them directly or grappling a Cainite wearing envenomed clothing or armor, causes additional damage each turn. This includes attempts to disarm envenomed weapons or objects currently wielded by the Cainite.

Weapons coated in venom (including the vampire's own slashed limbs, claws, or nails) cause aggravated damage. Add one additional die of damage per success on the activating Willpower roll. This damage bonus depletes at one point per turn, at which time, the venom is lost. Any coated weapon is destroyed by the venom at this point.

A vampire may also bite her tongue or lip to spit a single point of envenomed blood at a lone target, or regurgitate up to her maximum amount of blood point expenditure per turn and spray multiple targets. The Cainite may spit or vomit her envenomed vitae up to three feet (one meter) for each dot of Strength and Potence she possesses. Alternative, the spray can come from an open wound, including both self-inflicted wounds and those received in combat. Spitting at a lone target requires a successful Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 6) to hit, though spraying hits multiple targets as a Hail of Arrows (see p. 347). Spewed blood contacting the victim's skin causes aggravated damage as if the blood were a thrown weapon with a damage rating equal to the vampire's Willpower successes.

The character may still use Scorpion's Touch instead of Baal's Caress.

••••• Quicken the Mortal's Blood

To maximize the amount of nourishment possible from a mortal's blood, those developing Cruscitus eventually evolve exceptional control over how they process the vitae they imbibe.

System: After quenching his thirst with mortal blood, the vampire can double the effectiveness of each blood

point. Roll Stamina + Occult (difficulty 6). Each success converts one blood point into two.

••••• • Taste of Death

By honing the nature of Baal's Caress, this level of Cruscitus focuses and mutates vampiric blood into a noxious and corrosive sap that eats through flesh, bone, metal and glass with ease.

System: Aside from the following exceptions, this power otherwise works according to the rules for Baal's Caress and Scorpion's Touch. Venom created through this power is a thick, syrupy, highly concentrated, and sticky sap (like molasses or tar) that gives off a rancid odor. The difficulty of the vampire's initial Willpower roll increases to 7, and two blood points are spent for every one blood point converted. The sap eats through nearly any compound; wood or leather is destroyed in a single turn, metal in two, stone in three. Especially well made, dense, or sturdy materials last for one more turn, while items created with mystical powers last for an extra three. Taste of Death can be used to unlock doors, dispose of evidence, or as a means of torture. The sap is immune to wind and water, though fire and sunlight still have the same effect.

Vampires frequently cut their flesh and smear the sap like a paste upon their claws, nails, or another portion of their body. Weapons almost never survive the time it takes to coat them; as such, the sap is rarely, if ever, used intentionally to augment a weapon's damage. The viscous glue of the venom rubs off like grease, clinging to anything that touches it, and burns for a number of turns equal to the successes scored on the vampire's Willpower roll. When that time has elapsed, the sap shrinks and hardens until settling into charcoal-like clay that turns crimson when crushed and powdered. The crimson dust produces the same effects as Scorpion's Touch, and may be inhaled or mixed in a liquid to yield the desired results.

The damage inflicted from Taste of Death is identical to Baal's Caress, but the venom remains after contact, continually causing harm. The initial contact causes damage equal to the Willpower successes to activate the power. Each additional turn, it causes one fewer aggravated damage, until it no longer causes damage. For example, with three successes, the initial attack causes three aggravated damage. The next turn, it causes two. The third and final turn, it causes one damage. Each turn, a character with Fortitude receives an additional soak opportunity.

A vampire may not retain the sap in her blood pool for later use or spray it, but he may still spit the sap at half the normal distance. A precise, self-inflicted puncture wound does not result in anything but the sap slowly oozing out.

Taste of Death acts as an alternative, not a replacement, for Baal's Caress or Scorpion's Touch.

••••• •• Rapturous Touch

The vampire is now able to absorb blood through her skin, as long as she is in contact with the blood itself or an uncovered part of a vessel's body.

System: This power is always in effect once learned. With a touch, any part of the vampire's body may absorb blood through osmosis. Regardless of Generation, she may only absorb two blood points per turn. All the standard risks from drinking blood still apply (blood bond, poisoning, etc.), but vampires resist the effects of the touch-initiated Kiss at difficulty 6, while mortals may resist as if they were vampires (difficulty 8).

••••• ••• Blood of Destruction

Someone foolish enough to drink from a vampire with Blood of Destruction is likely to perish and meet Final Death in a grisly fashion before she even realizes her mistake, simply attacking a vampire with this power risks wreaking damage to oneself or her weapon.

System: This power may be used reflexively as a defensive action. Aside from the following exceptions, this power otherwise works according to the rules for Taste of Death, Baal's Caress, and Scorpion's Touch. The player rolls Willpower (difficulty 7) and spends one point of blood to convert all the vitae in the character's system into all of the highly virulent or acidic toxins created through Taste of Death, Baal's Caress, or Scorpion's Touch. Using Blood of Destruction reduces a character's blood pool by half (rounded up). The blood shares all three effects. This causes Scorpion's Touch's Stamina loss, Baal's Caress's aggravated damage, destroys objects like Taste of Death, and sticks to the victim after contact, causing one fewer damage each turn until reduced to zero.

Anyone attacking a character under the effects of Blood of Destruction with a slashing or piercing weapon that breaks the skin loses her weapon, as the venom corrodes away nearly any compound. In the case of natural weapons, such as those created by Protean and Serpentis, the attacker automatically suffers two health levels of aggravated damage. Any attacker in close combat that causes lethal or aggravated damage to the vampire is splattered with the venomous blood. Blood of Destruction lasts for a scene.

••••• •••• Weaken the Blood of Ancients

The pinnacle expression of Cruscitus strips away the potency of another vampire's blood to increase his Generation.

System: In order to use this power, the character's blood must have been ingested or entered the target's bloodstream at any time, usually through drinking (even from a ghoul belonging to the character) or being pierced by a bloodied weapon (for example, one augmented by other Cruscitus powers). The player and victim engage in contested Willpower rolls (difficulty for the player is the victim's Stamina plus Fortitude, while the victim's difficulty is the character's Willpower). The target's effective Generation increases by 1 for each success on the player's Willpower roll minus successes on the target's Willpower roll. A victim reduced to Thirteenth Generation acquires the appropriate Flaws, see p. 427. Higher Generations may be allowed at Storyteller discretion. Characters beyond Thirteenth Generation most certainly receive the Thin Blood Flaw, and may have other limitations. After a number of nights equal to 10 - the victim's Stamina and Fortitude have passed, the victim regains one lost Generation per night. When a Cainite is under the effect of this power, she loses access to all benefits of her former Generation, such as higher blood pool (excess blood is vomited up), increased blood expenditure, and high-level Disciplines and Traits.

Quietus Hematus

Assamite Viziers practice Quietus Hematus.

• Blood Tempering

A Cainite may instill vampiric vitality into an item drenched in her blood. Since antiquity, Viziers have made use of this power to conserve both common materials and the ancient relics of the clan.

System: The player spends one blood point and one turn per size by cubic foot/30 liters that an object occupies (minimum 1) then rolls Intelligence + Crafts (difficulty 6). A book or scroll may require as little as one blood point, the average sword may need three, while a door might consume as many as 12 blood points and turns to lightly coat it. The item acquires a vampire's susceptibility to fire and sunlight, but it gains an amount of temporary extra soak dice equal to the character's dots in Stamina. It also gains immunity to erosion by time or elements, such as wind and water, for a period of time based on the successes rolled.

Successes	Duration
1 success	up to one day
2 successes	up to three days
3 successes	up to a week
4 successes	up to two weeks
5 successes	up to a month
6+ successes	indefinitely

The Stamina referenced here is the vampire's base Stamina + Fortitude, unaffected by any modifications or enhancements. The extra soak dice are spent upon being rolled. Once this pool is depleted, the power ends and the object loses all vampiric immunities as well as susceptibilities gained through this power.

•• Truth of Blood

As a means to assure that their judgments are firmly grounded in truth, this power allows a vampire to use the blood of an individual being questioned to divine not only the truth of the subject's words, but the truth behind those words.

System: To use this power, the Cainite must have one point of the target's blood, which she pours into an open container capable of holding the fluid indefinitely, such as a basin or goblet. The container must have dimensions that permit her to, at the least, dip one finger into the vitae for the duration of the questioning. This power lasts for one scene or until the questioner stops touching the blood. The blood reduces until spent, gradually smoldering into a thin red mist that dissipates entirely to vapor by the scene's conclusion.

At the start of the scene, the player spends a Willpower point. For each statement made by the target that the character wishes to examine, the player rolls Perception + Subterfuge (difficulty equal to the target's Willpower). Successes on the roll indicate the degree of truth or falsehood that the questioner becomes aware of. Each level of success builds upon the last. For example, if you roll four successes, you receive all the results up to four successes.

1 success	Intuitively know whether the target believes their statement is a lie, partial truth, or the whole truth.
2 successes	Intuitively know whether the statement is genuinely accurate and unadulterated, only partially so, or completely false.
3 successes	Intuitively sense the emotional reason (ennui, jealousy, anger) behind the target's statement.
4 successes	Intuitively understand the whole truth as the target consciously knows it, including information the target remembers, but does not understand.
5 successes	Experience hazy visions of and receive veiled hints at information that the target himself does not have.
6+ successes	Intuitively know information that the target is not consciously aware of, or has lost due to supernatural influence like Dominate.

••• Cleansed in Blood

By using the power of vitae to cleanse and restore, the vampire releases her blood, allowing it to wash over another and carry away spiritual impurities from outside influences. This power cleanses the target's soul, purging his mind of externally imposed supernatural taints and stains.

System: Spend one Willpower point. The character baptizes the forehead of the intended subject with one blood point, then places her hands on his head. Both parties spend a minimum of one hour in deep concentration per power that the subject wishes to eliminate. The subject spends a number of blood points equal to the level of an individual supernatural mind influencing power he wishes to nullify and rolls Willpower (difficulty equal to the level of the power +4). Powers that would push the difficulty past 10 cannot be affected, and for inherent powers with no set level, the difficulty is 7. If the roll is a success, it removes the effects of that power. A failure wastes the blood spent and requires another attempt.

Cleansed in Blood can erase current and ongoing influences from Dominate, Dementation, Presence, or similar effects, but does not shield the subject from or ward him against those powers in the future.

This power does not remove non-supernatural techniques of persuasion, hypnosis, brainwashing, or genuine emotional states, and cannot dispel dispositions imparted by the subject's clan or bloodline or influences transmitted by blood, such as a blood bond. A character cannot use Cleansed in Blood on herself.

•••• Ripples of the Heart

With this power, a vampire can leave an emotional echo that resonates in her own blood or the blood of those from whom she feeds.

System: The vampire drinks one blood point from a subject and spends a minute concentrating on the emotion he wishes to imprint on her blood. The player spends one blood point and rolls Charisma + Empathy (difficulty 7 under normal circumstances, 5 if the character is presently feeling the imprinted emotion, 9 if currently she's experiencing a strong opposite emotion). A subject's blood can only carry one emotion at a time; efforts to overlap multiple Ripples of the Heart on the same subject have no effect. The vampire and the subject are immune to the emotional effects they generate through this power, but not the effects of others who use it. A vampire may induce this power upon a living being, another Cainite (incurring a one-point blood bond to do so), or himself as a defensive measure. The subject's blood carries the imprinted emotion for a number of days equal to the successes rolled.

Anyone who swallows the subject's vitae rolls Self-Control or Instinct for each blood point ingested (difficulty equal to the vampire's Hematus + 3, maximum of 9). The emotion overtakes the drinker to a degree and for a number of hours dependent on how many blood points ingested: one blood point results in a noticeable mood swing that lingers for an hour. Ingesting three or more enthralls the drinker for the better part of an evening, overwhelming faculties to supplant all other thoughts and feelings. The effects of five or more blood points may be spectacular or catastrophic.

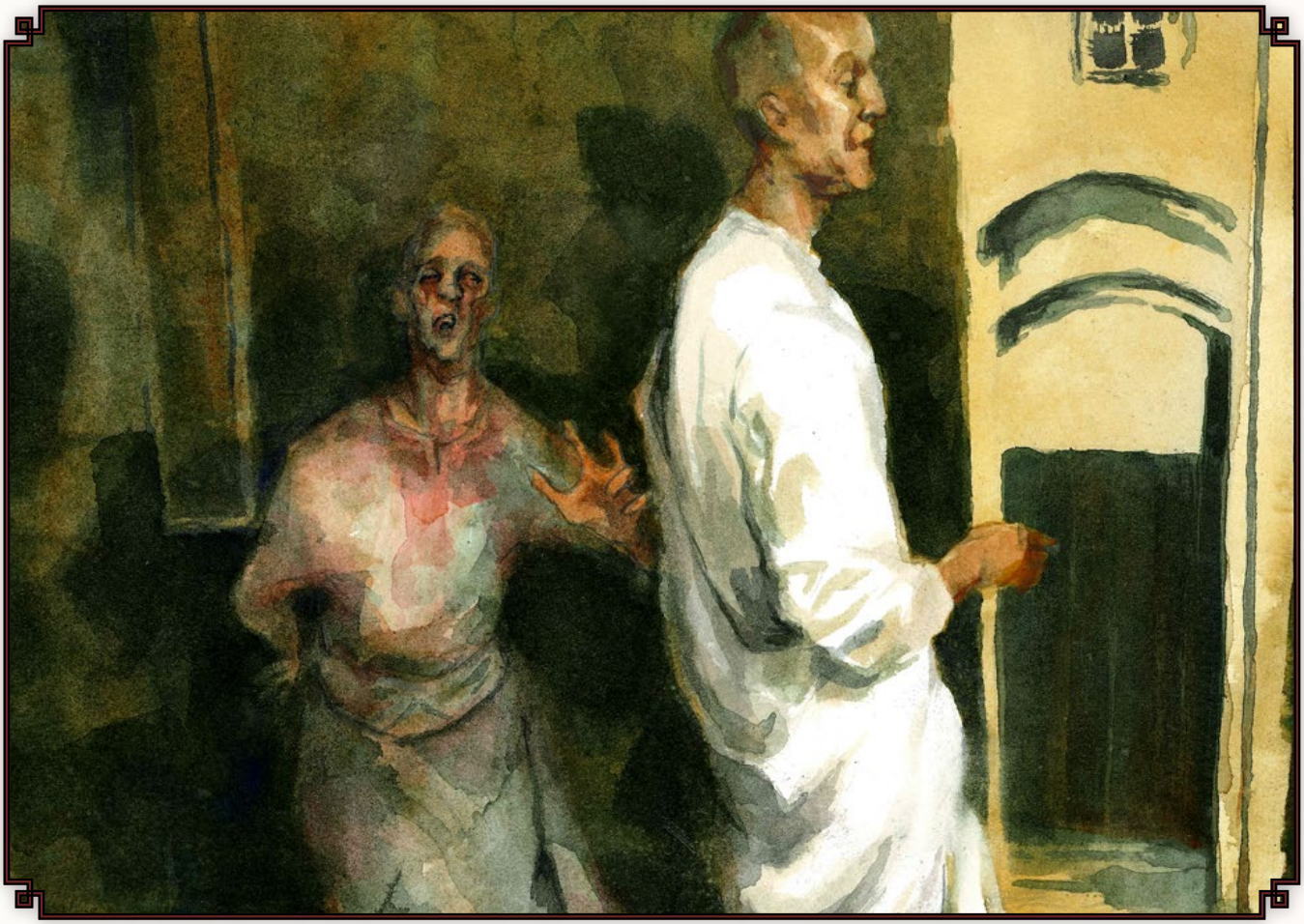
A draught of fear paralyzes the drinker, causing her to panic and flee screaming in trembling terror if shaken by any sudden sound or movement. One overcome with hate might eviscerate an object unlucky enough to capture the attention of her wrath, while a romantically impassioned vampire could quite conceivably fall in love with her supper (or other hapless bystander). Ripples of the Heart can embolden allies before battle, invigorating them with bravery or steadying their nerves by calming restless anxiety with determination and courage. Strategic applications include protecting herds or offensively deploying "tainted" kine and animals into enemy territory to weaken an adversary's defenses.

••••• Blood Sweat

If a victim harbors a shred of remorse or pride for actions he has undertaken, a master of Blood Sweat can induce a torrential outpouring of vitae as a sudden rush of sanguinary perspiration soaks the victim's clothes and puddles at his feet.

System: The Cainite must be in contact with at least a drop of the target's fresh vitae. The character spends three turns concentrating on the victim, who must be within the character's line of sight. Spend a Willpower point and roll Manipulation + Intimidation (difficulty equal to the target's current Willpower points). The victim loses one blood point per success, which he perspires. Blood lost through this process is considered dead and inert, providing no sustenance to a vampire. It could, however, inspire frenzy in hungry Cainites.

Additionally, the target is emotionally compromised by feelings of guilt and remorse for past transgressions (Conscience), or a spiteful compulsion to boast (Conviction). Storytellers should suit the effect to the victim's Road and Virtues. The number of successes rolled denotes the gravity of this impulse: with one success, the target receives a slight twinge of conscience, while five or more successes results in an excited exultation of his crimes.



••••• • Blood Awakening

This power allows a Cainite to scan memories latent in the blood belonging to one from whom she has recently fed.

System: The vampire must first consume one blood point from another character. Roll Perception + Empathy (difficulty 7). The number of successes determines the clarity accessed from archived memories echoed in another's blood which the vampire has consumed. As the memories manifest, the vampire may lose track of reality increasing the difficulty of Perception-based rolls by two. Consult the chart below for effects, with each degree of success building upon the last.

A botched roll floods the vampire with random memories from those whose vitae she has ingested in the past, during which time she is stunned and completely unable to act until she spends blood in an attempt to purge the visions (one blood point per failure on the roll which may require more than one turn to spend, depending on Generational limits).

Successes	Effect
1 success	Vague impressions from the most recent memories up to a few hours before the blood was consumed.
2 successes	Vague impressions of memories that had a strong emotional impact throughout the subject's existence up to when the blood was consumed.
3 successes	Pertinent details surrounding memories up to a few hours before the blood was consumed.
4 successes	Pertinent details surrounding memories that had a strong emotional impact throughout the subject's existence up to when the blood was consumed.
5 successes	Anything the subject knew or felt in the last decade up to the time the blood was consumed.
6+ successes	Anything the subject knew or felt throughout his existence up to the time the blood was consumed.

••••• •• Dam the Heart's River

Vampires who reach this level of Hematus master control over the flow of blood in a body. Dam the Heart's River is normally used to fortify a vampire from another's attempts to exsanguinate him, but can also be applied tactically to force a victim to deplete her store of blood and possibly push her into a hunger frenzy.

System: The first effect of this power may be used reflexively as a defensive action. The player constricts a number of blood points (up to his Generational per-turn limit, but no more than 5) that he wants to condense in any areas of his body and rolls Willpower (difficulty equal to the number of blood points condensed +5). If the roll is successful, it compresses 4 cubic inches /6 cubic cm per blood point into a solid rubbery mass that completely restricts blood flow to or from any areas the vampire selects within his body, preventing any loss of vitae that may occur from a wound or attempts to feed from the areas selected. The blood remains locked in place and cannot be activated for any other purpose; non-passive Disciplines requiring use of a body part containing compressed blood do not function. He may release the blood at any time to return it to an expendable state.

The secondary effect of this power allows a vampire complete control over the blood of a target who is currently in skin-to-skin contact with him (such as through a grapple), or targets who have at any time consumed the vampire's blood or whose blood the vampire has at any time consumed (even through drinking from a ghoul belonging to the opposing character), or if blood from either has entered the bloodstream of the other, usually through being pierced by a bloodied weapon. The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Medicine (difficulty of the target's Stamina + 3, maximum 9). As long as the target remains in skin-to-skin contact with the vampire (or in his line of sight if an exchange of vitae has occurred), the vampire has total control over the target's blood expenditure (subject to the target's Generational limitations) and can either condense her blood pool to lock it up (per the first effect of this power) or activate any blood-related effect (augment statistics, heal the target, fuel Disciplines, etc.). The secondary effect of Dam the Heart's River lasts for a number of turns equal to the amount of successes scored on the roll.

If used against mortals, the secondary effect Dam the Heart's River can induce cardiac arrest or blood clots leading to stroke.

••••• ••• Songs of Distant Vitae

Used as a chilling technique to punish Cainites who feed with excessive cruelty, this power is a sharpened advancement that pairs the methods of Blood Sweat with Blood Awakening to invoke residual impressions of emotion and personality etched on a victim's soul by the vitae they've ravished.

System: To use this power, the Cainite must be in contact with at least a drop of the target's fresh vitae. The character spends a turn concentrating on the victim, who must be within the character's line of sight. Spend 4 blood points and roll Wits + Intimidation (difficulty equal to the victim's current Willpower points). If successful, the target's viewpoint is thrown into a nightmarish reenactment, flashing between the perspectives and terror felt by every individual whom he has ever stalked and fed upon. Throughout this sojourn, he experiences none of the pleasure that would normally accompany the Kiss. For each success scored on the roll, the victim is stunned and completely unable to act, he regurgitates and loses 2 blood points per turn, and the process lasts an additional 6 seconds/2 turns. If the victim at any point runs out of blood he falls into torpor for (10 - Stamina) nights, loses half his permanent Willpower (round down), and automatically gains the Sanguinary Animism Derangement.

Once this onslaught subsides, the victim makes two separate rolls, one for Courage and one for Self-Control or Instinct (both at difficulty 8). Failing the Courage roll causes him to enter Rötschreck for the rest of the evening, during which time his greatest fear is that of his own image. Should he fail the Self-Control or Instinct roll, he gains the Sanguinary Animism Derangement. In addition, the difficulty of all the target's rolls increases by three for the rest of the scene.

If the victim has committed diablerie at any point, the character gains 1 automatic success for every Generation the victim acquired through the Amaranth.

••••• •••• Condemn the Sins of the Father

Though heritage does not equate to guilt, vampiric blood is sometimes known to pass a blight from sire to childe who commit the same crimes, in such cases, this technique is employed to administer overreaching punishments upon a vampire's entire brood.

System: The turn after successfully using any lesser Hematus power on another vampire, spend one a dot of Willpower (which can be regained by spending experience points). Roll Manipulation + Occult, then spend a number of blood points equal to the difficulty of the roll for this power (minimum blood points and difficulty equal to 4, +1 for each generation of the original target's descendants that the player wants to affect, ignoring additions to blood points and difficulty for Generations that push the maximums past 10). The player may exempt a number of descendants

from the effect of this power equal to twice the character's Wits; to do so, the character must know the face or have tasted the blood of the Cainite(s) she wishes to exempt. If the roll succeeds, every descendant targeted within the specified range of Generations becomes subject to the same power that the original target experienced the turn before, using the same scores from applicable rolls made by the vampire conducting this power upon the original target. Each descendant resists the power's effects with his or her own relevant Traits.

Serpentis

Serpentis is the unmistakable, terrifying legacy of Set. The Discipline stands as a secret the Followers of Set hold close to their chest; outsiders rarely see enough of its effects to understand them reliably. The Followers cultivate this image of mystery, letting the timid and the envious imagine what they might be capable of. The name of the Discipline is slightly misleading, as it doesn't just offer affinity for serpents; it allows the Setite to adopt traits of the legendary Typhon and Echidna. Various stories exist among the Followers to explain why they take on the imagery of Greek monsters instead of Set himself, but the prevailing stance is that the Discipline works, and they pass around historical accountings tying Set to the Typhonic Beast due to shared mythological imagery. Serpentis transformations last for the scene unless otherwise noted, or unless ended prematurely. Additionally, Serpentis powers can be used together.

• Enchanting Gaze

This power makes the vampire the proverbial flame to a moth. She takes on an alluring, enchanting feature, such as a serpent's gold eyes or a pearlescent sheen to her skin. She can paralyze with a glance, and mortals in her vicinity find themselves drawn to her. These features are always subtly supernatural; if a person pays close attention, it betrays the Setite's inhuman nature, but casual observation gives nothing away.

System: No roll is required. While active, the Setite enjoys a -1 difficulty to all Social actions due to her alluring feature. Her paralyzing gaze can only affect a single character, who must be paying attention to the vampire. The gaze will affect supernatural characters as well as mortals, but supernatural characters may spend a point of Willpower and roll Willpower (difficulty the vampire's Charisma + Subterfuge) in order to break the gaze. An affected character breaks the gaze if clearly endangered.

•• Typhonic Maw

The vampire's jaw becomes a ferocious, malleable thing she can control in a variety of ways. Her jaw distends to her chest, her fangs grow to the size of small daggers, her tongue forks at the tip and lashes out a meter long, and her throat expands to consume anything she can get her mouth around. She can choose to adopt some or all of these adaptations when activating Typhonic Maw.

System: Spend a blood point to reflexively activate Typhonic Maw. The tongue's lashes cause aggravated wounds (difficulty 7 to attack, Strength damage) and can be used as an additional attack for the purposes of multiple actions (see p. 322). Additionally, if she wounds her enemy, the proboscis of her tongue allows her to feed from her victim as if she'd bitten him. This causes the Kiss like a bite. She also suffers no penalties from the darkness while her tongue is extended. Her jaw allows her to make bite attacks without a grapple. Successful bites cause one additional die of damage and initiate a grapple automatically. When she bites an opponent, her enlarged throat can consume five points of blood per turn instead of three.

••• Serpent's Flesh

With this power, the Setite's flesh becomes leathery, scaly, slimy, and otherwise monstrous. Her body becomes flexible and malleable, and she becomes harder to hurt.

System: Spend a blood point to change reflexively. Serpent's Flesh reduces soak difficulties to 5. She can use her Stamina to soak any aggravated damage not caused by fire or sunlight. She may slip through any opening wide enough to fit her head. Lastly, she can reflexively escape any grapple.

This change can be subtle, if the vampire spends a Willpower point during activation. If subtle, casual scrutiny will not reveal her supernatural nature if she's wearing at least modest clothing. If she chooses to bear the weight of her supernatural nature, reduce Intimidation difficulties by two.

•••• Typhonic Avatar

Now, the Setite can become a Typhonic Beast, a creature of legend. It stands as a tall jackal with a hard, forked and spiked tail, with severe, pointed ears and a long snout. Typhonic Beasts are red, black, or a combination thereof. Alternatively, she can take a hybrid human/serpent form with a long, prehensile tail for legs. Setites use this as a sort of 'war form' in addition to religious functions.

System: Spend a blood point. The transformation takes three turns, but additional blood points can be spent

to reduce the time by a turn. Four blood points makes the transformation reflexive.

Either form gains two dots to Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina. The animal form moves at twice the vampire's speed, does two additional dice of bite damage, and reduces difficulties to resist losing balance by two. The hybrid form's tail can act as an additional attack as part of a multiple action, and the tail gains five dots to Strength instead of two.

Obviously, both forms are unquestioningly supernatural. The vampire inspires terror and awe in mortals. Mortals with fewer Willpower dots than the vampire's Serpentis score must flee or subjugate themselves. They can act for a single turn by spending a point of Willpower. Mortals with more Willpower can roll Willpower (difficulty the vampire's Serpentis) to avoid awe and fear.

When learning Typhonic Avatar, choose either the animal form or the hybrid form. You can purchase the other form later at half the normal experience cost.

••••• Mother of Monsters

Echidna was called the Mother of Monsters. This power allows the Setite to birth small typhonic beasts from her flesh. The monsters grow from her skin, starting by opening eyes and mouths from her flesh, then ripping from her body, taking part of her with them. These monsters have childlike intelligence and understand the vampire's speech. They follow her commands without exception, and cannot be commanded or frightened away from their duty. Some Setites can create other mythological monsters. Rumors persist of some Setites who can create rudimentary humans from their flesh.

System: Spend one or more blood points and mark a health level off your character's sheet. That health level cannot recover so long as the beast remains apart from the vampire. The first blood point creates the monster, and additional blood points act as a blood pool the beast can use to heal damage (the way a vampire can) or to activate the vampire's level 1-4 Serpentis powers for himself.

Each monster takes one turn to birth. The vampire may only spend as much blood as she can in a single turn to fuel the monster's blood pool.

The vampire can reflexively subsume a monster back into her flesh, replenishing its remaining blood pool and recovering the lost health level. She may also subsume a beast's corpse to recover the lost health level.

The Setite can choose a different mythological form for the beast. However, these monsters must be obviously unnatural.



Typhonic Beast

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Perception 4, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1

Abilities: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Intimidation 3

Health Levels: OK, OK, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Disciplines: The beast shares the vampire's Celerity, Fortitude, and Potence powers.

Soak: +3 dice of armor

Attacks: Bite (Strength +1 lethal), Claws (Strength lethal)

••••• • Echidna's Venom

At this level, the vampire's bite becomes venomous as a death adder.

System: Spend a point of blood. The vampire's fangs become hollow and generate venom. Any character the vampire bites suffers from the venom. Affected victims suffer the Setite's Serpentis in lethal damage in addition to whatever damage the bite may have caused. Humans that survive the damage become paralyzed (-5 to all actions) and must succeed in a Stamina roll every thirty seconds for five minutes or die.

••••• •• Form of the Storm

Set was known as a god of storms. With this power, the vampire becomes the storm temporarily, diffusing her body into a furious cloud of wind, rain, and lightning, battering everything around her relentlessly.

System: The transformation takes one full turn. Spend two blood points per turn while remaining in Form of the Storm. The vampire becomes a storm. This unholy storm takes up three meters per dot of the vampire's Serpentis, and she can move at half her normal speed. She becomes immune to physical damage in this form. Increase all Perception difficulties by 3. Roll her Serpentis as bashing damage each turn against every character within the storm. By spending one blood point, she can summon forth a bolt of lightning to strike an enemy. The attack requires a Perception + Occult roll and causes aggravated damage equal to the vampire's dots in Serpentis. It cannot be blocked or parried, only dodged and soaked.

By spending a point of Willpower upon activation, the vampire can stay material at the center of the storm. She becomes immune to the storm's effects, but can still take physical actions.

••••• ••• Cerberus's Fury

Echidna and Typhon's son, Cerberus, guards the gates to the underworld with his three heads. With this power, the Setite grows two additional heads which can be used to assault victims.

System: Spend two blood points. The Setite grows two additional heads from her chest, shoulder, or back. These two heads each receive an additional full action per turn. These are limited to actions a head can take, such as a bite or Dominate power. If she activates Typhon's Maw, these additional heads benefit from it.

As an additional effect, the vampire adopts Cerberus's affinity for the underworld. She can see ghosts, and her additional heads can affect them as if they were material.

••••• •••• Godhead

This fearsome ability gives the Setite the mantle of a god. While most Setites manifest this power by adopting the head of a beast similar to the Egyptian gods, every Setite manifests Godhead differently. Some grow a meter in height. Some adopt glistening gold flesh. Regardless the manifestation, it's always obvious and always awe-inspiring.

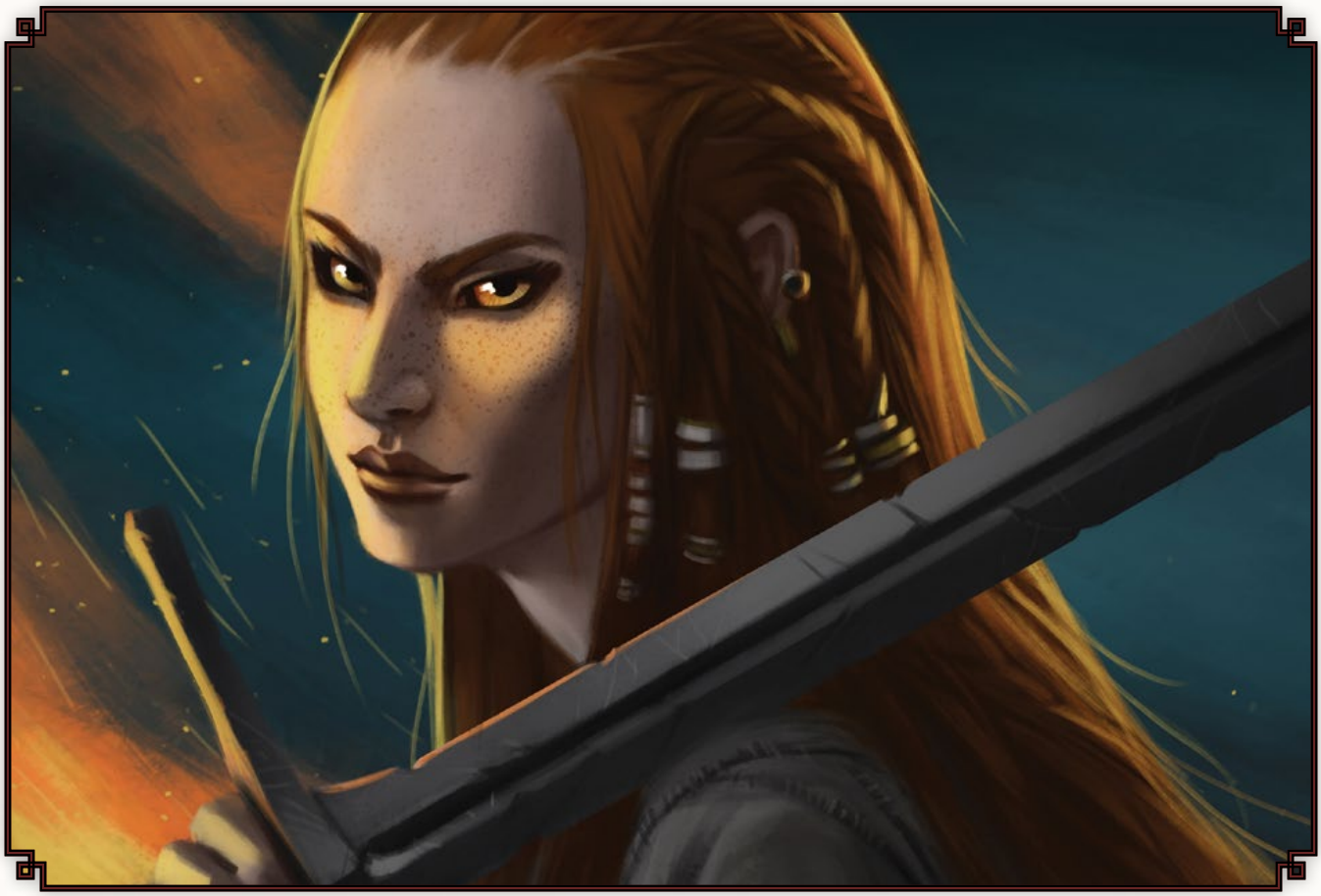
System: Spend three blood points and one turn. When purchasing Godhead, determine its specific effects. You may purchase other Godhead forms as additional nine-dot powers. Divide the character's Serpentis dots among her Attributes, with no more than half going to a single Attribute. These can raise a vampire above her normal generational limits. Godhead also allows for an additional game effect, but this must be decided with the Storyteller upon choosing the power. For examples, a Setite with ruby flesh may not suffer damage from physical attacks, or a vampire that glistens like the sun might cause Rötschreck and three aggravated damage per turn to vampires in her vicinity.

Spiritus

The first Ahrimane learned how to speak to animals from the Goddess Freyja. When she died, this gift transformed with her, allowing her to speak to the spirits of animals and objects.

• Aid from Spirits

Everything, whether natural or man-made, has a spirit. The vampire has learned to rouse these spirits to do her bidding and improve their performance. The spirit might object to this manipulation, but must nevertheless follow the vampire's commands.



System: The character touches an item, and the player spends a blood point and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 6). The player receives a number of bonus dice to use that item, equal to the number of successes rolled. These bonus dice can all be spent on a single roll, or spread out. Unused bonuses fade at the end of the scene, and multiple uses of this power do not stack. The character may reactivate this power or use it on multiple objects in the same scene, as long as she expends the blood for it.

•• Summon Spirit Beast

The vampire calls upon the spirit of an animal native to the area. The spirit animal becomes corporeal to serve her, but will only do what comes natural to it. The spirit of an aggressive animal would be happy to fight for her, while the spirit of a curious animal could follow people. The animal is slightly more intelligent than a normal animal and can follow simple telepathic commands.

System: The player spends one blood point and rolls Charisma + Animal Ken (difficulty 7). The number of successes indicates how long the spirit remains material. The spirit has the same number of health levels its physical counterpart would normally have. If the spirit is reduced to Incapacitated, it becomes incorporeal once more.

Successes	Duration
1 success	One Turn
2 successes	Five Turns
3 successes	One Hour
4 successes	One Night
5 successes	One Week

••• Aspect of the Beast

The vampire draws a part of a spirit animal into herself, gaining its physical strength or special powers. The spirit animal must be native to the area.

System: The player spends a blood point and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 7). The power lasts for one turn per success. Examples of aspects are given below, though the player and Storyteller are welcome to make up others:

Beaver's Bite — Bite through almost any substance, though bites do no additional damage to (un)living targets.

Chameleon's Colors — Change color to suit the environment (-2 difficulty to Stealth rolls involving hiding).

Eyes of the Falcon — See as well as a falcon (-2 difficulty to Perception rolls involving vision).

Ferocity of the Cat — Courage rolls are at -2 difficulty.

Leapfrog — Leap three times the normal height and distance (see jumping, p. 334).

Nose of the Hound — Enhanced sense of smell (-2 difficulty to Perception rolls involving scent) and track by scent with a Perception + Survival roll (difficulty set by Storyteller).

Serpent's Venom — Bite transmits a toxin that causes two health levels of damage per turn in living victims (see poisons, p. 360). This continues until the toxin is removed or nullified, or Serpent's Venom ends.

Sound of the Cricket — Produce a grating sound loud enough to deafen those nearby. The target suffers a +4 difficulty to all Perception rolls involving hearing for the next scene unless he succeeds on a Willpower roll (difficulty 7).

Squirrel's Balance — Move easily along tree branches or across tightropes (-2 difficulty to Athletics rolls involving balance).

Strength of the Bear — Gain two dots of Strength.

Swiftness of the Stag — Move at double normal running speed.

•••• Beastly Hunger

Snatching one of the many spirits that permeate the world, the vampire consumes it to refresh her own reserves. This destroys the spirit, but no repercussions have been reported.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Intimidation (difficulty 8). Every success allows her to regain a point of Willpower, but each use of this power destroys another spirit.

••••• The Wild Beast

Freyja's chariot was drawn by two cats, Bygul and Trjegul, and the user of Spiritus enjoys a special bond to these creatures. The vampire becomes like a cat as she grows lither and stronger. She assumes a half-crouch, the pupils of her eyes become slitted, and she grows vicious claws on her hands. Animals react with fear to the Wild Beast, and mortals see her as a monster — if they see her at all.

System: The change does not require a roll, but the player must spend two blood points. The vampire's Strength is raised by three, and Dexterity and Stamina each by two. Appearance falls to 0 and Manipulation is reduced by three (though no lower than 0). Her fangs inflict an extra die of damage and her claws inflict aggravated damage. She can see in the dark, and all difficulties involving scent, hearing, and vision fall by two. She may maintain the Wild Beast for a number of hours every night equal to her Willpower rating.

••••• • The Spirit Beast

The Ahrimane merges with an indigenous spirit animal, and their bodies and minds become one.

System: No roll is required, but the player must spend one blood point and one Willpower point. The vampire fully merges with a spirit animal of her choice, effectively creating a new being. The vampire's Intelligence drops by two and her Wits by one, but she is no longer affected by sunlight and may remain awake without a roll at the cost of two Willpower points daily. Since the vampire is co-inhabiting with a spirit, she can choose whether to be corporeal or incorporeal and she may travel the spirit realms. She can use Animalism, Celerity, Fortitude, Potence, and Spiritus while in Spirit Beast form. The duration of Spirit Beast is indefinite, though the vampire must pay another blood point and Willpower point to change back; a vampire who cannot pay this cost and has no means of re-acquiring either might find herself stuck.

Temporis

True Brujah insist the origin of Temporis hearkens back to the Brujah Antediluvian before his diablerie. They claim that Celerity is no more than the feeble copy of a corrupt amateur. The preponderance of Celerity over Temporis among the childer of Caine, as well as accounts within the *Book of Nod* of the founder's own inhuman swiftness, indicates otherwise. The truth is most likely somewhere in the middle. Their progenitor undoubtedly crafted the art of Temporis, but evidence suggests that he did so in refinement of Celerity. The distinctive Disciplines do bear some affinity to one another as both involve acceleration, yet Temporis' deeper mysteries reside in its capacity to directly channel the unholy stasis preserving a vampire from the erosion of time.

• Hourglass of the Mind

Time is far too treacherous a force to manipulate carelessly. The first power of Temporis grants a vampire an innate and unerring perception of time.

System: This Discipline duplicates the Celestial Attunement Merit (p. 422), save that the Cainite's intuitive grasp is flawless beyond any conventional unit of time measurement. Additionally, the vampire instinctively

knows when time is disrupted by any supernatural effect (Perception + Alertness roll at difficulty 6, adjusted for distance and intensity by the Storyteller), remaining within an altered timeline but aware that a change has occurred. The difficulty of any supernatural effect to alter the perception granted by Hourglass of the Mind is increased by 1 for each dot of Temporis the character possesses.

•• Locked Contemplation

Due to the efficacy of this simple ability, most True Brujah think it likely their Antediluvian has remained trapped in the instant Troile's fangs pierced his throat in perpetuity. A Cainite with this power masters the time perception granted through Hourglass of the Mind, allowing her to dilate her mental acuity in response to crisis. Secondly, she may also project this ability in the reverse upon others, numbing all thought processes and perceptual awareness while delivering a fathomless daze to her victim which blanks the mind.

System: The primary effect of this power may be activated reflexively as a defensive action. The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Wits + Alertness (difficulty 6). With a success, the vampire's perception of time halts as her mind steps out of flow with linear time into a perpetual present. She may pontificate and contemplate, but cannot act physically, shift her view, use any power requiring a physical activation cost (such as blood), or influence the world in any way. Once the vampire decides her next course of action, she returns her attention to time and may act on her plans.

The difficulty of the first action she takes is reduced by one per success rolled above, down to a minimum difficulty of 3. However, some actions and events are unavoidable. A vampire could delay in eternity ruminating from a no-win position without coming to a comfortable conclusion; a Cainite may pause to consider a stake the moment before it pierces her heart, but no matter how long she deliberates on a course of action, she simply cannot dodge it.

For the secondary effect of this power, the vampire concentrates on a single victim in line of sight. The player spends a blood point and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty of the victim's Willpower). The victim then falls into a light trance that lasts one minute per success. Entranced victims are oblivious to their surroundings and the flow of time around them. The state ends immediately if the victim suffers damage or experiences a sudden jolt to her senses, such as a thunderclap or even a gentle nudge. Normal conversation does not break the trance, though shouting does. A botch on the roll causes the vampire herself to enter the trance.

••• Leaden Movement

With a gesture, the vampire may now lessen time's flow to a mere trickle, causing those under the influence of this power to perceive time's passage in a dizzying blur. Her own perception slows to a crawl despite events occurring normally around her.

System: This power may be activated reflexively as a defensive action. The player spends a blood point and rolls Intelligence + Occult. The difficulty depends on the target's speed; for example, a sauntering cart pulled by a donkey is only difficulty 4, while a single arrow fired by a Cainite with Celerity has a difficulty of 9. Each dot of Temporis beyond this level reduces the difficulty by one, down to a minimum of difficulty 4. No target larger than a man on horseback may be affected. Closely grouped objects of a similar size and nature count as a single object and increase the difficulty by two. Each success reduces a target's current speed and any damage dice pools it possesses by half. Botches are re-rolled as unsoakable bashing damage against the vampire herself. For slowed characters, apply any successes scored against them to the difficulty of any actions involving Dexterity, Wits, and Strength. When first targeted by this power and for every turn he is affected thereafter, a character with Celerity may negate individual successes on the roll at a cost of one blood point each. This power, if successful, may not be applied more than once to a target. Leaden Movement lasts one turn for every two successes rolled, rounded up.

•••• Patience of the Norns

The vampire may now either expand her power's circumference to engulf multiple targets at once or localize it on a single focused point to freeze an object in place. This utilitarian power provides both combat and non-combat benefits, such as transforming an attacker into a statue mid-swing or preserving precious documents without risking them to the ravages of age.

System: Aside from the following exceptions, this power otherwise works according to the rules for Leaden Movement. To slow multiple targets, the player spends a blood point and a Willpower point. To suspend a single target in place, the player spends two blood points (ignoring generational limits). Multiple targets do not require separate rolls and suffer the effects according to the successes scored against their difficulty. A number of targets up to the character's Wits rating may be affected in a single action.

To completely halt a lone target in place requires a successful Intelligence + Occult roll (see Leaden Movement). Thereafter, if anything carrying more kinetic force than a drop of rain comes in contact with the target, it

re-enters time at the velocity at which it was stopped. Characters with Celerity may still negate individual successes on the roll at the cost of one blood point each, but can not attempt to do so after this power has taken hold. Objects that are inanimate prior to application of this power may be suspended indefinitely. This does not include living or unliving targets at rest or targets currently under the influence of this power.

••••• Clotho's Gift

With this power, a vampire accelerates time within himself, moving with a preternatural speed that allows him to maneuver or strike faster than the eye can see, as well as think, plan, or invoke Disciplines which require intense focus.

System: The player spends three blood points (ignoring normal generational limits) and rolls Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 7). With a single success, this Discipline functions like Celerity, using the vampire's Temporis rating in place of Celerity where applicable. This power remains active for a number of turns equal to the successes rolled. Unlike Celerity, Clotho's Gift permits any type of action. A vampire may contemplate his movements, activate Disciplines multiple times, including those that require full concentration or normally cannot be used more than once in a turn (such as Dominate or Thaumaturgy). One exception exists: any Discipline that grants the vampire extra actions on top of those already gained by use of this power do not function at all. Furthermore, every action spent activating a Discipline results in two unsoakable dice of lethal damage against the Cainite (difficulty equal to the vampire's Temporis rating). The damage manifests as the very fabric of the Cainite's being falling apart, as if the heavens deny her existence in parts.

••••• • Kiss of Lachesis

True Brujah with this power gain limited mastery over the physical age of objects and individuals. Commanding the ability to either accelerate the aging process or unweave entropy and lessen time's hold, the vampire may mature or regress a target decades or even centuries in the blink of an eye.

System: The vampire briefly touches the target and concentrates for a turn. The player spends two blood points and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 4+ the target's Stamina or applicable score for an object + 4). The Cainite may increase or decrease (their choice) the age of the target by an amount of time according to their successes. This power cannot modify or revise history; its singular domain lies in either reversing or quickening the effects of time in terms of wear and tear. She does not need to use the full effect; for example, with five successes, she may opt to age the victim by six months instead of a century if she wishes. Every success her player chooses to apply is in turn re-rolled as unsoakable lethal damage against the vampire (difficulty equal to the vampire's Temporis rating).

Successes	Effect
1 success	one week
2 successes	one month
3 successes	one year
4 successes	one decade
5 successes	one century
6+ successes	one century per success over 5

Vampires lose one blood point per day of accelerated aging they incur, usually resulting in frenzy for anything under three successes and torpor if they lose all vitae. Living beings begin to wither and starve, usually perishing of dehydration after three or more days (after the third day, living beings lose a point of Stamina per day, until death). Effects upon non-living objects are up to the Storyteller, nevertheless, many organic compounds rapidly decay within a day or a week, while certain metals might take on rust and become increasingly brittle over time.

Unraveling the cords of time usually has a similar effect, but objects cannot return to an earlier or incomplete state before the point at which they were assembled. A golden ring may appear newly crafted, but will not revert to a lump of raw metal. Likewise, a living being may regress, at most, to the point of birth (or its equivalent), but not to a prenatal state. An amputee will not regenerate a missing limb, nor will a broken blade become anything less than freshly forged shards.

This power does not change an object or subject's mental or mystical properties. Sentient beings recall all memories and any Derangements they possess. A vampire's corporeal state will not revert to a point earlier than that of Embrace. Whether her age increases or decreases, she retains all Disciplines and keeps any changes in Generation due to diablerie. If aged far enough, a vampire will lose any marks of diablerie from her aura while her skin permanently pales. She may even begin to evince a rapacious hunger for her own kind.

••••• •• Cheat the Fates

The antithesis to Clotho's Gift, this power permits one to step outside the bonds of time altogether, bestowing the appearance of a world held in delicate suspense,

paused in a moment's stasis. Once triggered, the vampire and those he brings with him may casually stroll to avoid threats, adjust aspects of the setting to produce a more favorable outcome (such as launching attacks of their own), or even leave the area entirely, undetected.

System: This power may be activated reflexively as a defensive action, but doing so reduces the duration to a single turn. The player spends a Willpower point and three blood points, then rolls Wits + Occult (difficulty 7). A Cainite may include additional passengers up to his Wits. Each botch on the roll automatically inflicts one level of aggravated damage onto the Cainite (though any passengers remain unaffected). The power lasts for a number of turns equal to the amount of successes rolled, though the vampire may end the power prematurely should he wish. A non-combat turn still only lasts three to five seconds; these turns occur only for the vampire and his passengers who may take any actions but can not activate any Disciplines (even innate or perpetual ones). Resolve any attacks inflicted by the vampire and passengers normally, the exception being that halted targets cannot take defensive actions. Barring damage the vampire and passengers sustain through injury from sunlight, frozen flame, or similar sources (which are applied immediately), any damage is applied after time resumes its natural course. Once the power ceases, continue play on the same turn and initiative as when the vampire and passengers left time (if applicable). Prior to resolving any other action, roll one die for per passenger per turn the vampire moved out of time (difficulty equal to the vampire's Temporis rating). The Cainite suffers one level of unsoakable aggravated damage for each success, applied simultaneously with damage suffered by stilled victims.

••••• ••• Clio's Kiss

Named for the muse of history, Clio's Kiss circumvents the tides of time by projecting a vampire into the past, allowing her to retrieve something (or someone) to be carried forth to the present. Students of history might employ this power to verify the facts of past events, whereas others may derive value in seeking counsel or fetching long-lost items buried by the sands of time. A previous coordinated effort by True Brujah to recover their progenitor met with cataclysmic disaster, yet despite the catastrophe, rumors persist that a second attempt is being planned.

System: The player spends five blood points and rolls Stamina + Occult (difficulty 8). Successes indicate the length of time that a character may project back to:

Successes	Effect
1 success	up to one week
2 successes	up to one month
3 successes	up to one year
4 successes	up to one decade
5 successes	up to a century
6+ successes	up to one century per success over 5

Clio's Kiss manifests in a spherical radius, roughly equivalent in volume to that of a ballroom (Storyteller's discretion), transforming all conscious beings within its reach into invisible disembodied observers. They have awareness of their surroundings and may move about freely, but may take no other actions. The vampire who activates the power may elect to interact with the environment or remain invisible at her discretion. To the vampire and her passengers, anything outside its circumference appears as simply vacuous space, or the absence of it. Those under the effects of this power are restricted from exiting until the vampire who activated the power chooses to end it, or loses consciousness. Beings and objects from the past may enter and exit the space freely and remain unaware this power is active without supernatural perception, such as Hourglass of the Mind. If the vampire chooses to appear visible, she may be perceived naturally by those in the past existing outside the radius of its reach, though the vampire can not perceive them unless they enter the boundaries of Clio's Kiss.

To bring an object or individual from the past forward through time requires the expenditure of a dot of Willpower and ends the scene, returning all participants and the target (and only the target) to the present. Time is a self-correcting force. The vampire cannot bring forward objects and beings from the past that have a meaningful role to fulfill after the point in time this power travels back to, such as the jester who poisons the king to spark a major war a decade after the arrival of the vampire. An object or being located in one's travels to the past that continues to survive within the temporal present can not be brought forward; their continued existence in the past can not be superseded, as to suggest otherwise would conflict with the evolution of history. The manipulations of a Cainite from the future traveling to the past, more often than not, serve to assist the very event they attempt to divert. The outcome simply finds some other path with which to conform to history's original trajectory, try as a Cainite might to affect a desirable alternative. However bitter, Carthage will fall; warnings fall on deaf ears and all actions taken to divert its course serve only to entrench the outcome further. Storytellers should supplant narration in place of dice rolls to ensure time's infallibility.

Valeren

The Salubri's proprietary Discipline is divided into three aptly-named Paths: Healer, Warrior, and Watcher. Salubri use the healing powers and martial prowess of Valeren as bargaining chips, intimidating less moral Cainites into walking the Roads with greater conviction. The respective Salubri castes favor their proprietary Path as an in-clan Discipline. They may raise other Paths as clan Disciplines, but the opposing Path has an experience cost of (current rating x6).

Learning Valeren causes a physical change in Cainites: a bump or nodule developing in the center of the forehead, eventually cracking open into a fully-developed third eye when the character learns the third dot of Valeren. Cainites with high Road ratings rating manifest a human-looking or angelic-seeming eye; those walking a low or inhuman Road develop freakish or demonic third eyes. The eye is sensitive; attempting to cover it results in a penalty of one die to all rolls, though obscuring it under a hood is fine. In all cases, the eye may be retracted into the skull and perfectly hidden for the scene with a Stamina + Stealth roll (difficulty 5), but using any level of Valeren brings it forth once more.

Healer

• Sense Vitality

With a glance, the Salubri can instantaneously read a target's physical or spiritual vital markers. She may learn how much damage a target has incurred or what manner of being he is.

System: The third eye squints, revealing the small details of life to the Salubri's second sight. The player makes a Perception + Empathy or Medicine roll (difficulty 7), with successes cumulative if the Salubri continues examination. Two successes reveal how many health levels of damage the subject has suffered. Three successes tell how much blood a living target has left in her system. Four successes reveal the subject's Road or Path rating (if applicable), though not which Road the subject walks. Alternately, successes allow the player to ask the Storyteller one question about the subject's general health. "Was he drugged?" or "Was this done with Vicissitude?" are valid, but "Who did this to him?" or "Was it Rustovitch?" are not.

•• Gift of Sleep

The Unicorn can ease a target's pain or place him into a deep, soothing sleep. The Healers have staunch ethical concerns about forcing unconsciousness on the unwilling, but these are concerns, not limits.

System: If used on the willing, the power requires a touch and a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) to block the subject's pain. This allows the subject to ignore all wound penalties for one turn per success, and the Salubri may use this power on himself. To put a living being to sleep (willing or unwilling) the vampire must make a contested Willpower roll against the subject (difficulty 8). This target sleeps for eight hours (or whatever is normal for the individual) and regains one temporary Willpower point upon awakening. Being put to sleep in the midst of combat is entirely possible; while dropping to the ground does not awaken the subject, being struck with a weapon will snap the victim back to full wakefulness. Vampires and other undead creatures, or those who are sleepless for whatever reason, are not affected by this power.

••• Healer's Touch

The signature power of the Healers stems from the ability to apply the vampiric regenerative process to others. The third eye opens wide, shedding slick sanguine light. The target feels sweet, invigorating energies rushing into their wounds.

System: This power works on any living or undead creature, but the character must be able to touch the target, even if they merely "lay on hands." The target's wounds may be healed by the expenditure of blood points, as if the vampire were healing herself. Aggravated wounds may be also healed in this manner, requiring three blood points for each aggravated health level. The Healer's Touch may also cleanse any bloodborne infectious diseases, requiring two blood points per infection; they must first be identified, and this power does not prevent a recurrence, but it will alleviate the worst of the malady.

•••• Shepherd's Watch

The third eye opens and flares a bright white, illuminating a barely-visible ward around the Unicorn and his charge. No foe may breach this sacred shield. The Salubri himself must stand among those he defends as he generates this barrier; he cannot guard them from afar.

System: The Salubri spends two Willpower points. Erecting the force barrier is a standard action, but maintaining it per turn or dropping it is reflexive. The invisible barrier extends in a 10-foot/3-meter radius from the character. Those within it at its creation may leave and return, and the barrier moves with the Salubri.

Those who wish to cross the barrier from the outside must contest the character in an extended, contested

Willpower roll (difficulty 8). The opponent may cross the barrier as soon as he accumulates three net successes against the Salubri; if the Salubri accumulates three net successes, the opponent is permanently barred from the threshold. Rocks, thrown weapons, or crossbow bolts may penetrate the barrier without penalty, but everyone within the barrier is considered to have two additional dice of soak against such attacks.

••••• Unburden the Bestial Soul

The third eye opens and a shaft of golden radiance lances out, transfixing the victim. Something barely perceptible wafts out of the subject's mouth, drawn into the Salubri's body. It is the victim's soul. Salubri with this level of Valeren may draw the tattered soul from the vampire into the Salubri's third eye, allowing the Healer to repair damage done by the burden of unlife and the Beast.

System: Vampiric souls with a Road rating of 0 cannot be healed by this power; they're best left to the Warrior Caste. For all others, the character spends two Willpower points and rolls Stamina + Empathy (difficulty of 10 minus the subject's Road rating). Failure means the character cannot try again until the following night, while a botch means the Unicorn acquires a temporary Derangement. Success takes the target's soul. Souls drawn out in this manner become part of the Salubri's soul while the healing process takes place, and she may return it to its proper body at any time. Bereft of a soul, the target's body is vacant, but alive; it obeys the Salubri's commands. The body may be forced into combat, but loses two dice to its dice pools due to lack of coordination (Healers consider this gravely unethical, even if they absorbed the subject's soul as a defensive measure). The subject's body and soul were never meant to be separated; holding a soul for longer than strictly necessary — usually, a night — is considered a sin against most Roads (especially Humanity and Heaven). The soul may eventually attempt to escape; this is resisted by a Willpower roll (difficulty of the trapped soul's Wits + Empathy), attempted once per week. She may only hold one soul at a time.

By spending five Willpower points over the course of an hour, the Salubri may roll Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty 8) to increase the subject's Virtue ratings (Conscience, Courage, and Self-Control) degrade them (Conviction and Instinct), or increase the subject's Road rating directly. She sees the myriad degenerations that led to the soul's fallen state as harrowing visions. The Salubri may only restore or degrade a total number of points equal to her Empathy rating per night, and must pay the Willpower cost when she attempts it again. She may expend additional Willpower (one per) to cure the subject's Derangements. Malkavians may be healed of their clan weakness, but only for a night.

••••• • Father's Judgment

The Blood is Caine's gift. The Salubri pronounce judgment on those who misuse it. His third eye glowing as silver as Raphael's soft halo, the Unicorn renders a portion of the target's vitae inert, blocking them from powering their Disciplines or healing their undead frame by sheer effort of will. The target feels their blood seize within them, clotting into dead dark chunks. Even powerful elders fear repeated use of this power.

System: The Healer spends a Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Medicine or Empathy (difficulty 7) against a target of a Cainite within line of sight, contested by the victim's Willpower roll (difficulty 9). For each success on the roll, a blood point in the target's pool is rendered unusable for any purpose – healing, Disciplines, ghouling, or anything else. The target may spend one point of Willpower per blood point to unclot their vitae, but otherwise may not spend or discharge the dead blood in any way.

••••• •• Blissful Gaze

The mere presence of a Salubri Healer heralds victory. To those within her gaze, wounds knit themselves together, and even a steel kiss tastes sweet.

System: This power enhances Gift of Sleep and Healer's Touch. The third eye's light spears out, lancing through the target, and both powers no longer require touch to be used, merely a line of sight. In addition, Gift of Sleep can be used to *reverse* wound penalties for its duration, instead providing bonus dice as the target is flooded with ecstasy and anticipation of the Salubri's touch.

••••• ••• Rayzeel's Song

Music soothes the savage breast. Voice and instruments heal the soul and confer focus. Rayzeel is said to have crafted the Song to draw Saulot out of depression after the Baali Wars. Salubri who hail from Judeo-Christian traditions call this power King David's Blessing. When playing music appropriate to the situation (a wistful string tune is appropriate for most situations, though a jaunty flute-and-drums combination before battle gets the soul singing along), the Salubri focuses the souls of all involved on the task at hand.

System: Playing an appropriate composition is Charisma + Performance (difficulty 7) and requires a Willpower point for every three listeners affected by the Discipline. If the Salubri is singing to the accompaniment of another, both players must make the Performance roll.

Accompanist botches remove successes from the Salubri's efforts, potentially resulting in a botch.

If the Salubri is attempting this before individuals healing others (including addressing Derangements), going into battle, or entering tense negotiations, each success on Rayzeel's Song lowers the difficulty by one for all situation-relevant rolls during the scene for any listeners so affected (minimum difficulty 4).

Failing or botching Rayzeel's Song is unpleasant for all concerned; failure increases the difficulty for all situation-relevant rolls by one, while a botch increases the difficulty by two. A botch also inflicts a single level of lethal damage as the subject violently rejects the music and suffers internal convulsions. Medieval thought holds that disharmony invites ill luck and malicious spirits, and the botch may carry serious social repercussions.

••••• •••• Heaven's Gate

The apex of Valeren involves miraculous healing of body and soul, even reversing death itself. The third eye flares gold, forming a bright halo around the Salubri as he gently traces lines around the chakra points of the corpse. The subject's soul reconstitutes itself, merges with the Salubri, then flows outward from the third eye to visibly reintegrate with the body. With a gasp, the mortal is resurrected, death wounds healing as life is restored.

System: This power may only be used on an individual dead less than a week, who did not die of old age and whose soul was not consumed or destroyed in some manner via Necromancy or Warrior Valeren (or similar effects). It cannot be used to reverse the Embrace. Only the subject's head is necessary for the resurrection, but it must remain relatively intact, with most pieces present. The elder spends two Willpower points and five blood points, and rolls Willpower (difficulty 8). Success reconstitutes the subject's soul (wraiths disappear and reappear near the Salubri, transformed by the power), reborn within the body. The Salubri's blood spirals outward and heals the death wounds, regenerating the body to perfect health. Forever after, the subject retains traces of the Salubri's blood, making her a revenant. She recalls the time spent as a wraith (if any), but any spiritual trauma suffered fades into a bright, healing light.

Warrior

• Sense Death

A healer learns a subject's illnesses to cure them. The warrior learns so they know where to strike.

System: This power works identically to Sense Vitality, save that Sense Death may not see how many wounds a target has suffered nor scrutinize a mortal's blood. In exchange, Warriors may analyze the target's soak rating (for two successes) and determine the amount of vitae currently in a vampire or ghoul's blood pool (for three). Questions may pertain to the subject's physical prowess, combat Disciplines or philosophical stance towards killing. Knowing both Sense Vitality and Sense Death grants an additional two dice to the Perception + Empathy or Medicine roll; if known, they may be activated with a single roll, with successes counting towards both.

•• Morphean Blow

Healers use sleep to accelerate the healing process. Warriors use sleep to incapacitate enraged foes. Stories abound of Salubri Warriors quelling lupines with a single slap, leaving the beasts vulnerable to the killing blow.

System: This power works identically to the Gift of Sleep; despite the name, Warriors may dull their wound penalties with this Discipline. Knowing both Gift of Sleep and Morphean Blow grants an additional two dice in the resisted Willpower roll to pacify the target. This Discipline may be used in combat as part of a Brawl attack.

••• Burning Touch

The character's grasp inflicts searing pain akin to being burnt with a red-hot iron. This power inflicts no damage, but painfully disrupts the vital energies of the target. The Warrior can use prolonged or repeated exposure to this power in order torture a victim.

System: The vampire must grasp the target (a Dexterity + Brawl roll). The character spends at least one blood point to activate this power; each blood point spent reduces the victim's dice pools by two for so long as the Cyclops grasps the victim and for the next turn thereafter. Each activation of the power causes one level of bashing damage to the target from sheer physical strain. The pain triggers Rötschreck in vampires (as "being burned"), and Warriors have occasionally used it as a blunt demonstration of the victim's spiritual weakness.

•••• Armor of Caine's Fury

The third eye opens, blazing redder than the setting sun. This radiance spreads along the Salubri's desiccated veins in a flash until their entire body is enveloped in a web of radiant light that defies wounding. The Cyclopes consider this (and their talent at Fortitude) to be the chief reasons they are so feared in war. Ventrue have also expressed envy of this power, and have invited Salubri into their domains to teach them Valeren in exchange for patronage.



System: The player spends one blood point and rolls Stamina + Melee (difficulty 7). For each success, the vampire gains one point of armor, to a maximum of five points. This stacks with any worn armor. Additionally, for every two successes rolled, she gains an additional die to resist Rötschreck. This power lasts for the scene.

••••• Ending the Watch

The Warriors trace their origin to Samiel's ancient fury in the days after the Second City. Yet ancient tales record the Salubri of Enoch walking the streets, laying hands upon the terminally ill and freeing their souls from mortality's coil. In return, the Salubri gained both wisdom and strength of will. Despite their anger, the Warriors retain the fundamentally peaceful disposition of Clan Salubri, and this power reflects their hewing to the clan's original nature. When acting as death watch, the third eye's iris flares gold, absorbing the essence of the mortal's departing soul into the Salubri's own.

This power may only be used on a dying mortal (Incapacitated in lethal damage, but not yet dead) or one who truly wishes death without coercion. Generally, the mortally wounded or the elderly are targets of this power, but those of a deeply melancholic temperament or torture victims are equally viable. Tremere whisper rumors of unforgiving Warriors afflicting captives with the Burning Touch, then taking their souls when they beg for death.

System: The Salubri spends a Willpower point and lays a hand over a valid target's heart, peacefully and painlessly killing them. If the vampire kills with a melee attack, they may make a reflexive Dexterity + Brawl roll to touch the target and activate this power. This is a mercy killing, for all the difference that makes to a vampire walking their Road; as always, killing done outside the heat of battle may necessitate a Degeneration roll. The player then rolls the character's Perception + Empathy (difficulty 7); upon a success, the target's soul is absorbed. For each success on the absorption roll, the Salubri may do one of two things:

• Recall facts of the target's memory, requiring a separate Intelligence + Empathy roll (difficulty 5) for each fact of significance. With the soul's vitality residing inside the Salubri, he knows much of what the dead man did — interesting secrets, rare treasures, or vital documents. The Salubri may choose to let pertinent or

pressing information come to him (Storyteller's choice) but this raises the difficulty of the roll to 7.

• Absorb the living energies of the mortal's soul to bolster their own; each success allows the Warrior to recoup a point of Willpower. The Warrior may store these Willpower points above their normal maximum (to a total of 10).

The soul remains within the Salubri's own for as long as he wishes, but only one soul may be contained at a time. Once the successes on the roll have been used by either or both options, the remnants of the soul fade, venturing to their final destination. The corpse of the target may be fed upon, regardless of clan weakness. Their blood tastes rich and hot, even many nights after death; however, they may not be Embraced.

••••• • Samiel's Vengeance

Invoking the name and spirit of her long-destroyed progenitor, the Salubri retaliates with superhuman speed and unerring accuracy.

System: This power costs three blood points, and may target any foe who has struck the Salubri (even if the strike did no damage). Any melee-range attack made by her strikes as if the Warrior had succeeded with all of his Dexterity + Melee or Brawling pool (including dice from Celerity), with two dice added to the damage pool. Armor only affords half its rating against the fury of the blow. This power may be used only once per turn, and only works with bare limbs or melee weapons.

••••• •• Dream Combat

Warrior Salubri use Dream Combat to confront ghosts or demons that they cannot affect physically. Increasingly, they find that it allows them to confront elders and powerful entities on a more level playing field. The few Healers and Watchers who've learned Warrior Valeren also find the power extremely useful, as their less martial nature matters little in the dreamscape.

By locking the target's gaze with her third eye, the Salubri draws the target's mind into a shared dream. In the dreamscape, both the Salubri and her target can imagine any arena they wish for battle (or even peaceful pursuits). The target cannot suffer any direct, physical harm from Dream Combat, but the psychic damage can be devastating. Spirits can be outright destroyed by this power.

System: To initiate Dream Combat, the Warrior must look her target in the eye and make a contested Willpower roll (difficulty 7). If the Salubri wins, she pulls her target into a dreamscape. Neither leaves until the Salubri is defeated or ends the power of her own will. Time is accelerated within the dreamscape, and the entire battle lasts a turn outside.

In the dreamscape, both participants can do anything they imagine. They can fly, change their shape, and create any environment they want. Affecting each other is more difficult. Combatants can battle in any manner, but it's the will doing battle, not the body.

Dream Combat

Physical Traits and Disciplines, save certain applications of Auspex and Dominate (Storyteller's discretion) don't exist in Dream Combat; it's a battle of the mind. Manipulation replaces Strength, Charisma replaces Dexterity, and the character's highest rated Virtue replaces Stamina and soak. Willpower replaces health levels.

If the character cannot relate the attack somehow to Athletics, Archery, Brawling, or Melee, use unmodified Charisma for the attack pool, with the environment itself battering the combatants. There is no analog to bashing, lethal or aggravated damage, nor does Fortitude play any role in soaking damage.

Damage applies to the target's effective maximum Willpower. The target suffers penalties to all dice pools as his Willpower drops. Until the target loses half his Willpower (round fractions upward), he stays at OK. Each subsequent point of Willpower lost imposes a -1 wound penalty to all actions.

A dream-warrior can spend Willpower points without incurring any penalty. As the character's Willpower rating drops, he has fewer points to expend.

A character reduced to Willpower 0 is incapacitated; mortals become comatose, while vampires drop into torpor for a night and develop a spiritual Derangement. Spirits or demons reduced to Willpower 0 may be diablerized within the dreamscape; this destroys them, and while such an act doesn't affect the Salubri's Generation, it may allow the vampire to purchase Supernatural Merits at the Storyteller's discretion.

••••• ••• Fiery Agony

A Warrior's touch brings pain and the promise of cleansing fire. At this level of mastery, even their gaze inflames the agony, rendering victims debilitated and mewling in fear.

System: This power enhances Burning Touch. The Touch no longer fades after a turn, but continues under the harsh red light of the third eye. The Warrior must still touch his target first to invoke the power, but may continue activating the power at range as if still grasping their victim. Additionally, each blood point spent now *also* reduces the vampire's pool to resist Rötschreck by one.

••••• •••• Song of the Blooded

Samiel's words were heard only by his childer. Only they know the secret doubts he spoke aloud, purging them from his heart so he could face his enemies with his potential unchecked. The clear heart of a Salubri Warrior is a furious one, the purity of their rage visibly shining forth. The doubts are spoken as a prayer, acquiring cadence and rhythm and defining the speaker as an avenging angel of an angry God ("Lend me your rage, o Lord, for I am Michael, General of the Host"). For this reason that the Warrior Caste often takes the names of Judeo-Christian angels; even if they cannot use this power, symbolism lends a great deal of weight.

System: Once per chapter, the Warrior may activate this Discipline at no cost or roll. Any subsequent activation requires the expenditure of three Willpower and five blood points, and a Charisma + Performance prayer (difficulty 7) to openly voice the doubts and fears of the Warrior, giving them life so that she may kill them. Success means the Salubri enters into a trance state for the rest of the scene, singing loudly of victory over her foes and fears and her eyes glowing brighter than the sun. Her Physical Attributes immediately increase to Generational maximums. A halo burns around her, incapable of being smothered by lesser Disciplines, rendering Stealth impossible. The glare increases the difficulty of any attacks against the Salubri by two. While in the battle-trance, she gains immunity to Dominate, Presence and other mental Disciplines (save the effect of Rayzeel's Song). The trance ends when every foe is dead as her fears or she meets Final Death on the field.

Watcher

• Sense Cycle

Rather than diagnosing the sick and dying, the nascent third eye of the Watchers sees the cycle of life entire. They see the ebb and flow of lives in the streets, not the vitality locked within veins and organs. The Watcher experiences waking visions that alter her perception of the world around her, leaving her prone to seeing dire omens and auspicious portents in the smallest event. When she focuses, these visions resolve into incredible personal insight.

System: The Salubri instinctually realizes when she's in the presence of a character or event that is significant to her future (and the narrative, as determined by the Storyteller). Sense Cycle automatically informs the Salubri of potentially hostile encounters in the immediate future, ensuring she'll only be encountered unawares in locales unfamiliar to her. If she spends one Willpower point and rolls Perception + Enigmas or Empathy (difficulty 7), she may glean omens and visions of the person in question. Each success allows the player to ask the Storyteller a question regarding the target, such as his public identity and role in society, if he is hostile or could become so (and for another success, under what circumstances), or one psychological weakness he possesses.

•• Peaceful Touch

Watchers deal in knowledge, but knowledge threatens the most powerful of men — the brutal nights during the Wolf of Qin's purges are still fresh in the minds of their elders. Healing wounds after they occur is miraculous, but greater miracles lie in calming the bloodlust that comes with violence.

System: The Watcher spends a blood point and a Willpower point, and touches a foe hostile to him. For three turns, the target's difficulty to strike the Salubri increases by two (maximum 9). If the target is a vampire, she sees the difficulty of Rötschreck or frenzy rolls decrease by 2, making it easy for her to restrain herself.

The Salubri may not use this power on himself. Knowing Gift of Sleep or Morphean Blow increases the duration for two turns (to a maximum of 7).

••• Pariah's Caress

Watchers must contend with the Wan Kuei, other vampires who do not subscribe to the idea of the lineage of Caine, and stranger beings such as mages. They learned long ago that the best defense lies in misdirection — if enemies are looking at someone else, they aren't looking at the Salubri. With this power, a Watcher may charge her blood with the combined hatred and attention of all her foes, and then transfer that animosity to another with a bloody touch.

System: The character spends a blood point (which wells up under her fingertips), touches her victim (smearing the blood on them, possibly requiring a Stealth roll),

then the player must roll Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty 7). Each success extends the power's duration for one evening. The difficulty of the target's Social rolls increases by one as he finds himself within a miasma of annoyance and suspicion. Even mundane or positive acts draw significant negative attention, inspiring jealousy and causing every flaw to be scrutinized.

•••• Peacemaker

Watchers are arbiters and negotiators, dealing with hostile supernatural beings on behalf of all Cainites. Keeping the peace is paramount. With this power, out-of-control tempers find restraint and bitter arguments are reduced to differences of opinion. No few Healers have strived to learn this power; many simply believe it to be a more advanced Valeren effect rather than a tool of the mysterious Watchers.

System: The player spends two Willpower points to erect the Peacemaker aura, which must be inside a chamber no larger than a ballroom. The Salubri's third eye opens, but sheds no light. The aura lasts for as many turns as he has dots in his Road rating or until he leaves the area, though once used, tempers rarely surge again. The Peacemaker Aura is not a numbing or hypnotic effect, but more clearing one's head from the distractions of anger. Those under the power's effect are more inclined to talk out a dispute than reach for the sword. Even Brujah or similarly rage-prone characters find it harder to lose their tempers — the aura mitigates such weaknesses, and they roll against frenzy as normal.

Anyone wishing to insult someone or attack under Peacemaker must roll Willpower (difficulty of the Salubri's Road) or hesitate. This occurs even in the midst of an active battle, wherein all participants must roll each turn to continue hostilities until the duration expires. This applies to the Salubri as well — the aura must be raised in good faith and cannot be used to create an ambush (though nothing stops the Salubri from healing allies in case things go south).

••••• Soul's Breath

This is a secret of the Watchers: the Curse of Caine to subsist on blood and bitter ashes is a lie. Progression of the soul allows one to draw out the sanguine humor that floats within the lungs and the vitality of will in the breath. It's a meager draught, but one can sup one's fill from a crowd with none the wiser. With the breath comes power, all flowing to the Watcher.

System: The Salubri must be facing a victim within speaking distance. He rolls Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 6, though this may increase or decrease; difficulty 4 with a kiss, difficulty 9 for shouting across a ballroom). Success on the roll allows the Salubri to sup one "blood" point per turn (maximum duration of his successes) from his victim's breath. The victim rarely knows what's happening to them, experiencing the loss as a moment of discomfiting weakness. She loses one health level per point of "blood", as if he'd fed from her. The Salubri may divide his successes amongst multiple targets in range to draw in more breath per turn, rapidly draining a crowd of breath and continuing on. Breath does not sate like blood; he may only use this power for a number of nights equal to his Road rating before needing to physically drink blood.

Supernatural creatures targeted by this Discipline lose both "blood" and part of their power. Each success on the roll to activate Soul's Breath carries both a "blood" point (and concurrent level of damage) and robs the supernatural being of one point of her power pool (Cainites have their vitae rendered inert, Lupines lose Gnosis, etc.), translated to the Salubri as a point of Willpower. At Storyteller's discretion, this theft provides an excellent justification for the purchase of out-of-clan Disciplines or Supernatural Merits.

••••• • Safe Passage

Watchers walk the Silk Road. So safe is this journey that it's said a man may walk a thousand miles with a nugget of gold atop his head before encountering ill intent. A Watcher encounters ill intent far more often in her domains, but she too remains unharmed through use of this power. Crowds shift to allow her, people treat her with politeness, and she's even offered shelter and hospitality without recompense.

System: Safe Passage is always "on," though the Watcher may release the effect if she wishes. Besides receiving hospitality regardless of culture or local beliefs, the power also passively inhibits anyone hunting the Salubri. All attempts to hunt or track the Salubri with hostile intent suffer a -2 penalty to relevant dice pools; if a potential hunter sights her by coincidence, he must engage in a contested Willpower roll (difficulty 6). If the Salubri wins, the hunters temporarily lose interest in her for the scene, allowing her to flee.

••••• •• Aversion

Watchers can feel the hatred of their enemies, but without a common foe, society falls into disunity. The trick lies in not being the target of that hatred. By further study, a Watcher may focus this ill will on a target of his choice, ostracizing them utterly.

System: This power enhances Pariah's Caress; it now only requires a line of sight to the pariah-to-be. The target's Social difficulties increase by two (to a maximum

of 9). Any Social botches on the part of the target are immediately attributed to an insulting and threatening mien, provoking all who listen. This may well incite an attack, or just a disgusted order to vacate the offended character's presence.

••••• ••• Purification

Mages, Wan Kuei, and shapeshifters all command spirits and demons. These creatures exist in their own worlds, but infest our own. The Watchers see them, however, and seek not only to heal the infestation (as a good Salubri ought) but to rid their rivals of potential servants.

System: The Salubri spends a Willpower point, focusing on the spirit or demon. She and the spirit engage in a battle of wills, represented by a contested Willpower roll (difficulty 8). The contest ends when one combatant has accumulated three successes more than another. If the Salubri wins, she may expel the spirit and pacify it. By spending another Willpower point, she may thrust the spirit into a person, animal or location, including taking the spirit into herself. In all cases, she now commands the spirit, who behaves as if fully blood-bonded to the Salubri.

••••• •••• Soul Exchange

Scholar and thief, the twin childer of Zao-lat are seldom seen these nights. Mastery of the greatest Watcher power requires a melding of their two purviews: scholarly arcane research of the soul and the acquisition of the most valuable things. Combined, the Watcher Methuselahs can achieve the greatest redistribution of all: a soul.

System: The Watcher keeps two individuals within his line of sight, then spends a point of Willpower and makes a Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty 8). Success allows him to switch the souls of the two targets. The victims immediately exchange Roads (and ratings), Virtues, and Natures, an experience that's horrifically disorienting to say the least. Though Demeanor remains the same, the essential nature of the characters will shift rapidly. This power can be undone by two Healers applying Unburden the Bestial Soul, but doing so and avoiding the Watcher Methuselah's ire is a feat in and of itself.

Vicissitude

The discussion regarding Vicissitude is a contentious one; many a perfectly fine dinner party has ended in bloodshed because an especially impolitic (or cagey) neonate broached the subject before dessert. Is the Tzimisce art of fleshcrafting a mockery of Creation, a debasement of one's fundamental humanity, or a perfect union of flesh and spirit? Even the Dragons can't seem to agree; Old Clan Tzimisce repudiate its practitioners as gaudy aesthetes who allow themselves distraction from the call to rulership, while young Tzimisce pose the question: if a ruler shapes the land to suit them, why should its subjects be any different, given that they are an extension of the land itself? Philosophical mutterings aside, there is no shortage of Vicissitude users among the Cainites. Power, after all, is power, and there's no denying the visceral impact it can have upon an unwitting foe, particularly since it so often involves their actual viscera.

Vicissitude, the Tzimisce art of fleshcrafting, is a particularly intimate Discipline. Like a sculptor working clay, it requires touch, sometimes gentle, most often forceful. Contrary to popular belief, bones do not break themselves, nor does muscle simply realign itself. The vampire must make that happen, and it hurts. Simple changes can be wrought relatively quickly; a master practitioner can de-glove a forearm of flesh and muscle and twist the underlying bone into a deadly spear with but a single rending motion. But more complicated visions, particularly those with any degree of subtlety, take time, sometimes days, or even weeks.

Changes wrought by Vicissitude are permanent, with only rare exceptions. A Cainite of lower Generation than the Tzimisce can heal alterations in the same manner as they heal aggravated wounds. Furthermore, the re-application of Vicissitude can be used to restore a subject to their former self, though such an endeavor requires a considerable amount of skill and time, and the end result is often imperfect. Finally, Vicissitude cannot permanently

Body Crafts

Vicissitude requires expansive knowledge of the human body, the kind usually only available through Medicine. The Tzimisce, not particularly given to the art of healing, have developed an alternative: Body Crafts. Body Crafts is a unique Skill (not to be confused with the more generalized Crafts Skill) that combines knowledge of vivisection, anatomy, taxidermy, scarification, tanning, and sculpting into a new kind of artisan Ability. Its primary purpose is to augment the application of Vicissitude. Without Body Crafts, Vicissitude rolls may be made at +2 difficulty using the Medicine Ability. Almost no one outside of clan Tzimisce knows — or needs to know — this highly specialized Skill.

alter or undo those things that are inherent to other Cainites: the Nosferatu's horrid aspect, the deathly pallor of a Cappadocian, and so on. These things can be hidden for a time, but they return after the subject rests.

Vicissitude cannot be used to heal. Indeed, its very use is often damaging, and always invasive. After, a subject usually needs time to heal from the trauma of their shaping. Unfortunately for them, the physical pain is the least of their worries, a temporary inconvenience compared to adjustment of life within a new, often unrecognizable, body.

• Malleable Visage

The user may alter their own body in simple, cosmetic ways. He can be taller or stockier. He can change his voice by reshaping his larynx. He can adopt new skin tone, new eye color, new hair, and so on. The process is not simple; it requires the user to actually craft these changes in his own form, which can be disturbing and painful. True to its name, only flesh (including muscle, fat, and cartilage) can be manipulated with Malleable Visage.

System: The player must spend one blood point for each desired change and roll Intelligence + Body Crafts (difficulty 6). If the character is trying to duplicate another person's appearance or voice, the roll is Perception + Body Crafts (difficulty 8); the number of successes rolled sets the number of successes a friend or acquaintance of the imitated subject would need to get on a Perception roll to detect the deception. Increasing one's Appearance has a difficulty of 9 and requires an extra blood point for each dot above their natural total. A botch permanently reduces his Appearance by one.

•• Transmogrify the Mortal Clay

While Malleable Visage is relatively inoffensive, Transmogrify the Mortal Clay is where Vicissitude's real power takes shape. Now the Tzimisce may perform dramatic alterations, and not just upon himself, but upon any subject she can subdue long enough to impart her vision. Tzimisce often use Transmogrify the Mortal Clay to craft monstrous servants, torture enemies, and bestow "gifts" upon those who please her.

System: After spending a blood point, the vampire must grapple or otherwise subdue her intended subject. She then rolls Dexterity + Body Crafts (difficulty varies, depending upon the changes sought). Appearance can be changed as described under Malleable Visage; reducing Appearance is easier (difficulty 5), unless the Tzimisce pursues an especially complex and nuanced kind of disfigurement. Each success increases or decreases the Attribute by one. Furthermore, the Tzimisce may arrange flesh to improve upon the subject's defenses. Each success scored (difficulty 8) allows the vampire to increase the subject's soak pool by one, though it comes at the cost of a dot of Strength or a health level (vampire's choice).

••• Rend the Osseous Frame

At this stage of mastery, the Tzimisce has progressed to manipulating bone. Used on its own, Rend the Osseous Frame can inflict terrible damage upon a subject. When used in conjunction with Transmogrify the Mortal Clay, nightmares become possible.

System: The vampire spends a blood point and makes a Strength + Body Crafts roll (difficulty as above). When used on its own to inflict harm, the difficulty is 7 and each success scored inflicts one level of lethal damage upon the subject as bones are forced through flesh. The Tzimisce may "arm" a subject with spikes, claws, talons, quills or other weapons formed from the subject's own bones. Most such weapons inflict one health level of lethal damage as they burst out of the subject's flesh. Defensive weapons that cover larger surface areas do lethal damage equal to five minus the number of successes (a botch kills a mortal subject or sends a vampire into torpor) when they're formed. Spikes and claws deal Strength+1 levels of lethal damage. Quills inflict lethal damage equal to the subject's Strength upon an attacker, unless the attack succeeded with three or more successes on the attack roll, in which case the attacker takes no damage. The defender still takes damage normally. Additionally, quills improve damage from holds, clinches, and tackles by two. The vampire can craft bone plates to improve a subject's defense; this works in the same fashion as Transmogrify the Mortal Clay, save that each additional point of soak comes at the expense of a dot of Dexterity or a health level (vampire's choice).

Creative users of this power will find different and interesting ways to apply it, to the advantage of themselves and their allies and the detriment of their enemies. An old favorite involves turning a subject's ribs inwards until they pierce the heart and lungs. Five successes are required to achieve this effect; on mortals, it is almost always fatal, while vampires erupt in an uncontrollable sanguine shower that drains them of half their blood pool.

•••• Awaken the Zulo Shape

When one considers the primeval forests of Transylvania, the thought *demon-haunted* often comes to mind. More often than not, the inspiration for that response is a Tzimisce in zulo shape, an eight-foot-tall nightmare of scales and greasy fur, apelike arms tipped with jagged black nails, and a bristling row of spines tracing the length of its backbone.

System: By spending two blood points, the Tzimisce awakens the zulo shape. All Physical Attributes increase

by three, while all Social Attributes drop to zero (save for those also capable of assuming the zulo form, in which case Social Attributes are treated as normal). A vampire in Zulo form may use the Intimidation Ability with his Strength. All brawling damage is improved by one.

••••• The Body Impolitic

Arguably the most ghoulish of Vicissitude's gifts, The Body Impolitic allows the user to invest a portion of her sentience in the flesh of her body, then sever it from the trunk to do the Tzimisce's bidding.

System: By infusing an extremity with blood, the Tzimisce gives it awareness and a life of its own. Only one blood point is required, though some body parts can be gifted with more; the smallest of extremities (eyes, tongue, etc.) can hold only one, but a limb may hold two or three depending on where it is severed, the head can hold three, and the trunk can hold as much as five. Once imbued with awareness, the Tzimisce can then remove the extremity (Dexterity + Body Crafts to do so without inflicting one level of lethal damage upon herself) and set it free to do her bidding. When needed, an extremity can tear itself free from the main body; doing so requires two rounds and deals the usual level of lethal damage to the body. The Tzimisce can have as many servitor "parts" as she has extremities to use (and blood points to fuel them). While a body part is detached and still sentient, the Tzimisce cannot regrow it. Disembodied parts are always aware of all other parts of itself, but otherwise have only the sensory input normally available to them. Some Tzimisce will use Vicissitude to craft additional sensory organs onto these extremities to give them the tools to perform specific tasks (mouths and tongues to deliver messages, eyes to spy with, and so on). The master can use Disciplines through a disembodied extremity, but only if that body part can fulfill the Discipline's requirements (that is, it must have blood enough to fuel the Discipline, must be able to make eye contact if that's a requirement of the Discipline, etc.) If an extremity uses up its blood points to fuel a Discipline, it withers into nothingness moments after doing so. Independent extremities have one health level each. They are almost preternaturally aware of danger and gain three dots in Athletics. If an extremity is destroyed, it can be recreated by spending one blood point and successfully using Transmogrify the Mortal Clay and Rend the Osseous Frame to shape a replacement. So long as the Tzimisce has a living extremity tucked away somewhere, she can't fully be killed and may be able to reconstruct herself given time.



••••• • Chiropteran Marauder

The Tzimisce who obtains this level of mastery within Vicissitude learns to improve upon his zulo form, expanding its physical capabilities by melding its form with that of a terrible bat. So fearsome is the Chiropteran Marauder that a mere glance from it triggers eons-old prey instincts within mortals and younger vampires.

System: The Chiropteran Marauder is an evolution of the zulo form; it has all the same advantages, though the Tzimisce must spend three blood points to assume it. In addition, the vampire grows bat-like wings upon which it can fly at 25 mph/40 kmh, and can carry objects (but not manipulate) objects that it could normally bear in two hands. With a Strength + Body Crafts, difficulty 7, it may manifest bony claws along its wings or a fang-filled maw; these new natural weapons inflict Strength+2 aggravated damage. Finally, it subtracts two from all aural Perception checks (but increase the difficulty of visual Perception checks by one), and gain two dots in Intimidation.

••••• •• Blood of the Earth

The Tzimisce with this power has converted all of her blood into a dark viscous substance far more deadly than any regular vitae.

System: The Tzimisce's blood is dark and oily. The gooey blood clings to surfaces and is hard to remove; to do so in a hurry requires an attack against whatever it is attached to with a sharp weapon of some sort. Because of its viscosity, it takes twice as long to feed from a vampire with Blood of the Earth (making it twice as deadly to diablerize such them as well). Most terrifyingly, when exposed to open air, this blood becomes highly flammable; if set ablaze, it will burn in a white-hot conflagration for one round per blood point, doing three dice aggravated damage each round until it burns itself out. The individual Tzimisce is immune to damage from its own blood, though other Tzimisce are not. Blood of the Earth is an automatic effect; once taken, all of the vampire's blood and all blood they consume is affected.

••••• ••• Sublimation of the Larval Flesh

A Ventrue ghoul tells of a battlefield he once encountered deep within the Carpathian rim. There, soldiers from both sides lay dead, their flesh stripped cleanly from their glistening bodies. More disturbing were the strange flesh-colored sacs that hung pregnantly from tree branches above, some pulsing with inner life. He slashed at one within easy reach of his sword and what fell out was the most hideous sort of monstrosity, some half-formed melding of man and beast writhing in a pool of ichor and goo. Its soft, painful mewling brought about a seething response from the other cocoons. He left before seeing what might emerge.

System: The Tzimisce can, with a successful Strength + Body Crafts roll (difficulty 6, five successes required), jerk the living flesh from a subject's body, immediately dropping him to Incapacitated as he collapses into shock (all health levels lost due to this power are considered lethal damage). The vampire then spends a round shaping the flesh into a cocoon-sac in which she wraps the victim; this requires a Dexterity + Body Crafts roll (difficulty 7). The Tzimisce finishes by imagining a form she'd like the creature within to take (it must be a form the Tzimisce is actually capable of imparting upon the subject) and sealing the cocoon with blood (one blood point's worth). The cocooned subject will heal normally inside, but remain Incapacitated until at full health. Once he regains all health levels, he may fight his way out the cocoon; when he emerges, the cocoon will have twisted him into the shape the Tzimisce desired for him. In this manner, the Tzimisce can create servants en masse without the need for hours of labor to perfect any single individual. The Tzimisce may use this upon herself; when she does, the cocoon need not be constructed from her own flesh, and she may emerge at any time and in any form she chooses.

••••• •••• The Last Dracul

The most fearsome of the Tzimisce's monstrous forms, this power allows the Dragons to assume the shape from which their ancient nickname is derived.

System: By expending six blood points, the Tzimisce grows in size and girth, its flesh sloughs off reveal gleaming scales, wings sprout from its back, and its head becomes crocodilian. Its Strength and Stamina doubles, its scaly hide becomes the equivalent of 4 Armor, it gains five additional "Bruised" health levels, and difficulties to hit it are decreased by one because of its huge size. Its enormous wings function in the same way as the Chiropteran Marauder's. The dragon uses Strength with the Intimidation Ability and its mere presence triggers an Intimidation check each turn; this is a free action that happens automatically unless the Tzimisce deliberately suppresses it. While in dragon form, the vampire's blood immediately bursts into flame when exposed to open air, doing damage as described for Blood of the Earth. Those who manage to damage the dragon must take a dodge action to avoid being splashed with one blood point's worth of dragon's blood; those who have never fought a dragon before will not likely know to save actions for this eventuality. Even worse for its opponents, the dragon can spit any amount of its blood at its foes as a one-round action, even splitting blood points up among closely clustered opponents. This fiery vitae does damage as described for Blood of the Earth. The dragon cannot

consume blood in the normal fashion due to its size, but can supplement its diet by consuming fresh human corpses. Consuming a corpse requires an entire turn's action and grants the Tzimisce blood points equal to however many blood points remain in the corpse's veins.

Blood Sorcery

Some clans and bloodlines practice dark sorceries fueled by the blood. These Blood Sorceries are functionally similar to Disciplines, but work in slightly more complicated ways. Each style of sorcery has its own rules; Abyss Mysticism, Koldunic Sorcery, Necromancy, Thaumaturgy, and other types each have their own systems. However, they do share certain traits.

Paths and Rituals

Blood Sorcery comes in two styles: Paths and Rituals. Some forms of Blood Sorcery have one or the other, but most possess both. Path magic never climbs above five dots, while there is no upper limit to ritual magic. With Necromancy and Thaumaturgy, the character has a Discipline rating like any other Discipline. With each dot in that Discipline, she gains both a path dot and a ritual of equal or lesser level. The sorcerer may learn other paths, but may not exceed her Discipline rating. She may learn any number of rituals as well, with similar limits in level.

Abyss Mysticism

Most Lasombra do not spend much time contemplating the nature or source of the power that Obtenebration grants them. The majority of Magisters view Obtenebration as a tool, nothing more. A small number among the clan, however, develop a fascination with Obtenebration and the Abyss. Through devoting themselves to the Abyss and its study, they created rituals capable of breaching the boundary between the material world and the Abyss, with strange and horrifying effects.

Though this might seem heretical to those Lasombra with particularly religious inclinations, the rest of the clan ignores Abyss Mystics. Montano, the favored childe of Lasombra, is rumored to have dabbled with Abyss Mysticism, and it is known that Lasombra himself favored the Mystics. As such, even the most zealous Lasombra tend to leave the Abyss Mystics to her own dark devices.

Abyss Mysticism is not generally compatible with more traditional Roads. Roads like Humanity and Heaven would quickly see descend into bestiality. Abyss Mystics mostly follow the Road of the Abyss (see p. 441).

Rituals

Abyss Mystic rituals are different from other forms of blood sorcery rituals, as they are based on use of a Discipline and not magic. Characters looking to learn Abyss Mysticism rituals must possess an Occult rating of 3. Characters may not learn a ritual with a level higher than her Obenebration or Occult rating. Furthermore, characters must have an Occult specialization in Abyss Mysticism or add 1 to the difficulty of each ritual.

Despite being ritual-based, Abyss Mysticism is almost a Discipline in its own right. As such, each ritual costs 3 experience points per level to learn. Because tampering with the Abyss is dangerous business with potentially fatal consequences, Abyss Mysticism has fewer rituals than other mystical paths. Even those who succeed in mastering the Abyss are changed forever. Many Abyss Mystic rituals have side effects that confer Flaws; this is to reflect the fact that Abyss Mystics are tampering with forces inherently inimical to creation. Characters can never receive experience or bonus points for Flaws gained as a side effect of Abyss Mystic rituals.

• Pierce the Veil

When one stares into the Abyss, the Abyss stares back. This ritual attunes the mystic's vision to darkness by harnessing the watchful gaze of Ahriman, though it marks the mystic forever.

System: Using Shadow Play, the mystic forms a ball of shadows in her hand and gazes into its depths. The player rolls Perception + Occult, difficulty 8. A success results in the character permanently gaining the Merit Darksight. Failure simply means that the ritual does not succeed and must be tried another night, while a botch results in Darksight being acquired as a Flaw.

When a character uses Darksight gained through use of this ritual, her eyes become completely black, without reflection — windows into the Abyss itself. This effect is permanent for characters who obtained Darksight as a result of a botched ritual.

• Eyes of the Abyss

With this ritual, the Abyss Mystic summons tiny denizens of the Abyss to act as her servants, most often being used as spies.

System: The vampire crushes a small flame (e.g. a lit candle) in her bare hand, taking a level of aggravated damage. She then makes a Rötschreck check, difficulty 4. If she succeeds, roll Intelligence + Occult, difficulty 6. A botch results in an additional level of aggravated damage. On a success, a tiny Abyss elemental is summoned and consumes the extinguished flame.

Talon of the Abyss

The Abyss Elemental looks the part of an amorphous blob of inky shadow. It can temporarily take whatever shape it'd like, up to the size of a human child.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 1, Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Intimidation 2, Stealth 5 (+1 while in shadows)

Disciplines: Obtenebration 3

Willpower: 5

Health: OK x 3, Faded (-2) x2, Destroyed

The creature remains a number of nights equal to the successes rolled. The elemental will respond to and obey all commands given by the caster. It cannot affect the material world, though it can communicate mentally by entering a person's shadow. Any non-mystic who communicates with an Abyss elemental in such a fashion must make a Courage check, difficulty 6. Failure results in a temporary Derangement that lasts the remainder of the evening. On a botch, the Derangement is permanent and can only be cured through repeated use of Willpower.

The elemental is always in shadow form (as Tenebrous Avatar, see p. 230), can fly 30 yards/meters per turn, and is instantly destroyed by fire or sunlight. A level 2 version of this ritual, Talons of the Abyss, can summon shadow elementals that are corporeal and can even attack enemies.

•• Subsume the Darkness

By using this ability, the Mystic consumes the Abyss to accelerate healing.

System: The vampire spends a full turn meditating on the Abyss, then spends one point of Willpower and rolls Stamina + Occult (difficulty 8), with a botch resulting in one level of aggravated damage. Each success allows the vampire to spend one blood point to heal two levels of lethal damage or four levels of bashing damage, ignoring generation limits for such an expenditure.

However, once the Mystic casts this ritual, the Abyss consumes all blood gained from feeding until it receives a number of blood points equal to the blood spent to heal. A Mystic may not use this ritual more than once per night, and may not use it until her debt to the Abyss has been paid in full. Furthermore, use of this ritual stains the Mystic's soul. After use of this ritual, the Mystic's blood becomes black and absorbs all light. This effect clearly marks the Mystic as something terrifyingly alien. Any mortal who sees the Mystic bleed (or cry) must pass a Courage check of 6 or roll one less die for all rolls for the remainder of the scene.

••• Balthazar's Revelation

This strange expression of Abyss Mysticism comes from the Kiasyd bloodline. It peels back the veils that keep a stable mind safe from the dark truths of the world. The ritualist enchants a small object, usually a coin. Anyone holding the coin must make a Willpower roll, difficulty 9 minus their Obtenebration rating. Failure imposes a Derangement chosen when the object was enchanted, which lasts until the victim has spent Willpower equal to the ritualist's Obtenebration rating. Additionally, the victim sees nightshades and other strange entities everywhere. This causes +2 difficulty to all Perception rolls, and +2 to all Courage difficulties so long as the Derangement persists.

••• Calling the Hungry Shade

With this ritual, the Mystic calls a Hungry Shade, a human-sized soldier of the Abyss. Eternally hungry and fiercely independent, they will attempt to destroy any vampire foolish enough to summon them.

System: Beginning just after dusk, the Mystic paints a circle in his own blood. She spends hours in chants of evocation, completing the summoning just after moonset. Upon completion, the Mystic rolls Intelligence + Occult, difficulty 9. The difficulty

Hungry Shade

The following scores are equal to the caster's rating in Obtenebration.

Attributes: Strength, Stamina, Dexterity

Abilities: Alertness, Athletics, Brawl, Intimidation, Melee, Stealth

It also possesses the following:

Disciplines: Assign a number of points to Disciplines equal to the caster's rating in Obtenebration. The Hungry Shade may not possess Disciplines not known by the caster or assisting Mystics (if any).

Willpower: 6

Health: 12

may be lowered by 1 for each additional Mystic that assists in the ritual, with a maximum number of participants equal to the caster's Occult rating. Failure means the ritual fails to produce a Shade, and a botch results in the Shade attacking the caster.

On a success, the Mystic summons a Hungry Shade. The Hungry Shade possesses Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina equal to the caster's rating in Obtenebration, with a maximum value of 4. It is always in shadow form, as Talon of the Abyss.

••• The Third Eye of Rickard Argentis

This ritual summons forth a mysterious third eye, forged from abyssal energies, which rests upon the caster's forehead and protects him from harm. The ritual takes ten minutes to cast as close to dusk as he is able, at which time the caster chooses how much blood to invest in the eye. At any time the caster would be ambushed or surprised, the eye will expend one of the blood so invested. When this happens, the caster automatically succeeds on the roll to react to surprise, and the eye reflexively summons forth one Arm of Ahriman (see p. 229) against his attacker, which can act immediately. If the player chooses to expend further blood points, additional Arms can be summoned against other attackers, but no more than one per attacker.

Once the blood is fully expended, the eye vanishes until recast.

•••• Reflections of Hollow Revelation

A character with this ability stares through the darkness of the Abyss to view distant objects, places, or people.

System: The caster summons a Nocturne (see p. 228) and bends its shape to her will, forcing it to contract into a sphere that can be held in both hands. To attempt this, the caster rolls Perception + Occult, difficulty 7. A botch leaves the character drained by the attempt – she rolls two less dice on all rolls for the remainder of the scene. On a failure, the Nocturne expands and acts as it normally would. On a success, the Nocturne becomes a fixed window upon any object, place, or person that the caster has previously personally witnessed. This window remains open for the remainder of the scene, or until the target leaves the vicinity of the window. Maintaining the window requires concentration, however; the caster loses two dice from Alertness dice pools as long as the window is active.

Any character with Obtenebration or with abilities that supernaturally augment senses, such as Auspex, may roll Perception + Occult (difficulty 8) to detect the watchful gaze of the shadows around them.

••••• Whispers in the Dark

The Abyss existed before creation and will persist after its destruction. Its memory encompasses everything that is known or ever has been known as well as mysteries too dense for human minds to fathom. By sending one's thoughts into the Abyss, one may seek answers to her deepest questions.

System: The caster summons and contracts a Nocturne, as with Reflections of Hollow Revelation, until it can fit in the palm of her hand. The caster focuses her thoughts on a single question, which the Storyteller assigns a rating from 1 to 10 based on the importance or complexity of the answer, with 1 as trivial knowledge and 10 as truly revelatory.

When ready, the caster swallows the Nocturne. Once this is done, the vampire falls into torpor as her consciousness is catapulted into the Abyss. For each night spent in torpor, the player rolls Intelligence + Occult with a difficulty of 8. Successes are accumulated over successive nights until the player has successes equal to the question's rating.

Of course, attempting to commune with the alien thoughts of the Abyss can be dangerous. If the Mystic accumulates no successes on her roll for one night, the interval between rolls increases from one night to several nights to weeks, and so on. Even successful use of this ritual leaves the mystic forever altered as she can never entirely dislodge the alien hunger of the Abyss from her soul. After using this ritual, when dealing with non-mystics vampires permanently reduce the difficulty of all Intimidate rolls by one, and increase the difficulty of all Social rolls by one (two when dealing with humans). This drawback is not cumulative.

Legend has it that the reason for Lasombra's carefully guarded slumber in the Castle of Shadows is that he lies dreaming of a way to destroy creation itself.

•••••• Into the Chasm

With this ritual, the Mystic willingly enters the Abyss, traveling through the infinite realm of nothingness to journey to any location she has been previously.

System: In preparation, the Mystic spends one hour and three points of her own blood painting a doorway with glyphs of the Abyss. When finished, they roll Intelligence + Occult, difficulty 7. On a botch, a portal to the Abyss opens in the doorway, but only long enough to discharge a number of Hungry Shades equal to the number of 1s rolled. A failure causes the glyphs to flare and disappear with no result. Success results in an open and stable portal with no backlash that remains open for as many turns as successes rolled.

Once a character steps through the portal, she speaks her destination to the Abyss and roll Wits + Obtenebration to open a portal out of the Abyss, difficulty 6. Each failed attempt increases the difficulty, to maximum of 10. Additionally, the Mystic takes a level of lethal damage that cannot be healed while within the portal. Botched attempts additionally attract a Hungry Shade.

Non-Mystics may enter an open portal into the Abyss by spending Willpower. The Mystic may choose

to guide them by remaining in physical contact. Otherwise, her difficulty to exit the Abyss is 8. Non-Mystics cannot understand the formless chaos of the Abyss and see only total blackness. A Non-Mystic who attempts to use supernatural means of enhancing her senses while in the Abyss must make a Willpower roll or immediately gain a Derangement, as the horrible nothingness of the Abyss is often too much for non-Mystics to deal with.

Each time a vampire traverses the Abyss, they risk permanent contamination. Upon leaving the Abyss, each character must roll her Willpower against a difficulty equal to the number of rolls needed to exit the Abyss. A failure causes them to gain the Flaw Animate Shadow (see p. 427).

••••••• Evocation of the Oubliette

With this ability, the Mystic causes nearby shadows to erupt and devour a victim, sending them into the Abyss.

Abyss: The Mystic spends a full turn in concentration before spending three blood points and rolling Perception + Occult (difficulty 6) against a target that must be within line of sight. This attack may not be parried, but may be dodged. A successful attack results in the victim being dragged into the Abyss, where they remain for a number of nights equal to the caster's Obtenebration rating - though the Mystic may spend a blood point to summon them back sooner

The Abyss is a harrowing experience for those not initiated in its mysteries. Any character without levels of Abyss Mysticism gains a Derangement after her experience that can only be cured through repeated use of Willpower. A botched casting of this ritual results in the ritual backfiring and dragging the caster herself into the Abyss for a number of hours equal to her rating in Obtenebration. If the caster's Willpower is lower than her rating in Obtenebration, she gains a Derangement as if she was a non-Mystic subject to this power.

A level 8 version of this ritual exists, known as Summoning of the Abyss. With this ritual, the Mystic speaks the name of a person they wish brought to them. That person is pulled into the Abyss, as above, and is immediately disgorged in the Mystic's location, suffering all effects as above for traveling through the Abyss.

••••••• Cry That Slays the Light

This ability allows the vampire to tear a hole in the fabric of reality itself, causing the Abyss to cover the sky, blocking out the moon, stars, and even sunlight. The caster undertakes this ritual at peril of her very existence. This ritual is rare, even among Abyss Mystics, and has only been performed once in living memory.

System: In order to learn the Cry That Slays the Light, the vampire spends a week of nights in complete and utter silence, devoting every waking moment to meditation on her hatred of light and material existence. If at any point her silence is broken, they must begin again. Once the week has passed, roll Intelligence + Occult, difficulty 8. On a botch, the character is pulled into the Abyss for a period of one century per every 1 rolled. She remains alert and aware, never falling into torpor from blood starvation, and gains a number of Derangements equal to the number of 1s rolled.

On a success, the Mystic divines the shape of the word that encapsulates the Abyss. This word becomes part of the Mystic and cannot be discerned by another character through Telepathy or any other supernatural means. The Mystic may hold back this word as long as she chooses — days, years, decades - before she releases it and the Abyss darkens the sky for one hour. During this hour, all vampires are immune to Rötschreck and need not worry about sunlight, even at midday. Once the hour is over, the word fades from the Mystic's mind and must be re-learned.

Even when successful, allowing oneself to be a direct conduit for the Abyss comes with dire risk. After using this power, roll a number of dice equal to the Mystic's Road rating, difficulty 4. Each success allows the Mystic to retain two dots of her Road rating for Mystics on the Road of the Abyss, one dot for Mystics not on the Road of the Abyss. If the Mystic's Road is reduced to 0 in this fashion, the Abyss utterly annihilates her existence.

••••••• Lord Aludian's Claim

With most Abyss Mysticism rituals, a vampire pokes a subtle hole through reality, temporarily letting a primal, dark unknown through that portal. This phenomenal expression of tenebrous mastery tears down the boundaries between the realms of flesh and shadow on an almost permanent basis. This curses an area to become a hub of shadowy nightmares indefinitely.

This ritual requires an extended Manipulation + Occult roll, difficulty 8. Each roll represents one hour, and you can make rolls equal to your character's Willpower dots. Five successes are required to claim a five meter diameter, and which can allow through one shade (see p. 272). Additional successes can be spent to add an additional five meters to the diameter, or allow one additional shade to cross. These shades can leave the portal's vicinity. However, the portal can only support a total number of intruders as determined by the initial roll. Whenever a shade dies, it returns at dusk. The shades are completely subservient to the caster.

The portal only closes when voluntarily closed, exposed to sunlight, or to True Faith. A character may only have one such portal open at a time.

Koldunic Sorcery

The Tzimisce claim kingship not from heavenly mandate, but from the land itself; they are the lords of their realms and all who dwell in it. Since the First Days they have shared their blood with the earth, intermingling their spirits with those of their voivodes until they are one and the same. Those who study the ways of koldunism, that most ancient of Cainite blood magic, elevate this mastery yet further, binding the spirits of their homelands to themselves. These koldun, as they are known, manifest the raw power of the natural world through their physical forms, as if their flesh were the land itself.

No vampire is Embraced into Koldunism. Koldunic sorcery is always learned as an out-of-clan Discipline. Similar to Thaumaturgical Paths, koldunic sorcery is divided into *kraina*, which are as varied as the demesnes the Tzimisce rule over. A sorcerer from the windswept peaks of the Tatras will practice different magic than those dwelling amid the hills and pine forests of Samogitia, or their coastal brethren who feel the tides of the Black Sea rippling through their veins. A koldun may learn the magic of many krainas, but they will always have one greater than the rest — that of their homeland, the place whose native soil they rest most comfortably in. Upon earning their first dot in Koldunic Sorcery, the koldun learns the first power associated with their primary kraina. With each new dot, they may take the next power in a kraina they already know, or learn the first power in a new kraina. Regardless, it will always be easier for them to use magic from their primary kraina. There is also a spirit kraina, known as the Genius Loci; many koldun learn this kraina, for it greatly expands their power, but none have it as their primary.

To cast their magic, the koldunic sorcerer must offer up a point of blood to the land and then roll Attribute + Occult against a difficulty of the power's level + 4. If the power is within their primary kraina, the difficulty is reduced by two. The Attribute to be rolled is specified by the power itself; koldun always use their raw Attribute, unmodified by the expenditure of blood, Disciplines, or other vampiric magic.

Below are a pair of kraina, as well as the Genius Loci. Players are encouraged to create their own kraina to reflect the unique qualities of their homelands, using the following kraina to guide them.

The Transylvanian Kraina

Koldun of the Transylvania region practice the following magics.

• Burebista's Throne

Legend has it that King Burebista, who terrorized the Greeks for centuries — first as the mortal king of Dacia, and later as a mighty koldun — built a great throne atop a mountain peak from which he could survey all his lands and track the movements of all his enemies. The legend is true, though in time Burebista no longer needed the throne to observe his kingdom. He passed on this secret to his childer, and today most every koldun of the Transylvanian kraina can sit upon his throne.

System: The koldun spends a blood point and makes the activation roll (Attribute: Perception). If atop any mountain in Carpathia, there is no need to expend blood. On a success, the koldun can send his senses soaring high into the air, or extend them beyond their body; how far depends on how many successes are rolled (see below). This effect lasts until the koldun pulls back his senses or the end of the scene, whichever comes first.

Successes	Area
1 success	A 50 yard/meter radius
2 successes	A 100 yard/meter radius
3 successes	A 500 yard/ meter radius
4 successes	A mile/1.5 kilometer radius
5 successes	A three mile/ten kilometer radius

•• Pietrosu's Hospitality

Mount Pietrosu is the highest, and most dangerous, peak in the Carpathians, where the biting winds and frigid temperatures will kill an unprotected man in mere moments. A perfect setting to destroy one's enemies. Getting an unprepared foe up Pietrosu is quite difficult, however; much easier, the kolduns reason, to take the mountain with them.

System: The koldun must toss the requisite blood into the air (unless they are standing within sight of the Carpathians, in which case no blood expenditure is required) and make the activation roll (Attribute: Dexterity). If they succeed, a powerful, frigid wind arises all around the koldun for a number of turns equal to successes rolled. This wind causes one level of bashing damage each turn and numbs the bodies of anyone except the koldun caught within, reducing their movement by half and Dexterity pools by two. On the turn after this power expires, the Dexterity penalty is reduced to one and movement is three-quarters, and the turn after that the victim regains full Dexterity and mobility. A useful side effect of this power is that the koldun is immune to the cold and force of wind while this is active; when trekking in mountains or other environs where wind may be a hazard, they need only activate Pietrosu's Hospitality to ward themselves from danger.



••• The Banks of the Basca

When the rains come in the Carpathians, the Bâsca leaps its banks and whole villages are swept away, along with any person, living or dead, unwise enough not to seek higher ground. The koldun wielding this power carries with her the surging might of the Bâsca wherever she goes.

System: The koldun releases her blood into running water - a river or stream is most common, though a rivulet or even just runoff from thawing snow is enough — and rolls to activate this power (Attribute: Strength). On a success, the blood bolsters the flow, causing it to swell and surge forward, a flash flood given magical life. Anyone, as well as most anything not secured to the ground, caught in its path will be swept away towards the point of lowest elevation at a rate of a hundred yards a turn, and must soak five dice of bashing damage per turn. Any subject somehow prevented from being carried downstream — wedged against a wall or other immoveable object, for instance — takes twice the normal amount of damage. Additionally, mortals must make a swimming roll (difficulty 8) each turn to avoid swallowing great mouthfuls of water; failure inflicts one additional level of lethal damage which cannot be soaked. These rushing waters last for a number of turns equal to successes rolled to activate the power, or twice that number if the source of the flooding is any Carpathian river.

•••• Kupala's Exhalation

In the Berca basin, near the Eastern Orthodox monastery of Ratesti, vegetation ceases to grow and the strange gasses of the underworld bubble up into our world, forming tiny cones of mud that quickly harden while they exhale their frigid breaths. Some koldun have learned to summon these deadly gasses for themselves; they claim it's the breath of Kupala himself. They may be right.

System: The koldun expends blood, at least one point's worth but as much as she wants, and rolls to activate this power (Attribute: Stamina). Once per turn, for a number of turns equal to the successes she rolled, to a limit of however much blood was spent, she may cause the gasses beneath the ground to erupt upward, forming a tiny volcanic crater. These gasses are bitingly cold; anyone caught within a ten-foot radius of the cone is subject to the same damage and penalties as Pietrosu's Hospitality. Even worse, the bubbling gas is highly flammable; any nearby flame will ignite the gas in a terrible explosion, inflicting five dice of lethal damage (aggravated to vampires) to all those within range of the cone. If this power is activated within the Berca basin, each blood point spent counts for double.

••••• Restless Medias

From time to time, the ground beneath the village of Medias will shake and roil, tearing buildings from their

moorings and sometimes even killing the unwary. The locals blame the gods, but the koldun know it is Kupala, restlessly stirring within his earthen tomb. Those with the greatest skill know how to rouse his agitations.

System: The koldun spends a Willpower point in addition to the usual blood point and activation roll (Attribute: Strength). If used within sight of the Carpathians, no blood point expenditure is necessary. Each success allows the koldun to either affect a larger area (see below) or prolong the earthquake's duration. Anyone and anything caught within range of the quake is subject to ten dice of lethal damage each turn they remain in its area of effect, and must make a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 8) or else be knocked off their feet. Most homes and simple structures will collapse after a turn or two; structures of sturdier construction, such as castles, remain standing four or five turns before they are utterly destroyed.

Successes	Area
1 success	One home or a small building
2 successes	Several buildings, as many as five
3 successes	An entire street in a town or village
4 successes	A large structure, such as a castle
5 successes	An entire village, or a portion of a city

The Black Sea Kraina

Koldun of the Black Sea region practice these rites.

• Danubian Voices

Originating in the Black Forest and passing through a dozen nations en route to emptying into the Black Sea, the mighty Danube has been the sustaining artery of countless empires for as long as people have dwelt upon its banks. And through all of them, the Tzimisce kept watch. The koldun know its true value, for the spirits of the river speak to them, passing on what they know or carrying messages for them in exchange for a taste of the vampiric sorcerers' vitae.

System: The koldun drips the requisite blood into a river, stream, or other flowing waterway. Even the runoff from thawing snow or a heavy rain is enough to make use of this power. If it is the Danube itself, or one of its tributaries, no initial expenditure of blood is necessary at all. They then make the activation roll (Attribute: Charisma); if they succeed, a spirit of the water appears to them and will serve them (such as they can) for a number of days equal to successes rolled. This duration may be extended any time before it expires by splashing the water with more blood; one blood point extends the spirit's thralldom by an additional day.

What the spirit can do is quite limited; they can converse with the koldun, sharing whatever they know, or they can give it a message to carry to someone or someplace else. The spirit will be more than happy to talk of what it knows; river spirits can be quite garrulous and the Tzimisce is advised to help lead the spirit to the topics they're most interested in lest they be regaled for hours with prosaic descriptions of surrounding countryside. The spirit is only capable of moving up and down their waterway (and upstream is much slower than down), so the recipient of the message must be someone it can encounter in its journey. Another method involves instructing the spirit to go to a place along its path and delivering the message to the first person it meets, though this obviously has its drawbacks as well. A koldun may also beseech a water spirit to remain in one place and watch for trespassers or other threats, then to move quickly along the riverbed to warn her of danger should any present itself.

•• Grave of the Marea Neagra

The Scythians of old had their own name for the great sea around which they dwelt: axšaina, which translates to "unlit" to our ears. Their description is apt; sunlight fails to penetrate much beyond the surface and in the deepest portions, even air ceases to exist. It is, in many ways, the perfect sanctuary for a corpse, as attested to by the many ships and their crews preserved for eternity along its bottom, many of them put there by koldun who dwell beneath the waves.

System: The koldun may always descend safely into the lowest depths of the Black Sea, where she may rest comfortably, protected from the sun and the outside world. By splashing her blood into a body of water large enough to contain her mass and making her activation roll (Attribute: Wits), she imbues that water with all the protective properties of the Black Sea. She cannot be harmed by sunlight, her body is perfectly preserved for as long as she remains interred within, and she becomes extremely difficult to detect. To spot the koldun, a character must roll Perception + Alertness (difficulty 8) and achieve more successes than the koldun rolled on her activation roll. Those who engage the submerged Tzimisce take two levels of lethal damage each turn they remain in the freezing cold water.

••• Pontos Euxeinos

The Greeks once called the Black Sea *Pontos Euxeinos*, the Hospitable Sea. For the koldun of the Black Sea kraina, it truly can be, holding them in its embrace and healing them of even their worst injuries.

System: The koldun must have access to a large enough body of water to submerge herself in. Once submerged in

the comforting water, she releases the requisite blood into it (though if it is actually the Black Sea, no blood point expenditure is necessary), then make her activation roll (Attribute: Stamina). Each success may be allocated to healing just as if it were a blood point (one success heals one level of bashing or lethal damage, while five successes will heal a level of aggravated damage). This does not reduce the limitation of time upon healing; to heal aggravated damage, the koldun must remain submerged and at rest for a day per level healed.

•••• Minions of Deep Marmora

Legend says that the koldun Cyzicus, who ruled openly as king of the Dollonians in days of antiquity, discovered if he spilled his blood into the Sea of Marmora, strange beasts from its depths would emerge to do his bidding. Other koldun have found that any body of water serves the same, although the creatures that dwell in the deeps of Marmora are the strongest.

System: The koldun splashes his blood upon the surface of the water — at least one blood point, but as many as he chooses to spend — then makes the activation roll (Attribute: Manipulation). For each success, up to the total number of blood points spent, one minion emerges from the water. The Minions of Deep Marmora are strange humanoid creatures, combining the features of frog and fish. They will perform one task for the koldun, after which they are free to return to their watery abodes. Each minion may be given a different task to perform. Minions use the following stats (stats in parentheses are for those minions summoned from the Black Sea itself):

Attributes: Strength 4 (5), Dexterity 3, Stamina 4 (5), Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 1 (2), Wits 2 (3)

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: Ok, Ok, -1, -1, (-1), -2, -2, -2, -5, (-5), Incapacitated

Abilities: Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Intimidation 3, Survival 3

Attack: Claws (Strength + 2, lethal), Grapple (Strength + 4, bashing), scales and blubbery flesh gives +2 dice to soak rolls.

Abilities: Minions of Marmora can breathe air or water equally well. They're accomplished swimmers, moving as easily in water as out.

••••• Pontos Axeinos

Before the Greeks settled its southern shoreline, they called the Black Sea Pontos Axeinos, the Inhospitable Sea. For the enemies of the koldun, it can be very inhospitable, birthing storms, whirlpools, fog, and rocky barricades where there were none moments before.

System: The koldun drips his blood into a body of water (unless it is the Black Sea, in which case no blood need be expended) and makes the activation roll (Attribute: Intelligence). She may allocate their successes to manifest any number of dangerous waterborne hazards for her opponents to deal with; some examples of what each success can accomplish: a whirlpool or undertow with a Strength rating equal to the koldun's Strength that may seize or drag others, increase the current's Strength multiplier by one, reveal jagged rocks that do Strength + 3 lethal damage when smashed upon, fog that increases all sight-based Perception difficulties by 2, driving winds and rain with gales up to 50 miles per hour/75 km per hour, a precipitous drop in water temperature to near freezing levels, and so on. This power lasts a scene, and then dissipates.

Genius Loci

The koldun extends his awareness through the land upon which he treads, becoming the Genius Loci of legend.

System: The player spends one point of Willpower in addition to the traditional expenditure of blood, then rolls to activate the power. Charisma is the governing Attribute. For each success, Genius Loci remains in effect for one scene. While in effect, the koldun is aware of everything that transpires around him, out to a distance determined by dots in Genius Loci (see below). Even Obfuscate cannot deceive the Tzimisce who has established himself as a Genius Loci. Furthermore, the koldun may invoke any koldunic power he possesses anywhere he can perceive, so long as the level of that power is equal to or less than dots in his Genius Loci ability.

- • Perceive everything within a fifty-foot/fifteen-meter radius.
- •• Perceive everything within a hundred-yard/meter radius.
- ••• Perceive everything within a quarter-mile/half kilometer radius.
- •••• Perceive everything within a one-mile/1.5-kilometer radius.
- ••••• Perceive everything within a five-mile/eight-kilometer radius.

Necromancy

Mortals view Necromancy as a forbidden art, conflating it with demon worship. Cainites regard the practice of Necromancy with suspicion and fear. With few exceptions, the Cappadocians alone practice Necromancy among the Cainites, specializing in the Paths of The Corpse in the Monster and The Grave's Decay; collectively referred to as "The Mortuus Path".

Through a Glass Darkly: Ghosts, Magic, and the Underworld

Ghosts are the spirits of people who, upon their death, had an attachment to the world or a quality of spirit that refused to yield to the grave. They live in a world parallel to our own – the Underworld. From the Underworld, one can see and hear into the world of the living, but those dwelling there (including Cainites traveling with powers such as Ex Nihilo) are powerless to affect it without the use of their magics.

If a mortal saw the Underworld, he would recognize it. It resembles a nightmarish version of our own world, leached of color and life. The plants are dead and withered. The buildings are crumbling and decaying even if they stand in the living world. Even humans close to death will show the marks of death upon them. But the Underworld is more than just a dark reflection of our own world. The lands that resemble our lands are just the first layer of the Dark Kingdoms; realms of dream and nightmare lurk below the Shadowlands where even ghosts fear to tread.

The dead live by their own rules, and form their own societies. They create their own twisted wonders and darkly beautiful arts. Perhaps of most interest to Cainites are the artifacts of the dead. If a location or an item was valued enough in the living world, and then was destroyed, it may appear in the form of a Relic in the Underworld in its full glory. Rumors suggest the Relic of the Colossus of Rhodes is intact and standing tall somewhere in the Stygian depths of the Underworld; the Relic of the Tomb of Mausolus may serve as a revelry hall for the ghosts of long-dead satraps. But the kings and queens of the Underworld guard their treasures carefully. Even a powerful necromancer may wish to think twice before stealing the treasures of the dead.

Recent innovations are by contrast favored by their adopted Giovani childer who've conceived The Paths of Ash, Bone, and the Sepulchre. The rarest forms of Necromancy –The Path of the Cenotaph, The Path of the Twilight Garden and The Vitreous Path– are guarded carefully by the Impundulu, the Lamiae, and the Nagaraja respectively.

The Path of Bone

The Path of Bone explores those vestiges of life that remain in a corpse after death. The ease with which a corpse can regain a semblance of life fascinates those necromancers who study cadavers and mortals extensively. The fruits of their research have strong practical applications as well, as shown below.

• Seal of Abamixtra

By invoking the Seal of Abamixtra, a necromancer can raise a corpse or group of corpses to perform a simple task. The corpses remain animate until they complete their task or they are destroyed. If attacked, the corpses will not defend themselves in any way and will continue to work at their appointed task. Corpses animated by the Seal will gradually decay, albeit at a slower rate than a normal corpse. If the task has an indefinite duration, they will continue to work at the task until they rot away into a pile of bones.

System: The player rolls Wits + Occult (difficulty 7) and spends one blood point. For every success, she may choose to animate one corpse. She may give them a single command. These animated corpses have no judgment or intelligence and will follow any instruction literally. They can follow straightforward commands. "Sweep this room every day until the dust and cobwebs are gone" or "Hold this door shut indefinitely" are suitable commands; "Subdue any mortals who enter this room" or "Construct a shed" are not.

The animated corpses have Physical Attributes at half the vampire's Necromancy dots, rounded up. They have no Abilities. Their health levels are OK, -1, -3, Incapacitated.

•• Awaken the Homuncular Servant

With this power, a necromancer can take a small piece of a corpse and transform it into a grotesque sort of familiar. The homuncular servant is typically a severed human hand, though some necromancers prefer to use rolling eyeballs or hopping severed heads. Regardless of the form it takes, the homuncular servant is preternaturally quick and possesses an animal cunning and mild intelligence. It can hide easily, and knows how to evade detection.

Even if it has no sensory organs, a homunculus can see and hear anything that goes on around it. It is

capable of relating what it sees to its master in a crude, wordless sort of telepathy. It is unfailingly obedient to its master, but it possesses no volition of its own. Some necromancers prefer to animate small dead animals instead of human appendages. These dead animals are referred to as feraculi. A feraculum moves in an uncanny fashion similar to a homunculus and retains little of the traits it possessed as a living animal. For example, a feraculum bird cannot fly, but it can scale walls and hop like a homunculus.

System: The player spends a blood point and rolls Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 7). A single success gains the necromancer a familiar with the statistics described below. The homunculus cannot carry anything, but the necromancer can attach small items to it, such as jewelry.

The homunculus must remain within 100 yards/meters of its master or it will cease to move until the master comes within range again. The homunculus remains active for one night per success on the initial roll. There is no limit to the number of times a particular homunculus can be re-animated; some of the more eccentric Giovani keep "pets" that have served them for years.

The homunculus can die in combat like any other creature, and is as vulnerable to bashing damage as any mortal. Use the homunculus statistics from p. 312 to reflect this creature.

••• Shambling Hordes

With the use of this power, a necromancer can create a group of walking dead minions to attack her enemies.

System: To activate this power, the necromancer rolls Wits + Occult (difficulty 8). For each success rolled, she may spend a blood point and raise two corpses to fight for her. She can immediately order the animated corpses to attack, or she can give them standing orders (e.g. "Attack anyone who enters this room!"). The corpses will retain their integrity for centuries if need be; they are supernaturally bound to carry out her commands, even if their bodies would have normally crumbled into dust. For one additional blood point per corpse, the vampire may add a number of Physical Attributes equal to her Necromancy dots to the monsters.

•••• Baleful Exorcism

With but a word and a forceful gesture, a necromancer can exorcise a mortal's soul from his own body, effectively making him a ghost for the duration of the power. His only tie to the mortal world is his comatose body, placing him at the mercy of the necromancer who exiled him.

System: The necromancer spends a point of Willpower and makes a contested Willpower roll against her target. The number of successes she wins over her target indicates the number of hours that the soul is banished from the body. After this time, the soul is free to return to the body, assuming that no other spirits have taken up residence in its absence (see Daemonic Possession below).

This power cannot be used on Cainites or other supernatural creatures, save for ghouls.

••••• Daemonic Possession

Daemonic Possession allows a necromancer to channel a soul into a freshly-dead body. This power can give a physical body to a disembodied spirit such as a ghost or a vampire using Psychic Projection.

System: The body in question must be a corpse that is still warm and has not yet gone into rigor mortis. Alternatively, the body may be a vessel that has been prepared either by Baleful Exorcism (above) or Prepare the Vessel (p. 293). The necromancer cannot force a soul into a body, but most ghosts hunger for a chance to walk the earth again. Many necromancers will use Daemonic Possession as a bargaining tool with the restless dead. If the body in question is the body of a vampire in the moments before it is reduced to ash, the necromancer must achieve five successes on a contested Willpower roll against the original owner of the body in order to proceed with possession.

The soul may use whatever physical abilities or Disciplines (such as Potence) that the body possessed in life. The soul retains whatever mental abilities or Disciplines (such as Presence) that he possesses.

The Path of the Cenotaph

Using her own undead body as a conduit, a practitioner of the Path of the Cenotaph becomes instinctively attuned to the links that exist between the worlds of the living and the dead.

• A Touch of Death

The necromancer is attuned to the residual energy left by a ghost's passage or touch, allowing her to determine if an object, person, or area had been touched or influenced by a ghost.

System: The necromancer touches a person or object, and the player rolls Perception + Awareness (difficulty 6). If successful, the necromancer may know whether a ghost has exerted power over the subject, or crossed nearby.

Successes	Result
1 success	Last turn; detect use of ghostly powers
2 successes	Last three turns; detect use of ghostly powers
3 successes	Last hour; detect ghost's touch and use of ghostly powers
4 successes	Last day; detect ghost's touch and use of ghostly powers
5 successes	Last week; detect nearby passage of ghost, ghost's touch, and use of ghostly powers

A botch provides a misleading answer. If the necromancer succeeds in detection on a possessed object or person, she immediately becomes aware of the ghost inside. The impression thus gained counts as an image of the spirit for purposes of the Sepulchre Path.

•• Reveal the Catene

The necromancer recognizes the ashen mark left on objects by the dead, allowing her to distinguish between ghostly playthings and fetters.

System: The necromancer holds and examines an object for at least three turns. The player then spends a blood point and rolls Perception + Occult (difficulty 7). If successful, the Cainite determines if the object holds significance to any ghost and, with three or more successes, the identity of at least one such ghost (which allows the Cainite to use the Sepulchre Path on that wraith). If the necromancer already knows any of the ghosts involved, the nature of the tie is revealed alongside their identity. A botch means the necromancer can never use this power on that item again.

••• Tread Upon the Grave

The necromancer feels when she is close to the world of the dead. A necromancer might use her natural perception, whilst another might scry, but both can sense where the Underworld touches the living world. Ghosts are drawn to places where the veil is thin, making these locations superbly suited to further necromantic purposes.

System: The player declares intent to sense the Shroud in an area and makes a Willpower roll (difficulty 8). Success reveals whether the location is highly attuned to the Shadowlands, about average, or far removed. With three or more successes, the necromancer can determine whether the Shroud's strength has been artificially altered in the area. A failed use of the power has no adverse effect, though it may be attempted only once per scene. A botch stuns the necromancer into inaction for a full turn and costs her a temporary Willpower point as she is overcome by overwhelming despair.

•••• Death Knell

The necromancer instinctively feels the short tug of the Underworld when a newly deceased individual pulls away from it and turns to a ghostly existence instead. The necromancer can use the accompanying emotions of obsession and despair to find the new ghost's location, though she might need additional powers to actually see the wraith.

System: Whenever someone dies and becomes a ghost within a half-mile (or kilometer) of the necromancer, she automatically senses the demise (though she may choose to ignore this "always-on" power). This does not automatically pinpoint the location or identity of the new ghost, but the player may spend one Willpower point and roll Perception + Occult (difficulty 7) for the necromancer to gain a sense of the distance and direction to the new wraith. With one success, the Cainite may sense a vague pull in a general direction. With three successes, the necromancer can sense the direction and guess distance to within a quarter-mile (or half a kilometer). With five successes, the necromancer immediately senses the location of the new ghost to within one foot (or 30 cm). Failure carries no penalty, but a botched attempt sends the necromancer in the wrong direction. To prevent overburdening a chronicle with ghost-hunting, the Storyteller may rule that disturbances in the Underworld, intervening magic, or similar phenomena cloud this sensation.

••••• Ephemeral Binding

By infusing an object, person, or place with her own ashen energy, the necromancer can create an artificial fetter rather than have to rely on finding one by chance.

System: The necromancer coats an object with her vitae; if the subject is a person, then that individual must ingest the vitae. The player marks off the blood point, spends a Willpower point, and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 8). If successful, the item temporarily becomes a fetter to one wraith. If the Cainite already knows the name of the wraith or has a strong psychic impression, the object can become a fetter at any range, even to a ghost who normally does not come near the living world. Otherwise, the necromancer must be able to see or sense the ghost.

A fetter created in this fashion functions for all necromantic and ghostly purposes as a normal fetter: it can be detected with Necromantic powers, the necromancer gains a -2 difficulty bonus to Necromancy against the wraith attuned to it, and the ghost similarly finds exertion of its powers easier upon the object (so the vampire might turn a ghoul into a host for a wraith familiar with possession).

The ghost can sink into the fetter to heal itself, but if the fetter is destroyed, the wraith is banished to some inaccessible region of the Underworld. Ephemeral Binding lasts for one night per success scored. The expenditure of an additional Willpower point increases this duration to a week per success, whereas spending a permanent dot of Willpower extends the duration to a year and a day. A botch causes failure and makes the ghost immediately aware of what the necromancer was trying to do.

The Path of the Corpse in the Monster

The corpse is the sacred gateway between the living and the dead. Through careful study and ritual, the Cappadocians have learned ways to apply some of the aspects of a corpse to a vampire or mortal.

• Mortuus in Vultus

A Cainite can make herself (or another vampire) appear as if she was a long-dead corpse. She can use this ability to hide in plain sight in a catacomb or crypts, or inflict it on an unwilling victim as a sort of curse.

System: The player spends one blood point to give her character the visage of a mummified corpse. She loses two points of Dexterity and Appearance (minimum of 1 in Dexterity and 0 in Appearance) for the duration of the power. The player also gains a bonus of two extra dice to her Intimidation pool. If she remains perfectly still (no roll required, as Cainites have no autonomic functions to suppress), an observer must score five successes on a Perception + Medicine roll (difficulty 7) in order to distinguish her from an ordinary corpse.

To inflict Mortuus in Vultus on another vampire, the necromancer must spend a blood point, touch the target (requiring a Dexterity + Brawl roll if opposed), and then make a Stamina + Medicine roll with a difficulty equal to the target's Stamina + 3. Mortuus in Vultus lasts until the next sunset or until the necromancer releases the spell.

•• Algor Mortis

With the use of Algor Mortis, a vampire is able to transform herself into a cool, melancholy creature, unmoved by mortal pain or emotional manipulation. Her body transforms in a literal sense; her flesh becomes colder and her breath freezes in the air when she speaks.

System: For the cost of a single Willpower point, a player may ignore all wound penalties for the scene. She gains an additional die to any pools that involve resisting emotional manipulation for each dot of the Corpse in the Monster, such as Intimidation or Empathy. However, her remoteness also makes it difficult for her to manipulate others, and she increases the difficulty of all attempts to manipulate others by one.

Algor Mortis does not ward against frenzy. Though the necromancer may appear apathetic and cool on the surface, the Beast still lurks in the dark recesses of her heart.

••• Intimations of Mortality

Intimations of Mortality inflicts the more unpleasant and irritating aspects of mortality upon a vampire. These experiences are culled directly from the Discipline user's memory and include such experiences as mortal hunger and thirst, the need to eliminate waste, poor sensory acuity, and vulnerability to physical trauma that even a neonate vampire could shrug off.

System: The player targets another vampire within her character's line of sight that is no further than 20 yards/meters away. She spends one Willpower and rolls Intelligence + Medicine (difficulty 8). If she is successful, the target is afflicted with all of the unpleasant sensations of mortal life without gaining any of the benefits thereof (e.g. walking in sunlight). All actions the victim takes are at a +2 difficulty. The victim can ignore these penalties by spending one point of Willpower per scene. Furthermore, the victim cannot use blood to raise his Physical Attributes (as described on p. 340), and Willpower cannot eliminate this penalty. However, he can still use Potence, Celerity, and Fortitude while under the effects of Intimations of Mortality. The curse remains in effect until the next sunrise.

•••• Benedictio Mortem

With this power, a necromancer fully assumes the aspect of a corpse and is able to slough off the weaknesses of his vampiric condition. A corpse, after all, is not particularly affected by the rays of the sun, nor is it especially flammable.

System: The player spends one point of Willpower and rolls Stamina + Occult (difficulty 8). For every success rolled, she gets the benefit of Benedictio Mortem for one turn. While Benedictio Mortem is active, a vampire needn't make Rötschreck or frenzy checks. A stake through the heart is no more dangerous to her than any other stab wound. Fire deals lethal rather than aggravated damage. Holy artifacts do not faze her. Sunlight does not affect a vampire under the cloak of Benedictio Mortem unless her bare skin is exposed on a clear day, and in that case, she only takes bashing damage. Once the protection Benedictio Mortem expires, however, the vampire immediately becomes vulnerable to the aforementioned dangers.



••••• Benedictio Vitae

With Benedictio Vitae, a Cainite is able to enjoy many of the best aspects of mortal life without forsaking the power of her vampiric nature. The voice of the Beast speaks only in a whisper, and she may enjoy the pleasures of mortal food and drink. She may enjoy the embrace of a lover and feel the warmth of the sun on her skin as a living woman would. Cappadocians who use this discipline enjoy a temporarily reprieve from their clan's weakness, and appear as they did before the Embrace.

System: The player must spend twelve blood points to activate this power. They needn't be spent in a single turn, but they must be spent continuously. A vampire may feed while simultaneously spending blood. Unless the vampire is older than Seventh Generation, having a sacrificial victim close by may be necessary to invoke Benedictio Vitae. With this power in effect, the necromancer can travel in daylight with little fear, and she takes no damage from sunlight if she is in the shade or suitably covered (as in a hooded cloak). She is not compelled to slumber during the day, but she is still vulnerable to being staked in the heart and is still repelled by holy artifacts. Though the voice of the Beast is not as insistent as it usually is, Benedictio Vitae does not silence it utterly. The necromancer can still succumb to the effects of frenzy and Rötschreck, though the difficulty of both checks is halved (rounded up). Benedictio Vitae lasts until the next midnight after its casting.

The Beast deeply resents being caged, however, and exacts its vengeance upon its jailer when it is freed. After the Benedictio Vitae expires, the difficulty of all rolls to resist frenzy and Rötschreck for the next six nights increases by three.

The Grave's Decay

The dark hand of fate is a real force in the Dark Medieval world. The Path of the Grave's Decay allows the necromancer to harness the dark powers of decay, ruin, and entropy that await all creatures, living and unliving.

• Ashes to Ashes

While some Cainites slaughter indiscriminately and fear no consequences for their actions, other Cainites feel the need to be a bit more discreet. The Dark Medieval

is a violent place, and even some of the most devout adherents of the Road of Heaven might have the need to dispose of a body quickly. Use of this power turns a human corpse into a pile of unremarkable ash roughly one-fifth the weight of the original body.

System: The player spends one blood point as the vampire drips her vitae onto the corpse. The player rolls Intelligence + Medicine (difficulty 6). The corpse disintegrates in a number of turns equal to five minus the number of successes rolled. These ashes are utterly unrecognizable via mundane means, though use of supernatural powers might be able to uncover the identity of the former corpse.

On a botch, the corpse putrefies, but loses none of its integrity. The vampire may not use Ashes to Ashes on that corpse again.

•• Rigor Mortis

With this power, the necromancer can make any target as stiff and still as a corpse. A target afflicted with Rigor Mortis can only move by sheer force of will as his own muscles contract uncontrollably, freezing him into place.

System: The player spends a point of Willpower and rolls Intelligence + Medicine (difficulty 7). Each success freezes a target in place for one turn. The target must be visible and within 25 yards/meters. A frozen target cannot move or spend blood points, but he may use perception powers such as Heightened Senses. Cainites may take physical actions with a penalty equal to the necromancer's successes.

••• Ashen Lady's Embrace

The Ashen Lady's Embrace causes a target's limb to age, dry out, and wither like grapes left on the vine. Tendons snap as muscles shorten and shrink. Skin becomes saggy and sallow at first, and then paper-thin and pulled tight over the newly brittle bones. Eyes cloud over and dissolve into dust. Cartilage all but vanishes. The lips and gums recede, and the teeth become as chalk.

System: The player spends a Willpower point. The vampire touches one of her victim's limbs (requiring a Dexterity + Brawl roll if the victim is avoiding the vampire). If the necromancer is successful, the target suffers from two levels of aggravated damage. Unless the target soaks *both* wounds (e.g. with Fortitude), the afflicted limb is crippled until both wounds are healed. Cainites heal these wounds as they would any other aggravated wound. Mortals, however, are not so fortunate; they will be crippled for life unless healed by supernatural means. The targeted mortal may take some small comfort in knowing that a crippled limb will not degenerate further (i.e., become gangrenous or infected).

The effect of the Ashen Lady's Embrace will depend on which limb is targeted. Crippled limbs cannot benefit from Potence. Crippled arms cannot carry anything heavier than roughly half a pound. A character with a crippled leg will limp slowly, dragging his leg behind him, and will suffer from the Odd Gait Flaw (see p. 421). If a necromancer chooses to target the face, she may choose to affect either the eyes, ears, or mouth. Any successful attack at the face will reduce a target's Appearance by one for each wound suffered, with additional effects depending on which part is targeted. A single withered eye or ear imposes a +1 difficulty on relevant Perception rolls; losing both eyes or ears imposes the Impaired Sense Flaw (see p. 421). A withered tongue will render one Mute (see p. 421).

•••• Gift of Melancholia

This power inflicts a virulent wasting illness on mortals and Cainites alike. Both are afflicted with a disease that causes dizziness, weakness, malaise, and nausea. The disease is highly contagious among mortals, who can spread it to each other by mere proximity. A vampire must either be directly targeted with the power or feed on an infected mortal in order to contract it. An infected vampire, however, will spread the plague to everyone he feeds upon until he is cured.

System: The player chooses a target within twenty yards and in the character's line of sight. She rolls Intelligence + Medicine (difficulty 6) and spends a point of Willpower. The defender must roll Stamina + Fortitude (if applicable) against a difficulty equal to the attacker's Willpower. If the victim rolls fewer successes than the attacker, he falls ill immediately. The disease has the following effects:

Strength and Wits are halved (round down).

Dexterity is decreased by a single point.

Cainite victims must spend an additional blood point to awaken every evening; mortals take one level of lethal damage per day.

Cainite victims must roll Self-Control or Instinct every time they feed (difficulty 8). On a failure, the vampire vomits up the blood he just ingested in horrifying gouts of gore, losing any benefit the feeding would have provided. Humans vomit up the contents of their stomachs, with no rolls to resist.

Once per day at sunset, a victim may attempt to throw off the plague by rolling Stamina. The difficulty is equal to 10 minus the number of days elapsed since contracting the disease.

••••• Dust to Dust

As Ashes to Ashes affects corpses, so Dust to Dust affects the bodies of vampires. Invoking Dust to Dust allows a necromancer to reduce another vampire into a pile of ashes as though he had been stranded in the sunlight or burned at the stake.

System: The necromancer cuts open her own skin, spending two blood points and a point of Willpower. She then drips the blood on a single Cainite target. The vampire must be within touch range of the target; it cannot be flung from more than arm's reach. The player makes a Willpower roll with a difficulty of the target's Stamina + 3. For every success, the target suffers one aggravated wound.

Any undead flesh damaged by this power disintegrates into dust. For every two health levels of damage inflicted against a victim, the player may choose a body part to target and destroy, as per Ashen Lady's Embrace. Body parts regenerate when the aggravated damage associated with the wounds is healed.

The Path of Haunting

The Path of Haunting, mainly used by the Impundulu and the Giovani (who rumor holds, may have originally acquired the Path through relations with a Bomzaki tutor), concerns itself with the power death holds over the living, rather than the dead themselves.

• Song of the Dead

The vampire chants, weaving unheard words into the song and instilling an unhealthy fascination with death in his listener. Afflicted individuals find themselves drawn to lonely, inauspicious places as they sink into depression; mortality concerns them as never before and they see ill omens everywhere. If affected by this power for an extended period, mortals go mad and become suicidal, while vampires eventually succumb to torpor.

System: The vampire chants to the victim while his player spends one blood point and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty of the target's Willpower). A botch indicates the vampire affects himself as though he had gained successes equal to the 1s rolled. For a number of nights equal to the successes rolled, the target suffers depression and morbid anxiety. This fixation adds two to the difficulty of Social rolls (except those involving Intimidation) and adds one to the difficulty of all other non-reflexive rolls. If a target suffers the effects of this power for more continuous nights than her permanent Willpower, she loses a dot of permanent Willpower. This cycle continues after an interval of the new rating in days, with the victim losing a dot of permanent Willpower after each such iteration. Once a character drops to zero Willpower, she commits suicide (if living) or falls into torpor (if a vampire). If the power is interrupted for at least one night, the victim recovers her permanent Willpower at the rate of one dot per week. A vampire who falls into torpor from reaching zero Willpower awakens with her original rating.

•• Summon Wisp

The vampire infuses droplets of his blood with the ephemeral energy of the Underworld, summoning a sphere of flickering lights. The wisp dances and moves at his command, and its hypnotic quality may lure unsuspecting mortals into a trap or provide a clever distraction.

System: The player spends one blood point and rolls Charisma + Occult (difficulty 5) to conjure an orb of pale light that lasts one scene. The wisp can take any color the vampire chooses and has no substance or weight. It may fly as fast as the vampire can run, casting cold illumination as bright as a candle. Mortals who behold the wisp must roll Willpower (difficulty 4) and achieve more successes than the caster or fall into a mild trance, which increases the difficulty of all actions by one due to distraction. If the vampire's successes double their own, they follow the light without regard for any but the most obvious obstacles. They walk around trees and rocks, but fall prey to quicksand or a high parapet. Any loud noise or other distraction immediately breaks the reverie. If the vampire's player botches the conjuration roll, the wisp appears and acts with its own malevolent agenda. Such a creature is only a nuisance, but can display remarkable cunning in luring enemies to the vampire's haven or giving away his position.

••• Harrowing

Harrowing extends the terror inflicted by Song of the Dead by haunting her in her sleep, turning her dreams to nightmarish visions of her own death.

System: The vampire makes eye contact with the victim, while his player spends one blood point and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty of the target's permanent Willpower). If successful, the victim feels a slight sense of unease. When she next sleeps, she suffers horrible nightmares about her own demise. Even though she cannot fully remember the content of her visions after she wakes, the emotional trauma prevents her from regaining Willpower. In addition, her twisted déjà vu and unnatural paranoia give her the Nightmares Flaw (see p. 422), and behaves as if she's always near someone with the Eerie Presence (see p. 427) for the day. A botch in casting this power inflicts the same terrible dreams on the vampire when he slumbers.

•••• Phantasms

The vampire sculpts the energy of the Underworld into elaborate hallucinations that terrorize the living. These apparitions have no substance, though they emit a surreal cold, and cannot speak or perform complicated actions.



System: The vampire envisions the desired apparition, while the player spends one blood point and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 7). A botch calls the attention of a malefic ghost, giving the vampire the Haunted Flaw (see p. 427) for a number of nights equal to the number of 1s rolled. Each success allows the vampire to create one phenomenon, or add one characteristic or condition to another phantom. For example, three successes could animate shadows to shuffle and writhe (one success) and create an illusion of dripping gore that bursts into a spray of flies when someone draws close (one success for the gore and one success for the conditional effect). This power may create apparitions anywhere in the caster's line of sight. The Storyteller remains the final arbiter of what is or is not possible with this power.

••••• Spectral Menacing

The vampire rends the shroud between life and the Underworld around his victim, calling malicious ghosts to haunt her.

System: The player spends one blood point and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 8). On a botch, the vampire permanently gains the Haunted Flaw (see p. 427), attracting the vilest and most hateful ghosts. If successful, the victim feels a sudden chill. The difficulty for ghosts to affect the target with any power decreases by one for every success rolled, to a minimum of difficulty 4. Malicious ghosts flock to the target, eagerly inflicting every horror at their disposal. The difficulty reduction diminishes by one every day at dawn until the victim returns to normal and the Spectres lose interest. Multiple applications of this power may not be stacked to increase duration or intensity of effect. The statistics and powers of Spectres are left to the Storyteller, but the experience should terrify the character utterly and may well result in Derangements at the least.

Power and Passion

As ghosts are creatures of passion, they possess a metaphysical link to the people and things they care about. When a vampire is in the presence of a physical object or person that has strong meaning to a ghost (such as the gallows where they were hanged, the home that they built with their own hands in life, or a beloved relative), the difficulty of any attempts to summon a ghost are reduced by 2.

The Path of the Sepulchre

The Path of the Sepulchre involves perceiving, communicating with, and commanding the spirits of the restless dead. The Path of the Sepulchre and The Path of Ash are common paths for the Giovani, and they are expected to know at least the fundamentals for communicating with ghosts.

• Peering Across the Shroud

The dead walk among us unseen and unheard. To command them, a necromancer must be able to perceive them. Peering Across the Shroud allows a vampire to see and hear the dead, but not touch them. They appear hazy and indistinct to her eyes, and they speak in soft whispers or echoing moans.

System: The player rolls Perception + Awareness (difficulty 5). Failure has no effect; a botch means that the character is stricken blind for the scene. Success means that the vampire can see ghosts for the remainder of the scene. There is a catch, however. The eyes of a vampire who is using Peering Across the Shroud glow bright blue to a ghost's vision, and like most people, ghosts don't like to be spied on.

•• Summon Soul

Summon Soul allows a necromancer to summon a ghost back from the Underworld in order to converse with him. In order to do this, she must fulfill a few requirements. First, she must either know the ghost's name or have a strong mental image of its appearance, such as one obtained through Peering Across the Shroud or other supernatural means. An image of the ghost's appearance in life will not work. Secondly, an object or person that the ghost had close contact with in life must be present. Using a piece of the ghost's corpse works very well. Finally, the deceased must actually be a ghost. Not everyone becomes a ghost upon their death. Indeed, the vast majority of people do not, instead going on to their final reward or punishment. Even if they do, many ghosts suffer spiritual destruction or dissolution at the hands of Oblivion. Cainites almost never become ghosts upon Final Death.

System: The player spends one blood point and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 7 or the ghost's Willpower, whichever is higher). If the necromancer has a piece of the ghost's corpse, reduce the difficulty of the roll by one. One success will summon a ghost.

If a summons is unsuccessful because the ghost does not exist, the necromancer will have a feeling of sudden, terrifying descent as they reach too far into the Great Beyond. A botch will summon a ghost other than the one specified, most likely a malevolent, Oblivion-worshipping Spectre that may impersonate the intended ghost and lead the necromancer astray.

Once summoned, a ghost may not move out of sight of the necromancer, though he may attack her or her allies. The necromancer may dismiss the ghost by spending a point of Willpower; otherwise, the ghost vanishes at the end of the scene.

If summoned, the ghost is under no compulsion to answer the vampire truthfully.

••• Compel Soul

Using this power, a vampire can bend a ghost to her will for a short time. This ability requires supreme confidence, as a failure of resolve can lead to disastrous consequences for a necromancer.

System: The vampire must be in close proximity to a ghost in order to command it. She may approach the ghost herself, but most necromancers consider this gauche and will use Summon Soul if possible. In order to gain power over the ghost, the necromancer must hold an object handled by it in life as described in Summon Soul above. The vampire then spends a blood point and rolls Manipulation + Occult, which the ghost contests by rolling Willpower (difficulty 6 for both rolls).

If the vampire wins, the net successes gained determine how much control the vampire has over the ghost (see below). Instead of issuing a command to a ghost, the vampire may ask it a question: if she does so, the ghost must answer honestly and to the best of his knowledge. A compelled ghost may not attack a vampire or indirectly endanger her, though he is under no compulsion to aid the vampire unless specifically requested to do so. If the vampire attacks the ghost directly, the compulsion will end immediately.

If the ghost wins, the vampire loses a number of Willpower points equal to his net successes, and the vampire is unable to use any necromantic powers against that particular ghost for the rest of the night. If the vampire botches, his current Willpower is halved (round down) and the difficulty for all her rolls is increased by two for the rest of the scene as she is assailed by confusing visions of her own death. If the ghost botches, he must obey the vampire as if the vampire's player had rolled five net successes.

•••• Haunting

A necromancer uses the power of her blood to bind a ghost into an object or location. The ghost is trapped by the necromancer's will; if he attempts to leave, he risks his own destruction.

Compel Soul

Net Successes	Result
1 success	The vampire may command the ghost to attend to a simple task that will not place the ghost in danger. The ghost is compelled to attend to the task immediately, but he may delay this by spending one point of Willpower per scene of delay. This task may take no longer than eight hours to complete.
2 successes	As above, but the vampire may give the ghost two commands instead of one. Alternatively, he can ask the ghost to perform one potentially dangerous task, so long as danger is not absolutely certain. The ghost may delay fulfilling his task by spending Willpower as above.
3 successes	The vampire may issue three commands as above, or she may ask the ghost to perform and difficult or dangerous mission. The vampire may instead choose to ask the ghost to perform a simple extended task with a duration of one month. The ghost may resist the compulsion for one scene by spending a point of Willpower.
4 successes	The vampire has three options: she may prescribe two dangerous or difficult tasks (as per two successes above), she may order the ghost to perform a single assignment that is complex and/or extremely dangerous, or she may also enslave a ghost for the purposes of performing an infinite number of simple, non-dangerous tasks for up to up to one month. If she chooses the final option, she may spend a point of permanent Willpower to enslave the ghost for a year and a day. The ghost may delay individual orders by spending Willpower, but he cannot delay enslavement.
5 successes	The vampire may issue multiple orders that have a sum complexity or danger (as outlined above) of five successes (five simple and safe tasks, one dangerous task and three simple ones, two dangerous tasks and one simple one, or one complex and/or extremely dangerous task and one simple one). As an alternative, the vampire may ask the ghost to perform virtually any task it is capable of performing as long as it can be accomplished within a single month, regardless of how dangerous or morally repugnant it is. The ghost cannot resist these commands by spending Willpower; he must obey immediately.

System: The player spends a blood point while the vampire draws a small circle on the ground (either in the location or around the object) with the blood. The target ghost must be present in the necromancer's location – she may use Summon Soul for this purpose. She must also know the ghost's name. The player rolls Manipulation + Occult with a difficulty of 4 + the target's current Willpower (minimum difficulty 4). The difficulty increases by one if she wishes to trap the ghost in an object, but is decreased by one if she possesses a piece of the ghost's corpse.

Each success binds the ghost for one night. The vampire may simply ignore her successes and bind the ghost for one week if she spends a point of Willpower. If she spends a point of permanent Willpower, she may bind the ghost for a year and a day. A ghost may attempt to leave the area by making an extended Willpower roll at difficulty 9 (four cumulative successes required). This is no easy task for the ghost, who takes one level of aggravated damage per roll attempted. If the ghost is reduced to zero health, he is hurled back screaming to the darkest depths of the Underworld to face horrible spiritual agony. The ordeal will last at least one month (if he survives it), during which time he cannot be summoned or otherwise contacted again.

••••• Torment

With use of Torment, a necromancer may strike at a ghost's incorporeal body as if he himself were a ghost. He remains in the land of the living, however, and a ghost cannot strike him in return.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Empathy with a difficulty equal to the target ghost's current Willpower (minimum difficulty 4). Each success inflicts a level of lethal damage.

The Path of Ash

The complementary discipline to the Sepulchre Path, the Path of Ash gives the necromancer the power to travel to the Underworld and learn its secrets. It is a subtler and more refined art than the brutal Sepulchre Path, but it is also more dangerous, leaving a vampire vulnerable to ghostly magics.

• Shroudsight

Shroudsight allows a vampire to gaze directly into the Underworld. He can see the structures, objects, and ghostly inhabitants of that dark world, though he cannot interact with them physically.

System: The player rolls Perception + Awareness (difficulty 7). If she succeeds, the necromancer may see into the Underworld for a scene.

•• Tongue of the Dark Kingdoms

When uttering the Tongue of the Dark Kingdoms, a necromancer can converse with ghosts in the Underworld. A necromancer can use this power in conjunction with Shroudsight, but she can speak with ghosts blindly if she desires.

System: To invoke Tongue of the Dark Kingdoms, the player rolls Perception + Occult and spends one point of Willpower. If the roll is successful, he may speak to any ghosts in the area freely for one scene.

••• Touch the Nether

While invoking Touch the Nether, a necromancer may stand on both sides of the Shroud; she manifests physically in the Underworld while remaining corporeal in the lands of the living. She can interact with ghosts and objects in the Underworld, and they can interact with her. This may appear confusing to living onlookers who see the necromancer climb an "invisible" ladder or get staked by an invisible opponent!

System: The player must spend a point of Willpower and succeed at a Wits + Occult roll (difficulty 7) to activate Touch the Nether for one scene. If she wishes to extend the power for additional scenes, she may do so at a cost of one blood point per scene.

•••• Ex Nihilo

Ex Nihilo allows a necromancer to physically enter the Underworld. While in the Underworld, she appears as a particularly solid ghost. She can be injured, but only by things that would inflict aggravated damage to a ghost, such as the cruel soul-forged blades wielded by ghostly warriors, for example, or by certain ghostly magics.

If slain in the Underworld, a vampire's soul is swallowed by the Void. No ghostly magic or necromancy can reach her; she is gone forever.

System: To enter the Underworld, the vampire must draw a door in chalk or blood on any surface. She then spends two points of willpower and two blood points before making a Stamina + Occult roll (difficulty 8). If she succeeds at her roll, the door opens, and she (and she alone) may enter the Underworld.

A vampire physically present in the Underworld can pass through solid objects in the living world at the cost of one lethal health level. She can remain thus incorporeal for a number of turns equal to her Stamina rating.

If a vampire wishes to return to the living world, she may do so by spending a Willpower point and succeeding at a difficulty Stamina + Occult roll. But even if she succeeds, there are some parts of the Underworld that are too far removed from the lands of the living to allow an easy return. If she wanders too far from the shadowed reflection of the living world and into the dark dream kingdoms of the Dead, she may find herself trapped.

Vampires in the Underworld must bring their sustenance with them; they cannot feed on ghosts without use of another power (such as Pischacha's Feast, p. 291).

••••• Shroud Mastery

With this power, the necromancer can greatly aid or hinder the ability of ghosts to function in the living world. She may use this power to bolster the ghosts in her service, to stymie a ghostly assault, or as a favor to a band of ghosts who wish to interact with (or wreak havoc upon) the living world.

System: To exercise Shroud Mastery, the vampire spends two points of Willpower and makes a Willpower roll at difficulty 9. For every success on the roll, he can either reduce or increase the difficulty of all ghostly magics invoked in a half mile radius by 1, to a minimum difficulty 4. The effect fades at a rate of one point per hour. For every -2 difficulty to ghostly magics this power incurs (rounded up), the difficulty of other Necromancy powers and rituals is reduced by one.

The Path of the Twilight Garden

Known to outsiders as "The Path of the Four Humors," the Path of the Twilight Garden is among the most closely-guarded secrets of the Lamiae. The Discipline arose from ritual practices of the Cult of Lamia, though like the Lilin themselves, the Path of the Twilight Garden has a martial bent.

• Whispers to the Soul

Merely a hearing the whisper of the true name of the Dark Mother is enough to drive mortals mad, and fill the hearts of the Cainites with terror.

System: A Lilin whispers one of the secret names of Lilith. Any single target within 100 paces and in the character's line of sight will hear the whisper as if the invoker were speaking directly into his ear. The target must immediately make a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) or be tormented by nightmares and hallucinations for a number of days and nights equal to the invoker's Manipulation score. This causes the target to lose two dice from all dice pools for the duration of of the power.

•• Kiss of the Dark Mother

The Lilin bites her tongue and fills her mouth with a foul, acrid mix of black bile and vitae. Her bite becomes even more terrible, and she can devour the life from her victims with ease.

System: The player spends a blood point as the vampire fills her mouth with the caustic substance. The next bite attack she makes deals double damage before soak is applied. This does not make feeding more efficient, nor does it exacerbate the damage done by blood loss. If the vampire does not use a bite attack on a target, her bite remains potent for the rest of the night.

••• Dark Humors

The Lamiae are known for their athleticism and mastery of their bodies. Not only are they able to perform feats of incredible physical prowess, but they can also manipulate the balance of humors in their body by sheer force of will. With the use of this power, a Lamia can transubstantiate her own vitae into one of four corrupted bodily humors, each with its own effect.

System: The player spends two blood points as the Lamia cuts open her skin (she may use a knife, bite her tongue, or simply rake her skin with her claws). She transubstantiates a small amount of blood into one of the humors described below. She may also use this as a defense against another vampire that is feeding on her. The target needn't ingest the humor to suffer its effects; skin contact is all that is required.

The four humors are:

Phlegmatic: Exposure to phlegmatic humors makes the target lethargic. All dice pools are reduced by two for the remainder of the scene.

Melancholy: Melancholic humors plunge the target into deep despair. For the rest of the scene, he may not spend any Willpower points and the difficulty of all his Willpower rolls is increased by two.

Sanguine: When exposed to sanguine humors, the target becomes prone to excessive bleeding. Any lethal or aggravated wounds will deal an extra level of damage of the appropriate type on the following turn.

Bilious: Bilious humors poison the target, inflicting a number of levels of lethal damage equal to the necromancer's Stamina.

•••• Caul of the Neverborn

With the use of this power, the Lamia strengthens her connection to the black heart of the Dark Mother. By completing a short ritual wherein she drinks at least five points' of blood from a cold corpse, she gains some of the hard-won strength and wisdom of the long-suffering Lilith.

System: The vampire drinks at least five points' of blood from a cold corpse, then spends five points to invoke the power. She then transforms on a spiritual and physiological level; her eyes become solid black, her manner becomes distant and cold. She gains two additional soak dice and immunity to all wound penalties for the remainder of the scene. With a successful Perception + Occult roll (difficulty 7), she may see into the Shadowlands and speak with any ghosts there. Finally, she can immediately tell the relative health of any being she sees, as injuries and diseases manifest themselves vividly on a creature's aura.

••••• Lament of D'hainu

The Lamia howls in agony, and the very earth trembles. A miasma of writhing darkness rises from the ground and ensnares her enemies. Those caught by the darkness are not physically bound, but are immediately stricken with emotional anguish so rich and raw that they seek to end their lives in the most expedient way possible.

System: The player rolls spends two Willpower points and rolls Stamina + Athletics, difficulty 7. For every success she rolls, the radius of Lament of D'hainu increases by five yards/meters. Anyone within the radius of the Lament (except the necromancer) must make a Willpower roll, difficulty 7. If the Willpower roll fails, the Lament's victims are overcome with despair and seek to end their lives immediately. Men will fall on their swords, lupines will tear out their own throats, and mages will turn their magics against themselves. Unless stopped, a victim of the Lament will not cease in her quest for death until she succeeds in killing herself. Cainites affected by the Lament are not driven to suicide, but rather fall into torpor immediately. Even if the target succeeds at the Willpower roll, he shakes off his suicidal urges, but her dice pool for all actions is reduced by two for the remainder of the scene. If a victim who failed the Willpower roll has not succeeded in killing herself by the end of the scene, the effects of the Lament wear off, but her dice pool for all actions is reduced by two until the next sunrise.

The Vitreous Path

This path, a closely-guarded secret of the Nagaraja, allows a necromancer to directly manipulate the energies of the Underworld and Oblivion itself. Most vampires outside of the Nagaraja have never heard of the Path, but more than a few Cappadocian scholars would pay dearly to learn its secrets.

• Eyes of the Wraith

By invoking this power, the necromancer can see the world the way that the Restless Dead do.

System: The player rolls Perception + Occult, difficulty 6. She then gains the ghostly power of Deathsight as described on p. 403.

•• Aura of Decay

The dark hand of entropy is everywhere. Everything around us contains the seeds of its own undoing. This power hastens the inevitable fate of any inanimate object caught within the necromancer's dreadful aura, allowing the vampire to cause any object to decay into a ruined heap.

System: Invoking Aura of Decay requires no roll, but it does require expenditure of blood and therefore explicitly cannot be used by a vampire who has been staked. The aura extends approximately one yard/meter away from the necromancer.

To invoke the Aura, the necromancer must spend at least one blood point. The speed at which objects caught in the aura decay depends on the number of blood points spent.

Blood Spent	Time to Ruin
One	One week
Two	One day
Three	End of scene
Four	Five turns
Five	One turn

Any rolls to use an item affected by this decay automatically botch. Items on the necromancer's person (e.g. clothing) are exempt from the aura's effects. The aura lasts for one scene. The aura has no effect on living creatures (though it feels unnaturally cold), but will decay nonliving organic matter such as wood or corpses.

••• Pischacha's Feast

Pischacha's Feast allows a vampire to align her soul with the dark energies of the Void. In doing so, she can subsist on the ambient energies of entropy that permeate the haunted places of the world, or feed directly on the corpus of a ghost.

System: The player spends one Willpower point to allow the vampire to feed on the energies of the dead. In this state, she can also perceive and feed on ghosts. If the vampire wishes to simply absorb ambient necrotic energy, she must be in a location where a death has recently occurred, or in an area closely attuned to the energies of death, such as a cemetery or a gallows. A necromancer can generally absorb one to four points at a time. Once depleted, the same area cannot be tapped again for a week or until the Storyteller deems that the energies have been replenished.

If a vampire wishes to feed on directly on a ghost, he must attack the ghost as if feeding normally. The ghost can still attack the vampire while he is being fed upon, however, though he cannot move or flee without defeating the vampire in a resisted Willpower roll (difficulty 6 for both sides).

The energies harvested by the Feast may be used exactly like ordinary blood points with one exception: they cannot be used to rouse a vampire at the beginning of the night.

•••• Curse of the Maelstrom

The necromancer inhales deeply, then forcefully exhales. If she chooses to curse her immediate surroundings, a mundane observer will not see any immediate evidence that anything has happened, but even infants in the cradle will sense that something terrible is coming. There is always an eerie calm just before the Maelstrom is unleashed.

Alternatively, she can target a single victim with the Curse. The accursed target's soul is marked by the hand of Oblivion in the form of a terrible wasting illness.

System: The player spends at least one blood point and rolls Willpower (difficulty 8). If she succeeds, the vampire summons a number of Spectres (terrible ghosts that worship Oblivion and seek the destruction of the world) equal to the number of successes rolled. The Spectre(s) will cause mayhem and destruction in an area centered on the necromancer with a radius of approximately one-half mile. This area can be increased by one-half mile for every blood point spent during activation of the power. The Spectres will typically ignore the necromancer, but they can be controlled by supernatural means (such as Compel Soul). See page 403 for more details on ghosts.

If she chooses to target a single person rather than a location, she must either touch the target or direct a stream of entropic energy at him (Dexterity + Occult, difficulty 7; this can be dodged). If the necromancer succeeds, the target suffers one level of aggravated damage. This manifests as a terrible supernatural illness that causes the victim's veins to turn either black or sickly gray. In addition to his ghastly appearance, a victim is marked on a spiritual level as cursed by the hand of Oblivion, and all but the most hardened necromancers and ghosts will be unsettled by his presence. Until the next sunrise, the difficulty of all social rolls he faces is increased by two.

••••• Night Cry

With use of Night Cry, a necromancer is able to display her mastery of the forces of entropy. She may either direct

it away from her allies to aid them, or she may channel it directly into her foes and hinder them.

System: The necromancer screams in an unearthly wail that is heard in both the living world and the Underworld. The player selects targets and spends one point of Willpower to affect one target. To select more than one target, she must spend one blood point for each additional target she wishes to affect. (Generational blood limits apply, and the player may not "pre-spend" blood to activate this power.) She may only select targets that are within one yard per dot of Necromancy that she possesses.

The player rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 6). If she chooses to aid the targets, Night Cry gives them a -1 difficulty on all of their actions per success. If she chooses to harm the targets, she deals one level of aggravated damage to each target.

If the player botches, she summons a pack of Spectres as in Curse of the Maelstrom above, but the Spectres will specifically target the necromancer. She suffers the effects of Curse of the Maelstrom as if she was the intended single target.

Necromancy Rituals

Not all necromantic powers are taught as disciplines. Some require more than mere blood or force of will to activate. These rituals are not as intuitive as Disciplines, but must be taught from one necromancer to another. Some have been crafted by the Cappadocians through years of careful study and experimentation. Some are rumored to have been taught to the vampiric by powerful mages of the Underworld. Folk tales of vampires who made foul bargains with the kings and queens of the Underworld in exchange for necromantic power abound in the Dark Medieval. However if any tangible evidence of these dread contracts exists, it's not widely known.

Some of the rituals listed reference specific groups such as the Impundulu and Giovani. As of the current era, these rituals remain tight-knit secrets within their origin groups.

System: To perform a ritual correctly, a player must succeed at an Intelligence + Occult roll with a difficulty equal to 3 + the level of the ritual, maximum 9. Failure produces no effect, but a botch may produce disastrous results.

Level One Rituals

Call of the Hungry Dead

Call of the Hungry Dead is a ritual used to communicate across the Shroud or to gaslight a rival. The celebrant chants and scatters a handful of black beans. At the end of the ritual (which lasts about ten minutes), the necromancer lights a black candle and burns a single hair from the target in the flame. The target is then able to hear the voices of the dead.

However, such a crude ritual provides murky results. Unless the target is able to exceed the caster's successes in a Perception + Occult roll (difficulty 9), the voices of the dead will come across as a cacophony of howls, lamentations, and curses. Whether successful or not, any target is subject to + 2 difficulty on all rolls related to audial perception, and may think he is going mad.

The Call of the Hungry Dead lasts as long as the black candle continues to burn.

Foxfire

The celebrant must burn a small green candle down to the bottom (which takes about fifteen minutes) and form the remaining ash and wax into a small sphere. The sphere is then placed somewhere on the intended target's person.

Anyone who carries the sphere appears to be normal by any observer in the living world, but to anyone in the Underworld, the target appears to be illuminated with a sickly green glow. Ghosts find it trivially easy to affect the target with their dark magic, and receive a -1 difficulty on all magic-related rolls directed at the target. The sphere remains for one hour per success on the casting roll.

Final Sight

There are two schools of thought on how to conduct the ritual of Final Sight. Adherents of the first school of thought conduct the ritual by dripping a few drops of blood on a dead man's eye and saying a brief prayer for his soul. Others conduct the ritual by slowly and reverentially eating one of the dead man's eyes. Most necromancers have a strong preference for one method. Regardless of which method the necromancer uses, this ritual must be used on a corpse with at least one intact eye, and it takes approximately five minutes.

The number of successes on the ritual roll determines the clarity of her results.

Successes	Result
1 success	A basic sense of the subject's death
2 successes	A clear image of the subject's death and the seconds preceding it
3 successes	A clear image, with sound, of several minutes preceding the subject's death
4 successes	A clear image, with sound, of the half-hour before the subject's death
5 successes	Full sensory perception of the hour leading up to the subject's death

If the player botches, her character is assaulted with vague and confusing visions of her own Final Death, which will immediately provoke a Rötschreck check (see p. 357).

Shew-Stone

This Impundulu ritual creates a magical stone, which can be used to keep track of a necromancer's friends or enemies, living or dead. To create a Shew-Stone, a necromancer must paint a person's name in a bird's blood (Germanic traditions insist on using the blood of a hoopoe) on a consecrated, polished stone. The necromancer must appease the spirits by performing a ritual such as a dance, a prayer, or an offering. Ghostly spirits will then appear in the Shew-Stone and whisper the target's whereabouts in the necromancer's ear.

The stone loses its powers after a month unless the necromancer spends a blood point to renew the magic.

Level Two Rituals

Antonius's Denial

A prodigy of Augustus Giovani's blood, called Antonius Giovani, crafted this wicked rite early in the bloodline's studies. It denies death to a victim, albeit temporarily. It does not, however, deny pain. The ritual requires the vampire temporarily sacrifice a dot (not a point) of Willpower, which only returns the night after he chooses to end the effects. Upon casting this ritual, the victim gains a number of phantom Incapacitated Health Levels equal to the casting successes. The character cannot be Incapacitated, only Crippled, no matter the damage he takes. The victim cannot heal these phantom Health levels under any circumstance, and if the ritual ends, any wounds in those boxes are added as aggravated damage to his normal Health track.

Hand of Glory

The Hand of Glory is a candle created with a special purpose. When the Hand is lit within fifty paces of any home, all mortal residents therein will fall into a deep slumber (or stay asleep and unable to be roused).

To create a Hand, a necromancer must mummify the left hand of a hanged felon in an earthen jar with saltpeter and peppercorns. After a fortnight, she coats the hand in wax made of tallow rendered from a condemned man's fat. Each finger (including the thumb) can be lit once. The Hand of Glory remains in effect for as long as the candle is lit. Only blood or milk will extinguish the candle; all other means to douse the flames will fail.

If any residents of the home remain awake after the candle is lit, the Hand will curl one finger down for each unsleeping resident. If the player botches her roll, all fingers will remain erect, but the somnolent effects will not occur.

Memento Mori

This ritual harrows a target with terrifying visions of his own demise. To conduct the ritual, a necromancer takes a small personal token from a target. This might be a sample of bodily fluid, a hair, or even a well-used possession. The celebrant must dig a grave at least six feet/two meters deep and no less than three feet/one meter wide. She may use supernatural means to aid her such as Potence or Protean, but she must do the work directly and not with any other aid. When she has finished burying the token, the ritual begins to take effect.

The target suffers intermittent, terrifying visions of his own death for a period of one week. Every time a target is subjected to a vision, he must roll his Courage (difficulty 7). If he fails, he can take no action other than cowering in terror until the vision passes.

Witch Eye

By implanting an enchanted eye from the corpse of a restless soul in her own eye socket, the necromancer can permanently gain the Deathsight ability (see p. 403). The ritual is complex and takes an entire evening to perform. At midnight, the celebrant cuts out her own eye and the eye of the corpse. She then places the corpse's eye in her own eye socket, and places her eye in the corpse. Vampiric healing takes place instantaneously, sealing the dead man's eye into her eye socket. The eye itself does not heal, however. It remains unmoving and rotten in the necromancer's face, causing her Appearance to decrease by 1 when the eye is visible. Even a freshly-harvested eye will cloud over and decay in a matter of hours. This increases the difficulty of Perception rolls involving mundane eyesight by 1. As the eye is no longer a proper window into the necromancer's soul, however, the Witch Eye increases the difficulty of all Disciplines that require eye contact by 1.

The Witch Eye may also complicate a vampire's life on a supernatural level. Any ghost whose body is being desecrated by the ritual knows immediately, and will likely be displeased by the necromancer's actions. Even if the necromancer completes the ritual successfully, the ghost maintains a supernatural connection to the Witch Eye, causing all magical rolls he makes against the necromancer to be made at a -1 difficulty.

Prepare the Vessel

This ritual works well as a method of facilitating mediumship, a bargaining chip for ghosts who long to walk in the Skinlands, or as a rather unique form of psychological torture. Prepare the Vessel renders a subject (willing or

unwilling) a fitting receptacle for spiritual possession. The target must have a hood (such as one used for hanged men) placed over his head for one hour. Until the next sunrise (regardless of whether the hood remains in place), any ghost or spirit attempting to possess the target gains two automatic successes when doing so. For more on ghostly possession, see p. 403.

Totenpass

The Impundulu necromancer ceremonially "kills" a mortal, laying him out on a bier and placing either two coins over his eyes or an inscribed tablet on his chest. The mortal may then leave his body and travel into the Underworld. He is not completely separated from this body – ghosts and other entities using Lifesight or Aura Perception will see a silver cord trailing from his soul to his still-living body. He can perceive the Underworld and speak to ghosts, but he cannot affect the Underworld physically.

Level Three Rituals

Din of the Damned

This ritual seals any space against attempts at eavesdropping via either supernatural or mundane means. The necromancer draws an unbroken line of ashes on the ground. So long as the line remains unbroken, no one outside of the line can hear anything going on inside. The only thing that a would-be eavesdropper hears are faint echoes of the Underworld as described in Call of the Hungry Dead (p. 292). If a listener uses supernatural means such as Auspex, he may roll Perception + Occult (difficulty 7) against the successes scored by the celebrant. If he botches this roll, he is deafened for the rest of the night.

Nightmare Drums

The realm of dreams is close to the world of the dead. With the use of Nightmare Drums, an Impundulu necromancer can make a dark bargain with denizens of the Underworld to harry her rivals in their dreams until they go mad.

To enact the ritual, a celebrant coats a personal possession of the target with his own blood. She then burns the possession, sending a Relic of it to the Underworld. While it is burning, the necromancer drums a steady beat on a drum made from the skin of no less than three humans. The drums are inaudible to the living, but to the dead, they are ear-piercingly loud and fill ghosts with agony. In exchange for silence, the ghosts torment the necromancer's foe by sending him nightmares for as long as the vampire requests. More powerful ghosts may bargain (albeit under duress) for the necromancer to perform some favor for them in return for their services.

A botch results in the ghosts in the area becoming enraged by the Nightmare Drums. Instead of harrying the necromancer's target, they will either attack the necromancer directly or haunt her dreams.

Tempest Shield

A necromancer can use the Tempest Shield as an emergency defense against hostile ghosts. To raise the Tempest Shield, a necromancer must spend one turn performing a ritual dance (Dexterity + Performance at difficulty 6, or difficulty 7 in combat). In the next turn, the celebrant bites through her lips (taking one level of bashing damage and spending one blood point) and spits on the ground in a circle. The player then makes her ritual roll. If she succeeds, no ghost can enter the circle, and the difficulty for all ghosts to target any creatures within the circle using their magics increases by 2 . The ritual lasts for fifteen minutes or until the circle is broken.

Level Four Rituals

Bastone del Diavolo

Even a powerful ghost fears and loathes a necromancer armed with a *Bastone del Diavolo*, or "Devil Stick." Creation of a *Bastone* is a difficult task. The Giovani celebrant must sever the leg of a living mortal, remove the femur from the surrounding tissue, and submerge it in boiling lead. Once the lead has cooled, she inscribes the femur with a litany of curses. Once she has finished her craftsmanship, she must beat the mortal to death with his own femur.

To activate the powers of a Devil Stick, a wielder must spend one point of Willpower. For the next scene, any ghost struck with the Devil Stick loses a point from his Passion Pool (see p. 403). A ghost need not be manifested to be struck with the Stick; it affects incorporeal targets just as well as corporeal ones. The Devil Stick deals an additional die of aggravated damage to a ghost currently possessing a corporeal host.

Ghosts instinctively sense the presence of a Devil Stick, and they are loath to approach anyone who carries one. Any necromancer who attempts to summon or attract ghosts with a Devil Stick on her person does so at a +1 difficulty, even if she is not wielding it during the summoning.

Vision of St. Anthony

With this ritual, the necromancer can grant others Shroudsight (as described on p. 288) for a number of hours equal to her Stamina score. She enchants a handful of wheat infected with ergot (a common type of toxic fungus) with an hour-long ritual. For every success on her ritual roll, she creates three doses. The enchantment removes any toxicity



from the ergot, but if she botches, she creates three doses of highly-toxic wheat that will inflict eight dice of lethal damage on anyone who ingests it, mortal and vampire alike.

Level Five Rituals

Chill of Oblivion

The subject of this powerful ritual calls upon the power of Oblivion, the great all-devouring Nothingness destined to consume the universe. By doing so, the subject gains considerable power over fire. To cast the ritual, a subject must lay naked upon the bare earth while a block of ice no smaller than the length of his forearm melts upon his chest. This inflicts three levels of bashing damage to mortals. The ritual takes twelve hours minus the number of successes gained on the ritual, and it stays in effect for a number of nights equal to the necromancer's Occult rating.

A subject infused with the Chill of Oblivion does not burn easily. He takes lethal rather than aggravated damage from fire. He automatically succeeds at all Rötschreck rolls triggered by the presence of fire (but not for rolls triggered for another reason, such as by sunlight). He may also attempt to extinguish any fire within his line of sight merely by force of will. To do this, his player rolls Willpower (difficulty 9). Each success reduces a fire's soak difficulty by 1, and a fire with a soak difficulty of 2 is effectively extinguished.

A necromancer does not invoke the power of Oblivion lightly. Oblivion tarnishes the soul of anyone who calls upon it, causing black veins to appear in his aura in a fashion similar (but not identical) to a vampire who has committed the sin of amaranth. The vampire also radiates a palpable aura of stillness and cold, and should be treated as if he possessed the Flaws Touch of Frost and Eerie Presence (p. 426) for the duration of the ritual's effects. Finally, the call of Oblivion attracts Spectres. With their desire to see the entire world cast into the Void, they may decide that the necromancer is a good place to start.

Dead Man's Hand

By performing the rite of the Dead Man's Hand, an Impundulu necromancer can inflict a rival with a terrible wasting illness. The ritual requires a freshly-severed hand and a piece of white cloth that has come in contact with

the bodily fluids of the target (e.g. blood, saliva). The necromancer places the folded cloth in the grasp of the severed hand. The necromancer makes a standard roll and spends two blood points for each point of Stamina and Fortitude the target possesses. If she succeeds, the target undergoes a gruesome transformation: as the Dead Man's Hand decays, so does the target's body. He becomes a maggot-infested, putrid corpse before his very eyes. The curse progresses as follows, with the target slowly losing health levels according to the table below:

Health Level	Time Until Next Loss
Bruised	12 hours
Hurt	12 hours
Injured	Six hours
Wounded	Three hours
Mauled	One hour
Crippled	30 minutes
Incapacitated	12 hours

After twelve hours, Incapacitated mortals die, and Incapacitated Cainite fall into torpor. The only way to stop the process is to remove the cloth from the Dead Man's Hand or destroy the Dead Man's Hand entirely.

Treasures of Hades

This complex and lengthy ritual allows a necromancer to retrieve Relics from the Underworld. The ritual requires that the necromancer chant for six hours while burning a replica of the Relic (which needn't be well-crafted or convincing). At the conclusion of the ritual, the Relic will appear in the ashes of the replica. In order to summon a Relic, the celebrant must have seen it before. This ritual cannot be used to retrieve non-relic objects in the Underworld, such as the soul-cutting blades of the ghost kings.

It is unlikely that a useful Relic can be taken away without anyone noticing, however. Relics are precious, jealously guarded commodities in the Underworld, and ghosts have an uncanny way of tracking down meddling necromancers who plunder their treasuries.

Objects taken from the Underworld will remain in the living world until All Hallows' Eve, at which point they return to the sunless lands. A necromancer can only summon a particular Relic once every one hundred years.

Orphic Sojourn

Orphic Sojourn allows a necromancer to project her soul from her body and effectively exist as a ghost for the duration of the ritual.

Orphic Sojourn requires that the vampire dress herself in funerary garb and surround herself with grave goods. She lies down and meditates from dusk until midnight. After midnight, she is freed from her body. She may wander the Underworld and interact with the objects and creatures as if she were a ghost for a number of hours equal to her successes on her ritual roll. When the ritual expires, she immediately returns to her body. Orphic Sojourn may not be used to retrieve objects from the Underworld.

Thaumaturgy

When their mortal magic failed after their transformation, the Tremere knew that they would be helpless without a substitute. Out of the centuries of lore that their libraries held and through daring experimentation in their laboratories, they cobbled together the first blood-powered paths of their signature Discipline: Thaumaturgy. Unlike the arts of the magi, whose applications are limited only by will and imagination, the Tremere's substitute art is precisely delimited. Each path produces a predictable effect if the thaumaturge has the strength of will; each ritual can be repeated with scientific accuracy so long as it is carried out without error.

Of the two forms of Thaumaturgy — paths and rituals — the rituals are the safer. An error in performing them simply means a waste of time and perhaps ingredients. The paths have substantially less rigid structure than rituals, and thus have the potential to backfire spectacularly if a user cannot master the necessary force of will.

A Hermetic Theory of Vitae

The Tremere have made the study of *vitae* their foremost concern. Their present theory is that it represents the *prima materia*, the pure matter out of which all other things are generated. Without any form (in the Aristotelian sense) of its own, it can be shaped into whatever its possessor wills it to be, but it is vulnerable to those elements of nature that embody clarity and perception: the Sun and fire. Both of these react against the formlessness of *vitae* and force it back to an inert state because they aid the mind and senses in recognizing the forms of things.

While other, older forms of blood magic exist, Thaumaturgy is strictly the domain of Clan Tremere. The leaders of the Clan know that the Discipline has the potential to raise them to the highest echelons of Cainite society, and they severely punish any Tremere who risks that future by sharing their secrets with outsiders.

System: Unless specified otherwise, thaumaturgic path powers all follow the same system. To activate path powers, spend a blood point and roll Willpower against a difficulty of the power's level +3. To perform rituals, roll Intelligence + Occult against a difficulty of the level of the ritual +3 (maximum 9).

The Lesser Paths

The so-called lesser paths are most often the ones first taught to initiates in the thaumaturgic arts. Increasing mastery of these paths does not teach the thaumaturge new applications of power, but merely increase the force or scope of a single ability.

Creatio Ignis (The Creation of Fire)

With this power, the thaumaturge conjures an eerie flame in his palm that sheds light but offers no warmth and does not provoke frenzy in other vampires. When he releases it at a target within sight, however, it burns like any ordinary fire and is beyond his control.

System: One success is enough to conjure a flame for illumination and to release it at any target within ten yards. Every additional success gives the flame a further ten yards of range, up to the limit of the thaumaturge's line of sight. To hurl the fire at a target in combat, roll Perception + Alertness to hit and apply damage according to the power's level. For complete rules on fire, see page 356; for rules on Rötschreck, see page 358. Thaumaturgic fire causes aggravated damage.

Botches: A botch when using Creatio Ignis means that the conjured flame is not under the thaumaturge's control. It immediately spills from the hand to a flammable object within ten feet or, if no such object is present, causes the caster one level of aggravated damage before extinguishing itself.

- • Candle (difficulty 3 to soak, one health level of aggravated damage/turn)
- •• Palm of flame (difficulty 4 to soak, one health level of aggravated damage/turn)
- ••• Campfire (difficulty 5 to soak, two health levels of aggravated damage/turn)
- •••• Bonfire (difficulty 7 to soak, two health levels of aggravated damage/turn)
- ••••• Inferno (difficulty 9 to soak, three health levels of aggravated damage/turn)

Iter Pernix (The Swift Journey)

This power subtly strengthens the vigor of mortals, vampires, or animals so that they can cross great distances more quickly than they ordinarily could. It does not speed up their movement in the same way that Celerity does. Instead, it instills in them a determination to press ahead and a relief from the fatigue of a constant march.

System: Choose a number of targets and roll for successes. Each success allows the targets to move along roads at a speed of thirty miles per hour/forty-five km per hour for one hour without need of rest or any negative after-effects. It has no effect on movement speeds in combat, only for long-distance travel.

Botches: Instead of speeding up travel, a botch when invoking Iter Pernix causes mounts to become difficult to handle, slowing movement to half speed for the next hour if they are connected to wagons or possibly to wander off-course if they are not.

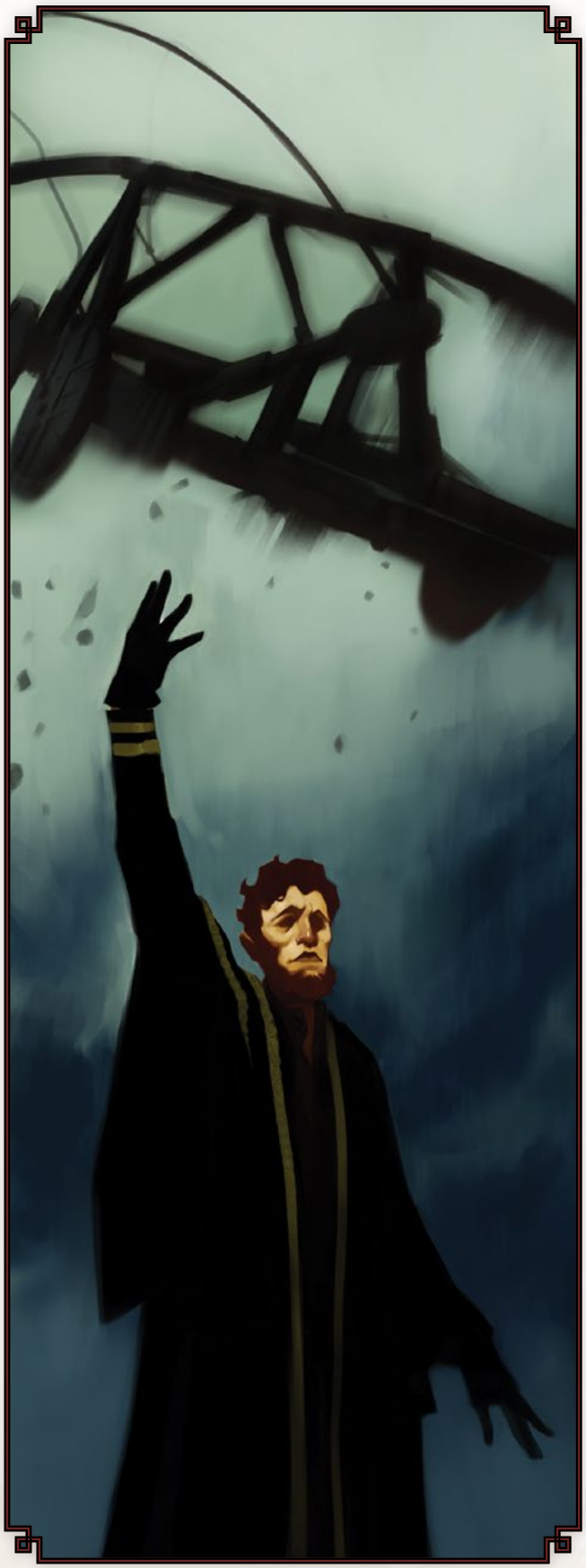
- • One being (a mount or walking human)
- •• Up to six mounts or one laden wagon
- ••• Up to twelve mounts or four supply wagons
- •••• Up to 24 mounts or eight supply wagons or one siege engine
- ••••• Up to 48 mounts or sixteen supply wagons or four siege engines

Potestas Motus (Power of Motion)

With concentration and simple gestures, the Thaumaturge who studies this path can lift and manipulate objects at a distance for a brief time. The amount of control is the same as if they were held, and objects suitable for use as weapons may be employed as such so long as they remain within the vampire's line of sight. Masters of the path can use it to carry themselves or others through the air, or even to hurl objects more violently than they could through physical strength alone.

System: Each success allows the character to manipulate the object for one turn. At the end of that time, she may make another Willpower roll at the same difficulty to extend the duration without spending any more blood points. If the initial roll achieved five successes, however, the power can be maintained for the entire scene without need for further checks.

At two dots, the thaumaturge can manipulate weapons well enough to use them to attack. Use the initial successes achieved when activating the power as the number of attack successes for the first turn, then



roll Melee + Thaumaturgy for subsequent attacks. The effective Strength of the attack is equal to the caster's Potestas Motus rating.

At three dots, the thaumaturge can levitate himself or another and fly at her unmodified running speed. If the target is unwilling, the caster and subject make opposed Willpower rolls each turn.

Botches: A botched roll with Potestas Motus turns the power against the caster, rooting her feet in place for the next turn. Until the end of that turn, the character cannot dodge.

- • One pound/one-half kilogram
- •• 20 pounds/10 kilograms
- ••• 200 pounds/100 kilograms
- •••• 500 pounds/250 kilograms
- ••••• 1000 pounds/500 kilograms

Potestas Tempestatum (Power Over Storms)

The power to influence weather is one of the oldest of magical techniques common among Tremere.

System: The number of successes determines how quickly the desired phenomenon can be conjured from otherwise neutral conditions, with one success being a gradual shift over the next day and five successes being an instantaneous change. Minor changes or changes that build upon existing conditions (such as directing lightning while a thunderstorm is already in progress) allow the difficulty of the roll to be reduced by one or two at the Storyteller's discretion, while rolls to enact wholly unnatural changes (a downpour in a parched desert) should have their difficulty increased by one or two.

Rolls to use Potestas Tempestarum indoors always have their difficulty raised by two. Rain, snow, storms, and thunderstorms cannot be conjured anywhere but outdoors, but fog, wind, and temperature changes may be created anywhere.

Changes in weather last for one scene per success before reverting to their former state.

Botches: A botched attempt to influence the weather triggers a backlash from the local elemental spirits. Winds whirl around the caster, raising the difficulty to Perception and ranged attack rolls by two for the duration of the scene unless he spends a point of Willpower to compel the spirits to relent. Conjured lightning immediately targets the thaumaturge.

- • Fog or light breezes (+1 difficulty to appropriate Perception checks, weapon ranges halved), minor temperature changes

•• Rain or snow (+2 difficulty to appropriate Perception checks, weapon ranges halved)

••• High winds (+2 difficulty to ranged attacks, weapon ranges halved, make a Dexterity check [difficulty 6] each turn to remain standing), moderate temperature changes

•••• Storm (combines effects of rain and high winds)

••••• Thunderstorm (roll Perception + Occult to strike a target with lightning for 10 dice of lethal damage)

The Greater Paths

Unlike the Lesser Paths, thaumaturges cannot master the Greater Paths simply by concentrating more force of will onto a single purpose. Instead, the Greater Paths are collections of related powers that build upon each other through common techniques. Many Tremere teachers require that their apprentices study at least one of the Lesser Paths before being permitted to approach the Greater mysteries.

Potestas Elementorum (The Power of the Elements)

Although the Tremere's transformation caused them to lose much of their mastery over spirits, thaumaturges who study the path of the elements can still call upon the lesser entities that inhabit natural phenomena. It is a popular form of magic among those stationed in more isolated chantries, ones where the exploration of nature is readily done, but its secrets are just as useful to urban Tremere.

• Strength of the Earth

By drawing on the power of the earth beneath her feet, the thaumaturge can temporarily increase her physical might with only a fraction of the cost in blood that another would require.

System: Assign three temporary points between Strength and Stamina for a number of turns equal to the successes rolled. The duration may be extended at a cost of one point of Willpower each turn, but the power cannot be "stacked" by using it again while one invocation is still in effect. It ends instantly if the thaumaturge is completely separated from the ground.

•• Wooden Tongues

By coaxing the minor elemental spirit of an inanimate object into awakening, the thaumaturge may converse with it briefly to discover what it has experienced of its surroundings.

System: The number of successes determines the extent and relevance of the information that the thaumaturge gains. One success is enough to learn of major events nearby, three successes can focus the spirit's attention on the presence or absence of creatures during those events, and five successes is enough for it to describe creatures in comprehensible terms.

••• Animate the Unmoving

The thaumaturge learns to awaken elemental spirits further, imbuing them with limited powers of movement. Objects animated in this way cannot bend or warp in any radical way, but can shift and twist themselves by degrees in order to move. A door could open or shut, a chair could pull itself across the floor, a statue could walk slowly, or a sword could shudder to cause itself to be dropped.

System: The thaumaturge must expend an additional point of Willpower to use this ability in addition to the standard blood point and Willpower roll. Success allows him to animate one object for up to an hour, so long as it remains within his line of sight. Multiple uses of the power allow for the animation of more than one object, but a thaumaturge cannot control more objects at a time than he has points in Intelligence.

•••• Elemental Form

The thaumaturge can transform herself into an inanimate body of earth (metal, dirt, or stone), air, or water (liquid, ice, or fog) roughly equal in size to her own volume. She cannot take the shape of any crafted object.

System: One success turns the thaumaturge into the appropriate substance, but keeps her shape the same if the form is a solid one. Two successes allow her to mimic any natural formation of the element, such as a small boulder, pool of water, or chunk of unworked iron. Three or more successes allow her to use her Disciplines while transformed, so long as they do not require eye contact or movement. The power lasts until sunrise, but the thaumaturge may dismiss it at any time.

In elemental form, she cannot move of her own accord and is largely impervious to harm, but take one unsoakable level of bashing damage each turn that the form is disrupted in any significant way. Regardless of the amount of disruption, however, the body will remain coherent. (You cannot put part of a watery thaumaturge in a bucket and carry it away from the rest. The water will seep back to join with the main body.)

••••• Summon Elemental

A master of Potestas Elementorum can summon one of the four classical elementals: a sylph (air), gnome (earth), salamander (fire), or undine (water). Although potentially a powerful ally, elementals are notoriously difficult to control. The Tremere who teach this art tell cautionary tales of summoned elementalsturning on their summoners.

System: In order to manifest an elemental, the thaumaturge must be near some source of the element from which the entity is to be summoned. The process of calling the elemental is separate from that of binding it into service, making it a risky enterprise unless the caster is confident in her knowledge of the arcane arts.

An elemental has a base score of three in all Physical and Mental attributes. For every success on the initial Willpower roll to summon it, the caster may add one dot to one of those attributes. The elemental may also possess other powers at the Storyteller's discretion.

Once she has summoned the elemental, the thaumaturge must roll Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 4 + the number of successes on the summoning roll) to command it. The possible outcomes are as follows:

Botch	The elemental immediately attacks the thaumaturge.
Failure	The elemental either leaves or attacks those nearby, at the Storyteller's discretion.
1 success	The elemental does not attack the thaumaturge.
2 successes	The elemental performs one service in exchange for appropriate payment.
3 successes	The elemental performs one service that is reasonable for its nature.
4 successes	The elemental performs any one task that does not endanger it.
5 successes	The elemental performs any task it is commanded to, even if it takes several nights or puts it at risk.

Potestas Exsecrabilis (The Accursed Power)

When the Tremere were mortal wizards, they considered the common witchcraft of curses and maledictions unworthy of their scholarly attention. Now, however, they have recognized that they need every instrument at their disposal, so they have quickly adapted it for their needs.

The Accursed Power has requirements that other paths do not. First, the thaumaturge must not only be in the presence of the victim of the curse, but must declare it clearly. It need not be in a language that the victim understands, but it must still be forcefully spoken. Second, the thaumaturge requires some part of the victim's being: hair, blood, a nail clipping, or something similar. Finally, the victim can throw off the effect of the curse by making a Willpower roll (difficulty 7 unless otherwise stated), representing her ability to hold fast against the psychological impact of the power.

• Stigma

In a time when the Tremere struggle for political status, the power to weaken their opponents' ability to influence social situations can be as important as any display of raw force. This curse lays an aura of wrongness on the victim, causing those around him to shy away instinctively, regard him with suspicion, or simply find his presence intolerable.

System: The thaumaturge spends a blood point and rolls Willpower as usual. If successful, the target suffers a +2 penalty to all Social actions (rolls involving Charisma, Manipulation, or Appearance) to a maximum increased difficulty of 9. The effect lasts until the next sunset or until the caster decides to lift the curse.

•• Malady

Although Cainites are spared most of the diseases that permeate the Dark Medieval World, this curse allows the caster to simulate their effects. The result can be both physically crippling and psychologically damaging, as the vampire victim is suddenly and powerfully reminded of the mortality she left behind.

System: For every success that the thaumaturge rolls, the target's Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina pools are reduced by one (to a maximum of a three-dice penalty with three successes) for a number of nights equal to the caster's Willpower. Each night, the victim can make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) to shake off the effect; each success reduces the penalty to Physical Attributes by one die until the next night. If she removes all penalties in a single night, the curse is broken.

••• Scapegoat

A refinement of the Stigma curse, Scapegoat causes those who see or otherwise interact with the target to perceive him as a bitter rival or hated enemy. Each person's perceptions are affected differently; the victim becomes whoever that person despises the most. Unlike Mask of a Thousand Faces, the illusion laid by the curse cannot be pierced with Auspex; its method is too new, too unusual, for the common traces to be discernable.

System: For every success that the thaumaturge rolls, the curse lasts for one night. During that time, the victim appears to everyone he encounters as some form of enemy. Although this does not necessarily result in immediate violence, it does tend to prevent the target from interacting in any normal way with those around him.

•••• Corrupt Body

With a malediction against some feature of the target, the thaumaturge invokes this power to cause a painful and specifically directed transformation. It can cause muscles to atrophy, limbs to shiver, faces to warp, or the entire body's frame to grow frail and emaciated. What makes it most fearsome in the eyes of other Cainites who have witnessed its effects is that it can last far longer than other Tremere curses. A few nights' suffering under a Malady is nothing compared to the weeks or months of pain that Corrupt Body can cause.

System: Once the thaumaturge lays the curse and rolls for successes, the target can try to resist by rolling Willpower (difficulty 7), with each success reducing the effective strength of the curse by one. After that, however, there is no chance to undo it unless the caster lifts it voluntarily or the duration has elapsed.

The curse only requires one turn to cast, but the transformation takes three turns to complete. For those three turns, the pain of the change reduces the dice pool for any action the target takes by three. Afterward, for the duration of the curse, the victim's dice pools for all actions are reduced by one (cumulative with wound penalties). In addition, the target has one attribute of the caster's choice — Strength, Dexterity, Stamina, or Appearance — reduced to 1. The duration depends on the number of successes rolled:

1 success	One night
2 successes	One week
3 successes	One month
4 successes	One season
5 successes	One year

••••• Acedia

This powerful curse not only lays a shroud of misfortune on the victim, but also instills such a strong sense of self-loathing and defeat that she may withdraw entirely from the world until its effects have passed. Every thought and action becomes a trial, burdened with doubt and the crushing bleakness of the belief that she will fail.

System: The effects of this curse require a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) to resist. If the target botches the roll and the caster achieved at least three successes in casting it, the curse is permanent. Otherwise, the duration is the same as Corrupt Body.

While under the influence of Acedia, the victim cannot succeed at any task automatically, and is treated as having rolled one botch in every action. (In other words, negate one success in every roll, with no successes meaning a botched result.) Even if she succeeds, the maximum effective result she can achieve is two successes, including additional success from Willpower or other sources.

Potestas Vitae (The Power of Lifeblood)

Understanding and controlling the mysteries of *vitae* was the first task of the Tremere after they joined the ranks of the Damned, and their mastery of this form of Thaumaturgy contributes heavily to their current reputation. While not every thaumaturge studies this path, many other Cainites assume that they do and treat them with appropriate caution.

It will only be much later that the Tremere overcome one of the greatest drawbacks of the Potestas Vitae: the fact that some of its techniques cause the thaumaturge to move closer to being bound by the very blood that he consumes. Any Cainite who successfully discovers a way to solve this problem can expect to be richly rewarded.

• A Taste for Blood

By tasting a single drop of blood, the thaumaturge can divine its origin. If it is *vitae,* the thaumaturge can discern the relative power (Generation) of its source, its freshness (how long it has been since the vampire fed), and concentration (how much blood the vampire holds). If the blood is mortal, he can identify whether or not it is mixed with *vitae*, thereby recognizing ghouls, as well as any blood- or humor-based illnesses affecting the mortal source.

System: The thaumaturge consumes only a single drop of blood, spends a blood point, and rolls as usual. Because of the degree of focus that the power requires, however, even that one drop is enough to move him one step closer to a blood bond with the source, so Tremere are reluctant to use it except on mortals or when absolutely necessary. A single success can determine whether or not *vitae* comes from a vampire of much higher or lower generation than the thaumaturge, with more successes giving more precise information. It takes at least three successes to estimate the concentration of the blood (that is, the size of the source's blood pool), and five successes gives detailed information on all aspects of the *vitae.* When used on mortal blood, one success is enough to recognize extremely ill sources or the admixture of Cainite *vitae.* In the latter case, more successes let the thaumaturge know whether or not the *vitae* is from a source he has tasted before.

•• Blood Awakening

Although intended as a way for Tremere to assist incapacitated brethren in healing their own wounds or

summoning the strength of their blood, this power's side effect—rousing the recipient's Beast to hunger — has already led to some nicknaming it "Blood Rage." By touching the intended target, the thaumaturge can control their ability to use *vitae* for healing or raising their physical attributes, although she cannot trigger the use of Disciplines that require an expenditure of blood points. The control lasts only as long as she maintains physical contact with the target.

System: The thaumaturge spends a blood point and rolls for success as usual after touching the target. Each success forces the target to spend one blood point, either for healing non-aggravated wounds or raising a Physical Attribute, in a manner chosen by the thaumaturge. While under the effect of Blood Awakening, the difficulty for the target to resist frenzy is also increased by the number of successes, possibly triggering frenzy even in situations that would not otherwise do so.

••• Inner Vessel

Through a form of internal alchemy, a thaumaturge can use this power to temporarily concentrate his *vitae* to act as that of a vampire of an older generation. Although it is not a total transformation of the blood, it does allow the user to channel some of his gifts more effectively.

System: After expending a blood point and rolling for success, the vampire can divide successes between effectively lowering his generation by one per success or giving the effect a duration of one hour per success. If no successes are put towards duration, the effect only lasts for one turn. The temporary alteration affects the vampire's ability to use Dominate, the number of blood points he can spend in one turn, trait maximums, and the number of blood points his body can hold. It affects neither the generation of any childer created while under its effect or the result of any diablerie during the duration; both of those acts take effect as normal.

•••• Theft of Vitae

This power allows the thaumaturge to force blood from a target up to fifty feet away and draw it into herself as if she had consumed it directly. The blood bursts from the target's mouth and pores, arcs across the intervening space, and is immediately absorbed by the caster. Mortals can be severely injured by the theft; vampires can be deprived of their *vitae.*

System: After spending a blood point and rolling as usual, the thaumaturge drains one blood point from the target for every success and adds them to her own blood pool. Blood points in excess of what the caster could usually hold are wasted in a splash of blood around her feet. Mortals who are the targets of the power take one level of lethal damage per success. Cainites take no damage, but still lose the appropriate number of blood points. Consuming the stolen blood causes the thaumaturge to move closer to a blood bond with the target, just as if she drank it directly from the source.

••••• Cauldron of Blood

Lacking the subtlety of the Assamites' power to poison blood, the Cauldron of Blood is no less effective in its results. With a touch, the thaumaturge causes a target's blood, whether mortal or *vitae,* to burn from inside, causing serious injury.

System: The thaumaturge must touch the target in addition to the other usual requirements of the power. In combat, or with an unwilling target, this could require a Dexterity + Brawl roll. A single success is enough to kill a mortal. Against a vampire, each success causes one level of aggravated damage and destroys one blood point.

Thaumaturgical Rituals

Thaumaturgical rituals are meticulously researched formulae prepared to produce powerful effects. Though less versatile than paths, rituals are better suited to specific ends, as their effects are singular and straightforward. By growing in strength through the arcane practice of blood magic, the caster gains the capacity to manipulate these focused effects.

Thaumaturgical rituals fall into two categories: general and clan-specific. General rituals may be learned and acquired by any sorcerer meeting the minimum criteria of thaumaturgical aptitude and training. Clan rituals are jealously guarded secrets that are never shared with those not belonging to the clan or bloodline harboring its mysteries.

Each level of a thaumaturgical ritual corresponds to both the level of Thaumaturgy mastery the caster must possess and the relative power of the ritual itself. Unless otherwise noted, casting rituals requires the expenditure of one blood point, five minutes per level to cast, and a successful Intelligence + Occult roll, for which the difficulty equals 3 + the level of the ritual (maximum 9). Rituals sometimes require special ingredients or reagents to work, which are stated in each ritual's description. Only a single success is required for a ritual to work, though certain spells may require further successes or have variable effects based on the caster's roll. Should a roll to activate a ritual fail or botch, the Storyteller is encouraged to create strange and malicious occurrences or side effects.

All thaumaturges have the ability to use rituals, though each individual ritual must be learned separately. At the

first level of Thaumaturgy, a sorcerer learns a single Level One ritual. To acquire more rituals, the thaumaturge must either find a tutor or learn the ritual from a scroll, tome, or other archive. Learning a ritual can take anywhere from a few nights (Level One ritual) to months or years (Level Five ritual). Some diligent mystics have studied individual rituals for decades or even centuries.

General Rituals

Level One

Ambrus Kelemen's Aegis

This ritual was a primary source of protection against the Tzimisce during the nascent clan's ascension. The ritualist crafts a bauble, a piece of jewelry, and wears it until expended. The bauble contains charges equal to the vampire's Thaumaturgy rating. Charges can be expended for additional dice added to any roll to detect surprise, or to any soak dice pool against bashing or lethal damage. A character may only have one Aegis enchanted at a time, but may give it to another character.

Blood Contract

This ritual creates an unbreakable agreement between two or more parties who sign it. The contract must be written in the caster's blood and signed in the blood of whoever applies their name to the document. Those signing the document permanently lose an amount of points from their blood pool maximum, which returned to individuals on a singular basis upon completion of the specific terms corresponding to them in the contract. If the document is destroyed before completion of the terms, the signatories can never regain the invested blood points from their maximum pool.

Defense of the Sacred Haven

This ritual filters any sunlight entering an enclosure into harmless moonlight, rendering Cainites within immune to any harm or Rötschreck the sunlight would normally cause. This ritual must be cast within an enclosed space, such as a single room or a cave. It requires one hour to perform and lasts as long as the caster stays within the confines of the space.

This is a Haven Ritual *(see Dedicate the Haven on p. 310)*

Deflection of Wooden Doom

This ritual requires one hour to perform and the placement of a wooden splinter under the caster's tongue. Whether or not the caster is resting or active, the first stake that would pierce her heart disintegrates in the attacker's hand, along with the splinter. A stake merely held near, or by, the caster is unaffected; the stake must be actively used to impale the caster. If the splinter is removed, the ritual is nullified. The caster may not create multiple splinters in advance.

Domino of Life

For one entire night, the caster can display all traits associated with being a living human, including eating, breathing, body temperature, and flesh tone. By casting this ritual, she can even circumvent a clan weakness or Road restriction normally preventing her from achieving these characteristics. This ritual does not restore life back to the caster; it merely allows her to appear alive. Domino of Life requires fifteen minutes to cast. For the remainder of the evening, the vampire must carry a vial of fresh human blood on her person to maintain the façade.

Encrypt/Decrypt Missive

This ritual must be cast separately for every page, sheet, or surface that the caster wants to either decipher or encrypt.

To encrypt a document, the caster composes it in his blood and speaks the name of the person he wishes to read it. Only the writer and the person to whom it is addressed can understand the text. The writing simply appears as gibberish to any others who observe the letter.

To decrypt a document not addressed to the caster or translate one written in an unfamiliar tongue, the caster lets a drop of his blood fall onto the page he wishes to comprehend. He then meditates for ten minutes. The player receives a number of extra dice on all rolls to translate, decode, or comprehend the work in question equal to the number of successes he rolled to enact the ritual. This does not actually change the page that it affects; it merely allows the caster to read it. The difficulty to decrypt documents encoded through this ritual is 6 + the number of successes rolled to enact the ritual (maximum difficulty 9).

Illuminate the Trail of Prey

This ritual causes the path of the subject's passing to illuminate with a glow only the caster can see. For this ritual to take effect, the caster burns a small object, such as a scrap of clothing or a letter, which has been in the subject's possession for a minimum of 24 hours. The caster must have a mental picture or the name of her prey. Thereafter, the individual's wake glows with a brightness dependent on how long it has been since he passed that way – old tracks glow faintly, while fresh tracks blaze brightly. This ritual only functions if the target utilizes land-based travel (foot, horse, carriage etc.). The trail comes to an end if the target wades through or immerses himself in water, or if he reaches the destination of his journey.

Purity of Flesh

This ritual slowly purges the caster of all foreign physical impurities. Dirt, alcohol, drugs, poison, and disease, weapons impaling the vampire, body piercings lodged in the flesh, and tattoo ink are all equally affected. Items thus expunged fall to the ground beneath the caster or sweat out of her skin. Purity of Flesh does not remove mystical mental enchantments or compulsions. This ritual requires one hour of calm meditation to enact.

Wake with Evening's Freshness

If any potentially harmful circumstances occur, the caster immediately rises, during any time of day, ready to face the problem. This ritual requires one hour of preparation during which the caster spreads ashes from a burnt rooster over the area where he intends to rest immediately before he slumbers for the day. Any interruption to the ceremony renders the ritual ineffective. If awakened during the day, the caster may ignore the rule limiting his dice pools to his Road rating for the remainder of the scene.

Level Two

Blood Walk

The caster may trace the subject Cainite's lineage and currently active Blood Oaths. This ritual requires one blood point from the subject and three hours to cast, with each success reducing the casting time by 15 minutes. The caster learns the subject's Generation and clan or bloodline, and each success allows the caster to "see back" one Generation, giving the caster a mental image of the face of the subject's ancestors. With three successes, the caster learns the identities of all parties with whom the subject shares a blood bond, either as regnant or thrall.

Commune with Cainite

By enacting this ritual, a caster may join minds with another Cainite, speaking telepathically with her over any distance. The caster must meditate for ten minutes over a physical token once owned by the other Cainite to create the connection. The communication may be maintained for one scene, or until either party ends the conversation.

Donning the Mask of Shadows

This ritual renders its subject's form translucent and smoky while muffling the sounds of her footsteps. The caster may include a number of subjects in the ritual equal to the caster's Wits rating. Donning the Mask of Shadows requires five minutes to cast for each individual benefiting from its effects. To detect a subject under the effects of this ritual, the observer must succeed in a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 5 + the caster's Stealth rating, up to a maximum difficulty of 9). Detection is automatic if an observer currently has a power activated (such as Auspex) sufficient enough to penetrate the Obfuscate power Mask of a Thousand Faces. Mask of Shadows lasts a number of hours equal to the amount of successes on the casting roll, or until the caster voluntarily lowers it.

This is a Gargoyle Ritual *(see Enchant Talisman on p. 309)*.

Flaming Weapon

This ritual affects only weapons usable by humans; it does not affect boulders or siege weaponry. The caster must cut the palm of her hand using the weapon (or a sharp object if the weapon has no edge) inflicting one level of unsoakable lethal damage; the player spends three blood points. If the ritual succeeds, the weapon is sheathed in a green, heatless flame that does not provoke Rötschreck. The flame can be obscured by covering it, and will not ignite other objects. The weapon inflicts aggravated damage for a number of strikes equal to the successes rolled. A wielder cannot choose whether a strike inflicts normal or aggravated damage, though the weapon must hit an object to deplete one of its charges. If a charged wooden melee weapon stakes a vampire, he suffers one level of aggravated damage per number of remaining successes left in the weapon, thus draining it of all charges. Enchanted missiles retain their magic for only one attack; each success scored in casting adds one extra die to the weapon's damage. Only one casting of Flaming Weapon can be active on any given weapon; the charges on the weapon must be depleted before the ritual can be cast on the weapon again.

Extinguish

This ritual allows the caster to douse flames up to the size of a bonfire. To enact this ritual, the caster pinches out a candle's flame (provoking a roll for Rötschreck) while spitting on the floor. For the duration of the evening, the caster can speak a magical syllable to extinguish a number of fires equal to the amount of successes scored on the casting roll.

Witness of Whispers

This ritual creates a scrying device which can be used to either observe enemies and events from a position of relative safety or hear sounds over a great distance. The ritual requires a three-inch pin, a length of thread, the claw of a raven, three points of the caster's vitae, a container, and one healthy human ear or eye (one or the other, but not both). The caster sews the eye or ear to the claw, and then seals the device in a container of her

vitae. After a week has passed, the device animates and can now be placed in any location the caster wishes to survey from a distance. The claw allows the Witness of Whispers limited mobility and the ability to secure to any surface. To see or hear through the device, the user concentrates for five minutes and spends one blood point. Once a connection has been established, the caster may mentally move the device one foot per turn at will. For as long as the caster wishes, the device takes over her visual or auditory perceptions (depending on if she used an eye or an ear to create the device); instead of what stands before her, she sees or hears what the device sees or hears, but uses her own Perception. A Witness of Whispers has one health level and one dot in each Physical Attribute. The caster may deactivate the Witness of Whispers at will and may reactivate it anytime through following the above steps. It remains potent until destroyed,

Cure of the Homeland

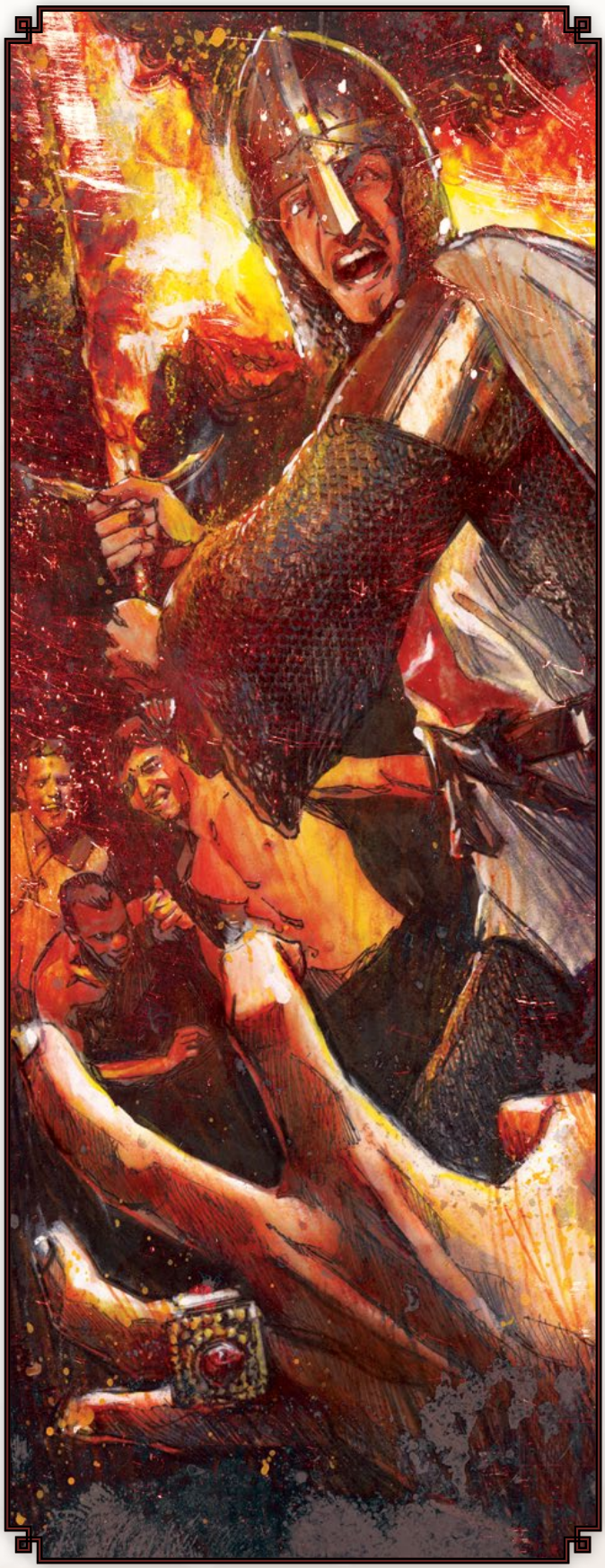
The caster may make a healing paste by mixing a handful of dirt from the city or town of his Embrace with two points of his immortal blood. One handful can be used per night and heals one aggravated wound.

Summon Guardian Spirit

The caster summons a spirit for the express purpose of guarding him. The spirit serves the caster for 24 hours and aids in no other way except to alert the caster to danger. Though the spirit cannot speak, the caster is often jarred (and awakened if at rest) by a sudden and strong intuitive sense when something is amiss. The spirit is only visible to the caster or those capable of seeing it through supernatural perception, such as Auspex. The spirit only appears during times of danger, staring at the caster while pointing in the threat's direction.

Ward

By invoking this ritual, the caster creates a ward that prevents unwanted trespassers from entering a location or handling an item. Wards can be cast on objects or enclosed spaces, such as a hallway or a portcullis arch, but only one ward may be cast on a particular object or space at any given time. The caster spends an hour ceremonially preparing the area or object to be warded, followed by plucking a hair from her head and snapping it in half. With a successful casting roll, a warded object or space cannot be moved or breached even slightly by a subject who does not meet the minimum requirement as set by the caster. All wards are tied to a single Attribute chosen by the caster when she enacts the ritual. In order to pick



up a warded object or cross into a warded room, a subject must possess dots in the particular Attribute equal to or higher than the level of the Ward. Trait ratings for Wards begin at 2, as a level two ritual. Casting a ritual Ward at a higher level increases the trait rating proportionate to the level of the ritual cast. For example, a level three Ward has a minimum trait rating of 3 tied to a particular Attribute chosen by the caster when enacted. No one possessing a trait rating lower than 3 in the Attribute tied to the Ward may enter the premises or pick up the object the ward has been cast on. If she so desires, the caster may designate a password that, when mentally intoned while touching the Ward, allows others to bypass its minimum Attribute requirement. Wards last for a number of weeks equal to the amount of successes scored on the casting roll.

At the cost of one Willpower point per attempt, a subject prevented from interacting with a warded object or space may roll Willpower as an extended action (difficulty equal to 4 + the level of the ward), requiring an amount of successes equal to the caster's Thaumaturgy rating to break an individual ward. A broken ward is accompanied by the sound of shattered glass, which the caster can hear regardless of her location. Thereafter, the ward is completely nullified and any may interact freely with the object or within the space.

This is a Haven Ritual *(see Dedicate the Haven on p. 310)*.

Level Three

Animated Assistants

This ritual allows the intrepid caster to animate temporary servants. The caster slices open her arm and flicks one blood point while incanting for five minutes for every ten feet of space. The ritual lasts one night per success rolled, animating whatever items happen to be lying around, such as rocks, glass beakers, dissection tools, quill pens, or books. All of the animated objects are intuitively linked to the caster's subconscious. Any tool the caster needs readies itself within reach of the caster or accomplishes minor tasks for her, like note taking, cleaning, sewing, grinding ingredients in a mortar and pestle, etc. However, these objects cannot physically attack or defend the caster.

This is a Haven Ritual *(see Dedicate the Haven on p. 310)*.

Bind the Familiar

Though the Blood Oath is far easier than ritual binding (allowing Cainites to transform mortals and beasts into ghouls with a draught of vitae), some thaumaturges yearn for more enlightened companionship. Beginning at dusk, the caster paints a circle of sigils in fresh human blood, finishing the last symbol at the stroke of midnight. The caster drains a beast intended to host a familiar spirit entirely of blood, then feeds it vitae in a parody of the Embrace while incanting. If the ritual succeeds, a familiar spirit is drawn to the animal and captured within the confines of the warding circle; it eventually succumbs to its new body as the ritual fuses it with the beast to restore the animal to full health. The familiar spirit may resent its bondage at first, but it can be mollified with good treatment. A familiar is identical to its animal counterpart in every way (use the statistics for the type of animal chosen, found on p. 396), but has the following additional characteristics:

- It is immune to the Blood Oath, mental or social compulsion of a supernatural nature (such as Animalism), and may not be made into a ghoul.
- It gains one additional dot of Intelligence, possessing roughly the same intellectual capability as a 10-year-old child.
- It may verbally speak the native language of its master and communicate telepathically with him, regardless of the distance separating them.
- Pain (though not actual damage) is mutually felt by and shared between the caster and the familiar.
- The caster may spend one blood point to adopt the perceptions of the familiar at the expense of his own, allowing his consciousness to reside within its body and experiencing through its senses.
- All familiars are loyal as if bound by the Blood Oath, and so long as they are properly fed their normal diet, they never age and remain perfectly healthy. At Storyteller discretion, casters may increase the strength of a familiar as a Background through spending their own experience points to improve the creature's statistics.

Incorporeal Passage

This ritual renders the caster completely immaterial, making her invulnerable to physical attacks and capable of walking through walls, passing through closed doors, and escaping physical bondage such as ropes or manacles. This ritual requires six hours of preparation and a full-length mirror capable of reflecting the caster from head to toe. Upon completion of the ritual, the caster steps through the mirror, becoming insubstantial until he walks through the mirror a second time or the next sunrise. If the mirror is smashed while the caster is incorporeal, he fractures into a shower of shards identical to those of the mirror, destroying him instantly. While incorporeal, the caster may fly or hover at his regular movement speed, but may not interact with

the physical world in any way. Additionally, he gains the Flaw Cast No Reflection (found on p. 426) for the ritual's duration. Once the ritual ends, the caster rematerializes in whatever location he may be at the time, and once again becomes subject to the physical laws of nature. Cautionary tales warn of reckless thaumaturges becoming trapped in walls or imprisoned in sealed chambers when the ritual ends when they weren't paying proper attention to time.

Mirror of Second Sight

The caster bathes an ordinary mirror (no less than four inches/six centimeters wide and no more than 18 inches/50 cm in length) in a small quantity of his blood while reciting a ritual incantation that takes one hour to complete. Thereafter, the mirror reflects images of other supernatural creatures' true forms – werewolves appear in their hybrid man-wolf shapes, mages glow in a scintillating nimbus, wraiths become visible, subjects under the guise of Obfuscate can be seen, illusions cast no reflection, and those possessed of True Faith are wreathed clouds of golden light. The mirror retains its powers for a number for nights equal to the successes scored on the initial casting roll.

This is a Gargoyle Ritual (see Enchant Talisman on p. 309).

Scry the Hearthstone

With this ritual, the caster or a subject whom she casts it on becomes linked with a haven (up to the size of a small castle). The subject may detect intruders of any sort, even if they are out of sight or under the veil of Obfuscate or similar powers. The ritual takes an entire night to complete and involves continuous incantation in conjunction with marking the subject's vitae at the cardinal boundaries of the haven, followed by the caster expending a point of Willpower to activate the effects. When completed, the subject gains an innate sense of the location and approximate size and physical condition of all living or unliving beings within the structure. To pinpoint an individual's location, the player rolls Perception + Awareness (difficulty 6); if the target is attempting to hide, she contests with a Wits + Stealth roll (difficulty 6), and whoever achieves the most successes is the victor. Regardless of the subject's success or failure on the roll, she knows there is someone present, even if she cannot see the individual in question. To detect intruders employing magical or supernatural abilities of concealment such as Obfuscate, the subject must possess and have supernatural perception (such as Auspex) of her own activated at the time (see "Seeing the Unseen" sidebar on p. 195). Scry the Hearthstone lasts for a number of weeks equal to the successes scored on the initial casting roll and is only tied to the location associated with the casting.

This is both a Gargoyle and a Haven Ritual (see Enchant Talisman on p. 309 and Dedicate the Haven on p. 310).

Shaft of Belated Quiescence

The stake for this ritual must be carved of rowan wood, coated with three blood points of the caster's blood, and blackened in an oak-wood fire. The ritual may be cast on other wooden impaling weapons, such as spears, arrows, and practice swords, provided they are made of rowan wood. The ritual takes five hours to enact, minus thirty minutes per success on the ritual roll. Attacks and damage with a Shaft of Belated Quiescence are performed with normal staking rules, but the attacker need only gain enough successes to do at least one health level of damage, as the attack does not need to target the heart. If at least one health level of damage is inflicted after the target rolls to soak, the shaft's tip breaks off and begins working its way through the victim's flesh to his heart. The Storyteller makes an extended roll once per turn, using the caster's Thaumaturgy rating (difficulty 9). Successes represent the tip's progress toward the victim's heart and are added to the successes scored in the initial attack. When the shaft accumulates a total of 15 successes, the tip reaches the victim's heart, paralyzing Cainites or instantly killing mortals and ghouls. Attempts to surgically remove the tip of the shaft can be made once per turn with an extended Dexterity + Medicine roll (difficulty 7). The surgeon must accumulate a number of successes equal to those currently held by the shaft in order to remove the tip. Each individual surgery roll that scores less than three successes inflicts an additional unsoakable level of lethal damage on the patient.

The shaft remains potent for a number of nights equal to the successes scored on the initial casting roll.

Level Four

Animated Weapon

This ritual allows the caster to animate a weapon for future use. The caster collects the skin of a scavenger animal that nourishes itself on the dead. The caster then binds the skin around the weapon in wax-sealed nightshade twine, requiring 12 hours to cast, minus one hour per success. When the binding is torn off, the weapon leaps to life, animating itself and attacking whomever the wielder verbally commands it to during the same turn. An Animated Weapon has the following qualities:

- The weapon has an effective life of five combat turns per success rolled on its creation.
- The weapon's attack dice pool is equal to the caster's Wits + Occult, and its damage dice pool equal to the caster's Thaumaturgy rating. The weapon always aims for the heart (difficulty 9). If the weapon is wooden, use the staking rules (p. 348) to judge its success.

Three successes on a Dexterity roll (difficulty 8) are required to remove animated wooden splinters from a victim's heart without leaving behind any shards.

- The weapon's maximum movement rate is 30 yards/meters per turn, and it may only perform actions to attack or move toward its target. The weapon cannot dodge or split its dice pool to perform multiple attacks.
- The weapon has three health levels, and the difficulty of attacks directed against it are increased by threedue to its spastic movement patterns.

Candle of Haunting

On a Friday night, the caster creates a black candle incorporating the brains and bones of a dead man with nine pinches of cemetery dirt. By burning the candle for 20 minutes each night while clutching and concentrating on an item that once belonged to the target, the caster plagues the victim with poltergeist-like activity such as thrown objects or furniture that moves to trip her. The candle is large enough to burn for a number of 20-minute periods equal to the caster's successes on the casting roll. Each 20-minute increment costs the caster one blood point. A single success will set the poltergeist against the victim for 24 hours. The poltergeist has an Intimidation and a Fright rating of 4 each (each Fright point adds one die to attempts to scare), Strength 2, and a dice pool of 4 for its pranks and attacks. In order to scare the target, the poltergeist must make a contested roll using its Fright rating + Intimidation against the victim's Self-Control or Instinct + Courage. With five or more successes, the target's hair turns white and if mortal, she may very well have a heart attack. The poltergeist tries to cause serious harm at least once every night that it harasses the target, using whatever props it finds on hand. If the ghostly force shoves the target while she walks down a steep flight of stairs or throws something while she rides a horse or steers a carriage, the target is likely to be seriously injured.

Firewalker

This ritual imbues the caster or a subject of his choosing with an unnatural resistance to the bane of all vampires, fire. To enact the ritual, the caster must cut off the end of one of his or the subject's fingers and burn it in a Thaumaturgical circle that takes ten minutes to consecrate. To relent to the injury, the subject must roll her Willpower (difficulty 6), and the removal of the finger causes no damage. This ritual lasts one night and grants the caster or subject immunity to Rötschreck provoked by flame and five extra dice to soak fire (on top of any Fortitude the subject possesses).

This is a Gargoyle Ritual *(see Enchant Talisman on p. 309)*.

Heart of Stone

The heart of a caster or subject under the effect of this ritual is transmuted to solid rock, rendering it virtually impervious to staking. However, while this ritual is in effect the caster or subject's emotional capacity and ability to relate to others becomes almost nonexistent. The following conditions last while the ritual is in effect:

- Conscience and Empathy scores drop to zero.
- All dice pools are halved for Social rolls not involving Intimidation, including Disciplines.
- The character loses access to all Merits she possesses that pertain to positive social interaction.
- The difficulty to use any supernatural emotional influence (such as Presence) on her is increased by three.

This ritual can be cast on oneself or a willing subject and requires nine hours (reduced by one hour for every success). The caster or subject lies naked on a flat stone surface and places a bare candle over his heart, which burns down to nothing over the course of the ritual (causing one aggravated health level of damage). At the end of the ritual, the caster or subject's heart hardens to stone, making the character impervious to the effects of staking and granting a number of additional dice equal to twice the character's Stamina rating to soak any attack that aims for his heart. Heart of Stone lasts as long as the caster wishes it to.

This is a Gargoyle Ritual *(see Enchant Talisman on p. 309)*.

Invisible Chains of Binding

This ritual allows the caster to create a supernatural force that holds a target immobile with invisible and intangible chains. The caster must make bold hand gestures, but no material component is required, and the caster may perform the ritual instantaneously. The target may try to move, but the chains require the target score two successes in one turn on a Strength (plus Potence, if any) roll (difficulty 8) to break. A number of targets equal to the caster's Occult rating may be chained through the ritual.

Scry

This ritual causes a body of water stained with black ink, a black-tinted mirror, or a dark, rounded, highly polished stone to become a scrying device, able to center on an item that bears his psychic impression, or on a person or location. The object used for the scrying can be no smaller than a foot in diameter or larger than a well.

The caster is able to see and hear as if she was personally there, similar to the Auspex power of Far Sense (see p. 198), with the following exceptions:

- The caster cannot use additional Auspex powers through the ritual.
- If used to center on a person, the caster must have a personal item belonging to the individual in his possession.
- If a location is the center of the Scrying, it cannot be changed for the duration of the ritual.
- This ritual lasts for a number of hours equal to the number of successes for the casting; the caster only has to concentrate during this duration to view scenes through the water.

Level Five

Abandon the Fetters

This ritual completely eliminates the Blood Oath from a subject. The caster must have unrestricted access to the subject, as well as a sample of blood from the regnant (if the caster happens to be the subject or regnant, no additional blood is needed). The ritual requires an entire evening, and during the course of the ritual, the regnant's blood within the subject evaporates in a hissing, scalding steam that inflicts five health levels of unsoakable aggravated damage over the course of the night. If the ritual succeeds, the subject loses a dot of Willpower, but the Blood Oath atrophies immediately. However, this offers no protection against the formation of another Blood Oath.

Enchant Talisman

This ritual allows the caster to enchant a personal magic item to act as an amplifier of her will and thaumaturgical might. The physical appearance of a talisman varies, but it must be a rigid object. A caster may only have one talisman at a time and cannot transfer ownership of a talisman to someone else. This ritual requires six hours per night for one complete cycle of the moon, beginning and ending on the new moon. The player spends one blood point per night and once a week makes an extended roll of Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 8), spending one Willpower per roll to gain an automatic success; if a night's work is missed or if the four extended rolls do not accumulate at least 20 net successes, the talisman is ruined. A completed talisman gives the caster several advantages:

- When the character is holding her talisman, the difficulty of all magical effects that target her increases by one. This does not affect helpful effects or rituals the caster uses on herself.
- The player receives two extra dice when rolling for uses of the character's primary Thaumaturgy path and one extra die when rolling for the character's ritual castings.
- If the talisman is used as a weapon, it gives the player an additional die for attack rolls and two additional dice for damage rolls.
- If the caster is separated from her talisman, a successful Perception + Occult roll (difficulty 7) gives her its location.

Gargoyle Rituals

Tremere thaumaturges may cast Enchant Talisman onto a Gargoyle to permanently enchant it with a specific ritual she knows. Gargoyles enchanted by use of this ritual do not possess the additional features of normal talismans. Thaumaturges may only enchant Gargoyles with rituals indicated as Gargoyle Rituals in their description. To accomplish this feat requires six hours per night, and one week per level of the ritual; otherwise, enchanting a Gargoyle follows the normal rules for Enchant Talisman. Once successfully cast, a ritual permanently enchanted onto a Gargoyle becomes inherent to him, like a Discipline. The ritual may be immediately activated, deactivated, and reactivated at will by the Gargoyle spending one blood point if no other trait, such as Willpower, or no amount of blood greater than one point is called for in the ritual's description. If the ritual is tied to a specific item, it is instead tied to the Gargoyle itself rather than the item. For example, a Gargoyle activating Mirror of Second Sight does not require a mirror; he need simply activate the ritual and gaze at a target to perceive its true form. A Gargoyle invoking Scry the Hearthstone may utilize the effects of the ritual on any dwelling by directly touching it and spending a point of Willpower.

Rituals activated by a Gargoyle require no roll to cast and last a scene or until dismissed. Gargoyles may learn enchantments from other Gargoyles at a cost equal to that of an out-of-clan Discipline of the same level as the ritual.

- The talisman allows her to forego any casting times for rituals she knows of level four or less.
- If a talisman is in the possession of another individual, it gives that individual three additional dice to roll when using any form of magical effect against the talisman's owner.

Escape to a True Haven

This ritual allows the caster to teleport safely to a personal haven from any distance. The ritual requires the construction of a permanent yard-wide circle charred into the bare ground or floor of the chosen haven, which takes six hours a night for six nights to complete, reduced by one night for every two successes on the ritual rolls. Each night requires the sacrifice of three of the caster's own blood points, which are used to retrace the circle. The nights need not be consecutive, but the magic requires time to set and construction cannot be sped up by taking twelve hours in one night. Once the circle is complete, the caster may attempt transport at any time and the circle may be reused indefinitely, as long as it is unmarred. To teleport, the caster spends one point of Willpower and speaks the command word to instantly transport herself from her current location back to the circle. If she chooses, the caster may take a maximum amount of "cargo" up to what her Strength rating allows and a number of subjects equal to her Occult rating. Any additional subjects teleporting with her must touch her to make the journey.

Stone Slumber

This ritual protects the caster by turning him into solid stone. The caster must begin this ritual exactly one hour before sunrise and swallow a pint of small rocks while remaining completely still in an open area facing east. When the first rays of the rising sun strike him, the caster's body turns to unbreakable magical stone. If successful, the caster is completely protected from all physical damage, including flame and heat. While in this form, the caster's mind is dormant; he is completely oblivious to his surroundings and cannot wake up – Telepathy and other mental Disciplines are useless. The ritual lasts until 10 minutes after the following sunset, and waking the following evening costs the caster an additional blood point.

This is a Gargoyle Ritual *(see Enchant Talisman on p. 309)*.

Dedicate the Haven

The havens of thaumaturges often house arcane documents, special resources, and other major assets. To defend them, thaumaturges frequently cast Wards over a site. Dedicate the Haven cements this process. The caster must take a minimum of one hour to walk a counterclockwise circle around the entire haven grounds while carrying a smoking thurible that contains a burning mixture of her blood, frankincense, and sage. Once complete, the thaumaturge must return to the rough center of her haven and douse herself with the remainder of the blood. A dedication covers a single building, and a complex of homes or an estate and grounds may require several castings to ensure proper protection. Once dedicated, a haven is open to more defenses; any Haven Ritual (specified as such in the description of individual rituals) cast upon it is rendered permanent and has its casting difficulty decreased by three.

Clan-Specific Thaumaturgical Rituals

Assamite Rituals

Level Four: Return of the Heart

Cainites targeted by this ritual have the portion of their soul that has been slowly dying returned to them. Invoking this power requires a quantity of the target's blood and takes five minutes to cast. If successful, the target becomes temporarily governed by the Hierarchy of Sins for the Road of Humanity as if she had a Road rating of 9, forcing the Cainite to perform Degeneration tests and be overwhelmed with guilt for the most minor of deeds. This does not actually impart a Road of Humanity rating of 9 to the target; the subject still has the Road rating that she normally would have, but is no longer inured to the cruelties of the world. This power lasts for one hour per success on the ritual roll.

Level Five: Rite of Marduk Slain and Risen

The sorcerer makes contact with a vizier, who names a victim that a warrior intends to diablerize. The sorcerer then takes part in a one-hour group ceremony with three other participants who know the ritual. All don robes and masks to ceremonially re-enact the myth of Marduk; taking the parts of Marduk, Ea, Sarpanitu, and the chaos dragon, Tiamat. If successful, and the beneficiary diablerizes his specified target before the next sunrise, the victim's sire, all of the sire's and the victim's childer, and any vampire holding a Blood Oath with the victim share her final sensations as she perishes. Each affected subject loses one blood point and three Willpower points, which go to the diablerist (this cannot exceed Trait maximums). If the diablerist's blood pool and Willpower are full, the remainder goes to the vizier, and following that, to the sorcerer. Furthermore, all of these collateral targets lose one point of Willpower for every ten minutes they spend in the presence of the diablerist, the vizier, or the sorcerer due to suffering flashbacks of the original victim's demise. This effect lasts for 13 nights.

Follower of Set Rituals

Level Three: Displacement of the Pneuma

This ritual takes twenty minutes to perform and requires a mortal victim restrained upright on a flat surface, as well as an animal (such as a goat or pig) tethered nearby. The witch cuts her wrist and ritually "slays" the prisoner by drawing a dull blade across his throat (doing no damage), while allowing the blood to gush from her wrist down the victim's chest. The ritual only works if the victim is unaware of the trickery and momentarily believes his own throat has been slashed. At this moment, the witch shouts a word of power as loudly as she can into the victim's ear. If successful, she shocks the victim's soul out of his body and into that of the animal. The victim lives the rest of the animal's lifespan trapped in its body; lacking in the animal's instincts, he may be ill-equipped to survive. A semblance of the victim's intellect, shorn of memory, desire or Willpower, remains in the human body. The soulless being is suggestible and follows the witch's instructions, so long as they require no interpretation. Without volition, the thrall doesn't seek its own basic survival and will perish of thirst if not ordered to drink.

Level Five: Cheat the Scale of Hades

This ritual allows a witch to remove the heart (as well other vital organs) from his body entirely and wraps his flesh in a protective cocoon. This ritual takes three hours to complete and can only be performed on oneself in the dark of the night, either after the moon has set, before it has risen, or during the new moon. The player makes an extended Dexterity + Medicine roll (difficulty 7). Each roll represents an hour of activity, and the ritual ends in failure if the moon or sun rises before the player achieves the necessary successes (five to remove a heart, twelve to achieve the mummified form). Any vampire who witnesses the process is subject to Rötschreck (difficulty 6). Once the witch has removed his heart, liver, and brain, he falls into a sort of torpor. His vitae and undead flesh combine to wrap him in a dry, scaly shroud that leaves a small opening around his mouth, but is otherwise nearly impenetrable. A witch so preserved may remain in stasis indefinitely, and the enshrouded vampire is virtually impervious to harm as if under the effects of Stone Slumber (p. 310). However, the extracted organs are extremely vulnerable, especially the heart. Destroying an organ causes an unsoakable level of aggravated damage to the vampire, while exposing the heart to sunlight or burning it instantly destroys the vampire in a terrible immolation. Only feeding the witch his removed organs can awaken him. After ingesting his organs, it takes one minute for the cocoon around him to crumble to dust and an hour for him to rise.

It is possible to undertake this ritual only partially, stopping with the removal of the heart. Indeed, it is also possible to perform the first part of this ritual upon another Cainite. A vampire is perfectly able to move about without a heart, and as an added benefit, she becomes immune to standard staking or diablerie. Due to the heart being the seat of emotion, the difficulty of all rolls to resist frenzy are two lower. However, if an enemy gains possession of her heart (or if the heart is removed by the witch) the vampire is in dire straits. Not only does it provide a powerful ritual connection to the vampire, but a simple flame or glint of sunlight upon the heart destroys the Cainite outright. In addition, driving a stake through the heart forces her into torpor, and any Cainite drinking more than two blood points from it passes straight to the heart's blood, reducing the difficulty for diablerie to 7.

Tremere Rituals

Level One: Rite of Introduction

The Tremere use this ritual as the formal method of presentation for arrivals in a new city, though it is also possible to use this ritual to request aid. The caster boils a handful of ground tamarisk root and a drop of galangal oil in a pot of rainwater, and then recites a short incantation into the vapors that form over the pot. She then speaks a brief thirty-second message, which is telepathically communicated first to the regent and then to the other clan members in the city, according to their place in the hierarchy. The ritual allows the regent to reply telepathically and engage in a five-minute conversation with the caster, if he so desires.

Level Four: Soul of the Homunculus

A homunculus is a tiny creature crafted out of the caster's blood and tissue which acts as an extension of the caster's will. Crafting a homunculus takes five hours of uninterrupted work, and requires the Tremere to self-inflict two health levels of unsoakable aggravated damage and succeed at a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) to relent to the damage. The hideous entity takes shape within a cauldron of bubbling morass containing a mixture of oil, blood, denuded bone, and chunks of the caster's body. Should the ritual succeed, the homunculus crawls forth from its fatty birthing caul within the cauldron. Homunculi have the following qualities:

- The homunculus has two health levels and two dots in each Physical Attribute. Sunlight and fire damage it in identical fashion to a Cainite, and it must be fed one blood point each week or it will wither and die.



- The homunculus can move about freely under its own power, but it works much like a limb of the creator and acts according to its master's orders, which may be issued nonverbally as long as it is in its creator's presence.
- A homunculus is a separate physical entity and does not count as an arcane connection, nor do its bodily fluids count as its creator's blood. Establishing a psychic connection to a homunculus instead projects into the consciousness of its controller.
- Though wholly loyal, the personality of a homunculus originates from the worst qualities of its creator. More than one unnerved Tremere has discovered his homunculus playing malicious pranks behind his back.

A Tremere may have only one homunculus at a time, and many types of homunculi exist. The most common are flyers (which resemble tiny winged demons), grubs (which look like worms with their master's faces), and hoppers (small, bald, imp-like entities with their casters' features reduced to miniature).

Combination Disciplines

Combination Disciplines allow a vampire to blend the effects of multiple Discipline powers into a single, unique ability. In the case of higher Generation vampires, this allows them to craft divergent powers from their normally available few. For lower Generation vampires, this means combining phenomenal powers into highly specific, highly devastating effects.

Characters may develop their own Combination Disciplines, or learn them from others. Some Combination Disciplines are taught within specific Roads, bloodlines, or cults. Often, these powers offer their owners custom edges that they'll defend fervently. For example, if a Road member shares one of the Road's Combination Disciplines with an outsider, they may face censure or death from his mates.

Note that Combination Disciplines employing the Dominate Discipline are resisted similarly; a vampire may not use a Combination Discipline with Dominate on a vampire of lower Generation.

Combination Disciplines

Arsenal of Flesh and Bone

Protean 2, Vicissitude 3

The vampire can form ferocious weapons from her flesh and bone. She can create blades, spikes, and other crude weapons instantaneously as they burst free from the flesh. With time, she can craft more ornate, precise weapons. The application of Protean causes them to devastate enemies easily.

System: This power costs two blood points per weapon. Making larger weapons (anything taking two hands normally) costs four blood points. Roll Dexterity + Body Crafts (difficulty 7). Weapons crafted from Arsenal of Flesh and Bone cause aggravated damage.

Experience Cost: 21

Aura of Accursed Rage

Animalism 3, Presence 2

Practitioners of the Road of the Beast developed this power which allows the vampire to let his Beast bleed outward into the world around him, inspiring rage and anger like his own bloody frenzies in all around him.

System: Spend one blood point and rolls Charisma + Intimidation (difficulty 7). Self-Control and Instinct difficulties to resist frenzy increase by one per success for the rest of the scene. This power affects all vampires within range of the character's sight. It continues to affect characters who have left the vampire's presence for the remainder of the night. Mortals are affected to a lesser degree, and must make Self-Control rolls to resist violent and impulsive action.

Experience Cost: 21

Aura of Inescapable Truth

Dominate 4, Presence 4

With this power, those in the vampire's presence must speak only the truth. The vampire's presence is defined by those characters the vampire can hear; for this reason, Auspex adds another dimension to the power's usefulness. Characters attempting to lie find themselves unable to speak. The truth for this power depends on the speaker; a character may impart untrue information that they believe to be true, but may not deceive a listener. The power is quite obvious in its effects, and a character may opt to leave the vampire's presence.

System: Roll Charisma + Leadership with difficulty equal to the highest Willpower points among all the targets. Use the below table for results. A character with five successes breaks the limitation on range; a character leaving the vampire's presence can only speak the truth for the entire night, regardless of where he goes.

Successes	Effect
1 success	The next statement made by those affected must be truthful.
2 successes	Those affected can only speak truth for the next minute.
3 successes	Those affected can only speak the truth for ten minutes.
4 successes	Those affected can only speak the truth for the remainder of the scene.
5 successes	Those affected can only speak the truth for the remainder of the night

Experience Cost: 28

The Beast's Transmogrification

Valeren 5, Vicissitude 3

A Zoroastrian Salubri healer named Kairam Ahmed Hamdan developed this power alongside the Vojvotkinja Tzimisce Livia Yorke. Their efforts allow the vampire to restructure a creature's body and soul alike.

Spend one Willpower, one hour, and three Vitae to enact this power. Roll Manipulation + Empathy, difficulty equal to the target's Road or Willpower – whichever is higher. Success acts identically to the first three powers of Vicissitude. Additionally, each success allows the character to increase or decrease the victim's Road or Virtues by one dot. If this takes a character to zero in his Road, additional successes can start the character on a new Road so long as she's also reduced the necessary Virtues. If this would increase a character's Road or Virtues above their initial dot ratings, the additional dots fade at a rating of one per night (the player's choice). The victim receives a Derangement from the process, which only fades after he's spent Willpower points equal to twice the dots changed.

All but the most callous Roads consider forcing a character to involuntarily change Roads to be a grievous violation, as it can truly be a fate worse than death to the victim's identity.

Experience Cost: 20

Bird in Ear

Animalism 2, Chimerstry 2

The Ravnos developed this power in order to better communicate between distant *jati*. The vampire imbues a message in a small animal who then carries the message to its intended recipient, relaying it in the vampire's own voice.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (Difficulty 7) to imbue the message in a small animal. The animal can be any creature, but if it must travel long distances, a bird is best.

The Ravnos speaks the message he wants carried to the animal and commands it with his will to deliver the message to his intended recipient. The vampire must have a clear image in his mind of who the animal must find. When the animal arrives at its destination, the message is delivered as the vampire spoke it, the illusion of his voice emanating from the animal.

Once the power is used, the animal has a number of days equal to successes to find its designated recipient and deliver the message, otherwise the compulsion fades and the message is lost.

Experience Cost: 14

Blood Apocrypha

Auspex 1, Obfuscate 1

The Nosferatu deal in secrets so dark they cannot risk leaks. To this end, they've created Blood Apocrypha, which allows them to communicate secretly through messages in their blood. The communication can occur in person, through the taste of the encoded blood. Often, this is done through vials of blood, or through a bloody kiss. Alternatively, the vampire can invest a significant portion of her blood into a written or drawn message, which carries alternate meaning.

Most Nosferatu encode these messages further, so even a vampire detecting the power must still decode the lore within. An encoded message can be rather detailed; a single use of this power can account for a whole written page. Some Nosferatu maintain entire warrens and catacombs full of encoded libraries whose parent books have long since been destroyed.

System: Spend one blood point for the character to retrieve or relate the message. In direct, in-person communication, no roll is necessary. For embedded messages, a single blood point allows the message to last a night. Two lets the message last a week, three a month, four a year, and five lasts indefinitely. A character who knows of a hidden missive can roll Perception + Occult (difficulty 7) in order to sense the message.

Experience Cost: 7

The Bloodsoaked Saint's Resurrection

Auspex 5, Fortitude 3, Valeren (Healer) 9

A vampire called Daniel, the Bloodsoaked Saint, crafted this legendary ability only available to a small number of Saulot's get. It allows the vampire to call back the dead, so long as a piece of their earthly remains exist. It requires ten Vitae, which are bled on the remains. Roll your character's Road, difficulty 9. One success will bring back a whole corpse, but only for a night. Two successes will fully regenerate the remains, and bring him back for a month. Three successes makes the resurrection full and permanent. However, the vampire using this power loses one permanent Road dot. This decreases his capacity to increase his Road. For example, a Salubri who has used this power three times may only ever have seven Road dots.

Experience Cost: 35

Craft Ephemera

Chimerstry 5, Fortitude 3

With this power, a Ravnos can give weight and substance to his illusions, making it functionally real. Disbelief is no more effective than attempting to ignore reality, though the illusions fade at sunrise. This power is most often used to craft weapons, or precious artifacts to dupe fools.

System: The player spends three blood points and one Willpower point and roll Willpower (difficulty 7). If successful, the vampire's illusion appears in his hands, solid and real as any normal object. Created objects can be no larger than the vampire who created them, and must be inanimate. They may have moving parts, but complicated objects are much more difficult and require an Intelligence + Crafts roll (at Storyteller discretion). The object is functionally real and cannot be disbelieved, but anyone with Auspex or similar magic greater than the vampire's Chimerstry rating may spend a Willpower point to see through the illusion and ignore its effects. Otherwise, the object remains intact until destroyed normally or when dawn arrives, at which point it fades into mist.

Experience Cost: 35

Eye of Unforgiving Heaven

Auspex 4, Warrior Valeren 4

The Salubri's third eye opens impossibly wide, burning an incandescent gold color. The orb is a reflection of the Salubri's inner virtue, but manifests as the sun at zenith, illuminating the area and searing undead flesh.

System: The vampire stares in the general direction he wishes the power to illuminate, while spending one point each of blood and Willpower (per turn). He then rolls Conscience (difficulty 6). Success causes the Cainite's third eye to open and glow, shedding light as direct sunlight and inflicting damage per turn to all vampires in line of sight as per their exposure. As the power's light emits as radiance rather a beam, it cannot discriminate between friend or foe. The Salubri isn't immune to his light, suffering three dice of lethal damage each turn, soaked normally. Any such wounds suffered manifest as bloody tears weeping from the third eye. Only Cainites who do ascribe to the Virtue of Conscience may benefit from this power.

Experience Cost: 28

Glare of Lies

Auspex 2, Valeren 1

The third eye opens, then narrows in close scrutiny. The Salubri's eye begins to discern truth and deception as easily as light scattered from a crystal. Lies become obvious to the third eye's sight, allowing a perceptive Salubri to easily come to judgment.

System: Any lies told in the Salubri's presence must succeed on a contested Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 8) against the Salubri's Perception + Empathy (difficulty 6). Success means the subject still lies, but the Salubri recognizes the deception. She cannot, however, sense subtler deceptions such as omissions or half-truths.

Experience Cost: 14

Guardian Vigil

Auspex 1, Celerity 1, Fortitude 1

Developed by a Malkavian fleeing his persecutors, Guardian Vigil allows the Cainite a lasting preternatural danger sense. He cannot be surprised or ambushed by those that would assail him.

System: Spend a blood point. For the remainder of the night, the character cannot be ambushed or surprised by mundane methods. Any non-supernatural stealth attempts against him fail automatically. Against Obfuscate and other such abilities, compare the Cainite's Auspex the way you would normally (see p. 195).

If Guardian Vigil alerts the character, he's assumed to have the highest initiative for the first turn of a combat. After the first turn, he must roll normally.

This power only protects against the first such ambush in a given night. The character may re-activate Guardian Vigil for another blood point. Additionally, he may activate it directly before slumber in order to benefit from its protections during the day.

Experience Cost: 7

Hand of the Master Artisan

Auspex 1, Celerity 1

Toreador developed this gift in order to create art with phenomenal speed and accuracy. The vampire moves with inhuman alacrity with the full use of her skill. This creates complex objects in moments.

System: Spend a point of blood. The vampire can craft what a human could in an hour over the course of a one-minute turn. With multiple blood points, she can create enormous art installations or even houses in under an hour. Alternatively, she can use a blood point to create what would take a minute in a three-second turn. This allows the vampire to create complex traps on the fly.

Experience Cost: 7

Hindsight

Auspex 3, Temporis 1

Hindsight confers upon a vampire the ability to transport his psyche backwards through time to trace the history of an object or being that he touches, revealing all details at once in a cascading torrent of information.

System: The player touches the target and rolls Perception + Awareness (difficulty 8, +1 per century of age, with each dot of Temporis the character possesses reducing the difficulty by 1, minimum 4). Failures are rerolled as bashing damage, resulting in the informational overload crashing through the vampire's mind in a fragmented jumble. The vampire may negate one failure per success on their roll, at the expense of said success to elicit discernable information from the target. Each success grants the character the ability to sort through the information and extract one relevant fact about the target from its history (Storyteller's discretion), before the knowledge fades and the vampire returns to her own time-stream. Examples include viewing a specific Cainite holding the object, learning a vampire's certain activities in days or even centuries prior, and gleaning knowledge from destroyed books (or even earlier drafts of the same) when holding the quill used to pen them.

Though Hindsight can offer facts about an object or subject's history, it does not impart any emotional significance that may have been associated with it, or felt during its journey. The sheer volume of information delivered prevents any opportunity for the Cainite to attempt an Empathy roll; she may bear witness that a murder took place, but might not ascertain if it a crime of passion or cold blood.

Usually any attempt to peer into the future of a target reveals an infinite shattering tapestry of possibilities impossible for the character to navigate. However, for objects or beings with strong and distinct destinies, all patterns eventually merge to a singular distinguishable point that is clearly visible to the character.

Experience Cost: 10

Komnenos's Honor

Fortitude 3, Koldunic Sorcery 2

This combination comes from a Koldunic knight called Nicholas Komnenos. It allows him to maintain the strength of his spirit despite that which would assail him. Activating this power requires the vampire carve a koldunic glyph into his flesh, causing one lethal damage. So long as that glyph persists, any Conviction or Instinct rolls he must make to resist losing way of his Road gain

+1 dice, and -1 difficulty. He may only one instance of this power active.

Experience Cost: 5

The Long March

Celerity 2, Fortitude 2

In the Dark Medieval World, Clan Assamite makes long, extended treks across vast expanses of countryside, forest, and mountains. Most Cainites would fall victim to the elements, to Lupines, or other, darker things. However, the Assamites have developed The Long March for these voyages. It allows them to travel rapidly for extended periods.

System: The Long March can be used any time the character is making an extended bout of travel. Its benefits stop any time the character must take unexpected, jarring actions, such as in combat. To activate The Long March, the character spends one blood point. For the next hour, multiply the character's full running speed by her Celerity dots plus one. She travels at this speed for the entirety of the hour. She may only use The Long March for a number of hours equal to her Fortitude in a given night.

Experience Cost: 14

Memory Rift

Obfuscate 2, Presence 2

This favored gift of the Baali and the Setites forces a single victim to forget the vampire's presence during a single scene or isolated event. Once the vampire activates Memory Rift, it's as if she was never there. The victim denies any evidence to the contrary.

System: While Memory Rift only affects a single victim, it can be activated multiple times to affect multiple victims. Spend a blood point and roll Manipulation + Subterfuge against a difficulty of the subject's current Willpower points. If successful, the victim's memories displace the vampire, telling him that she was never there. Characters with more Willpower dots than the vampire's Obfuscate can eventually remember the vampire's presence if presented with clear evidence of her attendance. Creative applications of Auspex, Dominate, or other Disciplines may dig up the suppressed memories.

Experience Cost: 14

Nightmare Curse

Auspex 4, Chimerstry 5

This power was developed as a means of punishment for those who deserve a fate worse than death. The Ravnos creates an image of the victim's greatest fear, setting it to plague him night and day. Only the victim can perceive his nightmare, but it seems very real and substantial to him.

System: The player spends one point of Willpower and rolls Perception + Intimidation (difficulty the target's current Willpower) with successes equaling each night the illusion is active. The Ravnos must concentrate for a full turn to draw the victim's greatest fear from his mind and give it life. The victim must be within line of sight of the vampire to use this power, though she may take a +2 penalty to use it on someone within a mile radius as long as she has access to a personal item. If her intended victim is beyond a mile, the power fails to take effect. The player can choose to extend the curse's duration by spending blood when using the power; each point adds a full night to the curse. The illusion vanishes at sunrise after its final night.

While plagued by these nightmare visions, the victim suffers the effects of the Haunted and Nightmare Flaws (see "Merits and Flaws" p. 419).

Experience Cost: 35

Penitent Resilience

Fortitude 4, Healer Valeren 4

Uriel's sun-curse cannot mar Raphael's promise of redemption. Their purity known to all, the Salubri may briefly walk in brightest sunlight without fear, the sunlight searing his Curse and not his flesh.

System: The vampire may reflexively spend one blood point whenever the vampire is exposed to sunlight. Until the vampire exhausts his blood pool, he need not make Rötschreck rolls. Such damage is rolled, rather than applied as automatic successes, and soaked normally with only Fortitude. Each level of injury burns one point of the Cainite's vitae rather than inflicting actual wounds; once the vampire runs out of blood, he suffers damage normally and must fear frenzy. Only Cainites who ascribe to the Virtues of Conscience and Self-Control may benefit from this power.

Experience Cost: 28

Retain the Quick Blood

Celerity 3, Quietus (Cruscitus) 2

Assamite Warriors who have achieved some mastery over both Celerity and Cruscitus have learned how to hone their blood to more efficient means. With this power, the vampire recovers blood spent to activate Celerity.

System: Any blood spent to buy extra actions through Celerity returns to the vampire's blood pool as if it had never been used at a rate of one per minute. Once learned, this power is considered always active.

Experience Cost: 21

Sympathetic Agony

Chimerstry 2, Fortitude 4

This is one of the first powers developed by the Ravnos allowing them to succeed in combat even against more competent opponents. As its name suggests, Sympathetic Agony allows a vampire to shift her pain to her enemies, allowing her to continue fighting despite grievous wounds.

System: The player reflexively spends one blood point and rolls Manipulation + Intimidation (difficulty is the higher of the target's Perception or Self-Control). Each success allows the Ravnos to ignore wound penalties associated with one health level of damage, and inflict a phantom wound on her target. Penalties are assigned based on the sum of the victim's real and phantom damage, even to put the victim into torpor. This power may only affect one target at a time, and does not heal or inflict real injuries. The power lasts for a scene, though the Ravnos may cancel its use at any time and re-invoke it against a new target.

Experience Cost: 28

Sawafi's Form

Protean 3, Serpentis 5

This ancient Setite trick allows the vampire to become a violent sandstorm. Spend one Vitae, and the transformation takes three turns to complete. Additional Vitae can reduce this time by one turn per blood point spent. The sandstorm takes up between one meter in diameter and five, at the character's choice. This can be adjusted with one turn's concentration. Also, she can drop the sand to dormancy reflexively. She moves at her normal speed. She cannot suffer physical damage. She takes normal damage from sunlight, but one fewer damage per turn from fire. Anyone within the sand cloud suffers -2 to all Perception-based rolls, as the sand buffets his senses. As well, the vampire can divide his Protean and Serpentis dots as bashing damage dice however he wishes among those within the storm.

Experience Cost: 15

Vicente de las Navas de Tolosa's Holy Shield

Fortitude 1, Obtenebration 2

Vincente de las Navas de Tolosa is a Lasombra who crusades against the infernal. In his pursuits, he developed this combination of Obtenebration and Fortitude to help protect him against the unholy forces of the world. Spend a Willpower and a Vitae to activate this power for the night. Demons, and characters on truly blasphemous and unholy Roads are almost unable to act directly against the vampire. Any action scoring fewer successes than your character's Obtenebration fail automatically. Additionally, the lowest possible difficulty for any such action against your character is his Road rating.

Experience Cost: 7

True Love's Face

Obfuscate 3, Presence 3

True Love's Face blends Obfuscate and Presence in a strange way; the vampire takes the appearance of a victim's one true love. While very useful in numerous ways, the vampire does not necessarily know what he looks like; even if he may think he knows the victim's true love, he may be wrong and cannot see the façade on himself.

System: Roll Charisma + Empathy (difficulty 6) and choose a victim; the vampire must have met the victim in question. Success makes the vampire appear as the victim's true love to all witnesses for the remainder of the scene. This ability does not impart knowledge of the true love; the vampire might need to employ Subterfuge, Performance, Empathy, or other Abilities in order to maintain the ruse.

Experience Cost: 21



Beloved sister,

If I still had tears to shed, I would have wept to see Constantinople not for the glory of its works or the magnificence of its people, but for its ruin. Nearly forty years after the nights of blood and madness brought by the Latins, it is no more than the specter of itself, chained to its tomb and condemned to watch mortal worms devour it as carrion.

It was not easy to enter. My guide, one of the Banu Haqim, told me that it would have been even more difficult only a few years ago, but hunger has driven so many from the city that there are unguarded gates open to those who know how to find them. I wonder how long it will be before Constantinople falls again.

I parted from my guide once we entered the gates, paid him in the currency of his kind, and set out to find the places that I remembered from my visits long ago. But the great houses of the Faithful, those pleasure palaces that we had built through so many centuries, were no more. Some had been hollowed by fire, some were given over to the city's new masters, and others were simply abandoned. Nowhere could I find the mark of the Serpent to guide me to the dwelling places of our kind or our loyal retainers.

Instead, I heard tales from the children of those who had lived through the city's destruction. The conquerors ravaged its holy places, took their pleasure from anyone they wanted, and burned what they could not possess. It must have been a glorious chaos for that brief instant, but now? Now the fires are cold and the churches are bare. The emperor buys armies by selling off what few relics remain, but soon, I wager, there will be nothing left to sell.

That is the sadness of the great city of the Romans: there is nothing that we could do here that has not already been done forty times over. For an instant, the Latins may have felt the liberation of following their desires, but even that is forgotten as food grows scarce and more armies gather to test their walls. They have no will left for pleasure.

As for the Cainites, even they are a miserable lot. I tried to present myself to the master of the city, only to find there was none. The Clan of Shadows held sway here for a time, I am told, but their Prince has fled the city to guard himself against some threat no one could name. Latin Ventrue, meanwhile, try to impress their own form of order on the people and have succeeded only in emptying the city's coffers. They will never understand that command and rule are two different things.

A curiosity: among the Venetians who helped bring the city to its knees are Cainites I have never seen before. They are some new corruption, I think, like the sorcerers who have lately started to arrive in al-Quhirah. They have the hunger for knowledge that the Clan of Death does, but none of their dignity. These young ones seem driven by the petty needs of wealth and acceptance. When I return, I will write to our cousins in Venice to discover what they know of them; perhaps they could be guided to ally with us, given the proper instruction.

A second curiosity: in the street last night, I passed a Cainite with haunted eyes and the bearing of a warrior. I followed him as he walked many of the same paths that I had on my first night, as if he were trying to find some familiarity in the city that has changed so much. As I watched and listened to him speak to himself — or perhaps it was to his god — I realized he was not mourning the loss of its magnificence, but his part in it.

Here and there, he stopped to stroke the wall of a ruined church or to bow his head in some nameless alley. I think he was asking forgiveness from the Queen of Cities herself, but only silence answered him. I may follow him again tomorrow. If we speak, I will free him from his guilt.

Soon, my sister, I will return to the sacred land and to your arms. There, I can forget the scent of squandered possibilities and drown myself in the pleasures of the nights to come. There, I can leave Constantinople behind.

Chapter Six: Rules

Do you think that I would have given six rules if I wished one not be disobeyed? Childe, rules are written to be disobeyed. They're written to control the weak. They're written as tools for the strong.

-Found in the Library of Elpis the Cappadocian

Vampire is a storytelling game. Specifically, it's a horror storytelling game. Horror is about the line between the known and the unknown, and **Vampire**'s rules help you walk that line. On one hand, they offer a sense of fairness and consistency to the game world. The rules define facts about the way the World of Darkness works, and this allows the players certain expectations during play. On the other hand, the dice offer randomness. Any time you lift dice, you raise tension; the thing your characters do may or may not succeed. Disaster's just a dice pool away.

In this chapter, we address the very basics of the Storyteller System for **V20 Dark Ages**. If you're familiar with **V20**, this will seem familiar. However, there are some subtle differences, to help emphasize the needs of the setting.

Rolling Dice

Vampire uses 10-sided dice. You can pick these up at most game stores or buy them online. You can also use any number of smartphone or web apps to emulate dice. The Storyteller should have a handful of dice. Players with starting characters should have about ten dice.

You roll dice when the stakes stand to mean something important to the story. If success or failure doesn't matter in the scope of the story, you don't need dice. But if calling success into question would build tension or excitement, that's when dice matter. If failure would derail your story, consider the value of a dice roll.

Your character's strengths and weaknesses will determine how many dice you'll roll.

Actions

Throughout the story, any time your character does something worth a dice roll and you bring that tension to the fore, it's an *action*. Examples of actions include leaping through a window, dueling on a cathedral rooftop, and uncovering a coded piece of Noddist lore from a tax ledger. Most actions take a single turn to complete (see p. 324 for more information on game time).

Remember, actions require stakes. While many conversations and basic character interactions might not be considered actions, if the stakes are high, let the interaction influence the dice, and let the dice influence the interactions. An action should always complement the story, not detract from it. Any pause to roll dice is a potential hiccup in the flow of the story.

To perform an action, simply tell the Storyteller what you wish your character to accomplish. She'll adjudicate the relevant dice roll and terms. You roll the dice, and look for dice that come up as *successes*. If the action takes



a single roll, and only requires a single success, it's considered a *simple action*. Actions requiring multiple rolls and multiple successes are called *extended actions*.

Reflexive Actions

Most actions require a moment's time and concentration. Your character actively does something. However, sometimes you'll make rolls for things that don't take time or consideration, usually because they're triggered responses to other actions. These actions are called *reflexive actions*, and you take them whenever the situation arises, while still allowing your character to take her normal action in the turn.

For instance, if your character is victim to the Presence Discipline, she can reflexively spend a point of Willpower and you can roll her Willpower to resist the effects. She could then pull a dagger and threaten her assailant as a separate action in the same turn.

For most reflexive actions, your character simply needs to be conscious and aware. However, different factors can cause reflexive actions, and each might have different restrictions and requirements.

The Golden Rule

When playing **Vampire**, *you are not here for the rules; the rules are here for you*. The most important thing is that you're having fun. The story stands as a close second. The rules need to foster the fun and foster the story, or they're not doing their job. If you feel that a rule needs tweaking, clarifying, fixing, or replacing, *do it*. While we have years of experience spanning hundreds of **Vampire** chronicles, we're not sitting at your tables, and we can't hope to tell you what's best for your story's needs.

Ratings

When creating your **Vampire** character, you determine her concept, her history, and her personality. You use game traits to define her specific capabilities and limitations. These traits use "dot" ratings, usually between 0 and 5. Some outstanding individuals may have more than five dots in their

traits. For example, Cainites of the Seventh Generation or lower will often have supernatural trait ratings.

As a basis of comparison, these are the standard dot ratings:

Rating	Description
X	Abysmal, terrible
•	Inadequate, poor
••	Average, competent
•••	Good, practiced
••••	Superior, expert
•••••	Outstanding, mastered
••••••	Superhuman, miraculous

Dice Pools

When you roll dice, you roll one die for every dot your character possesses in the relevant traits. Usually, you'll roll two traits, an Attribute and an Ability. For example, if the Storyteller tells you to roll Strength + Athletics, and you have Strength ••• and Athletics ••••, you'll roll seven dice. These dice are called your *dice pool* for that single action.

Dice pools can change from action to action, as the Storyteller can modify the components of the roll or modify the dice pool to reflect challenges and advantages in the environment. Generally, more dice affords a better chance of success or the potential for an overwhelming performance.

Not all dice use Attribute + Ability combinations. Sometimes you'll roll Willpower, your Road rating, or other dice pools.

As Storyteller, choose the Attribute + Ability combinations you best feel suit the actions in question. We've provided examples, but think outside the box and vary things to fit the immediate needs of the story.

Multiple Actions

Sometimes, you'll want your character to perform multiple actions in a single turn. For example, if your character is attempting to listen in on a conversation at a salon while simultaneously going unnoticed by the patrons, that could be two actions.

If you wish to take multiple actions in a turn, you must decide before taking your first action. The first action is taken at +1 difficulty, and at -1 dice. Each additional action receives a cumulative +1 difficulty, and -1 dice. You cannot take an action as part of a multiple action if the difficulty would be increased to 10 or higher. Additionally, only one action per turn may be an attack action.

Johan faces two royal guards in his escape from the castle. He wishes to push through them and crash through the door, but he also wants to avoid their spears. In essence, he's taking three actions.

First, he wants to avoid their spears. So his Dexterity + Athletics action is taken at -1 dice, and +1 difficulty. Second, he wants to slam through the guards. That's a Strength + Brawl action, taken at -2 dice, +2 difficulty. Lastly, his effort to smash the door will be a Strength + Stamina feat of strength, taken at -3 dice, +3 difficulty.

The rest of the players at the table opt to take single actions, while Johan's player blows on his dice for good luck.

The Storyteller is final arbiter on multiple actions. If a series of actions is not logical in the scope of the narrative, she may determine they cannot be performed as part of a multiple action.

Difficulties

When rolling dice, the *difficulty* determines what numbers you're looking for on those dice. The difficulty is usually between 4 and 8, but can range anywhere from 2 and 9, depending on the circumstances. Only the rarest, most absurd actions should have a difficulty of 10. Any difficulty of 2-4 should be weighed for its value, since success is all but guaranteed. If the Storyteller doesn't provide a difficulty, assume the default difficulty of 6.

Every die that rolls a result that meets or exceeds the set difficulty is a success. While you usually only need a single success to succeed on most actions, additional successes mean your character performs better, and will often have greater effect. Rolling three successes means your character has completely succeeded at her desired task. Use the below guidelines to build difficulties, and to reflect successes.

Failure

If you score no successes on your roll, the action is a failure. The sword misses its mark. The spy refuses to give up his secrets. The results are not inherently catastrophic (as with a botch), but the action does not go as intended.

Botches

Bad luck comes through despite any degree of talent or ability. Any die that comes up a 1 reflects bad fortune, and cancels out a single success. So if you roll five successes, but two dice come up as 1 the roll only achieves three successes.

Difficulties

3	Trivial, probably not worth rolling
4	Easy (following a clear and present trail)
5	Straightforward (convincing the sympathetic)
6	Standard (most average actions)
7	Challenging (finding something on short time)
8	Difficult (convincing an enemy)
9	Extremely difficult (juggling weapons)

Worse still, if the roll scores no successes and any of the dice come up with a 1, the action is considered a "botch". A botch is much worse than a normal failure. Not only does the action fail, but something terrible happens in the heat of the moment. The Storyteller determines this event, and it should pertain directly to the action's context. In a botched interrogation, for example, the interrogator might let slip her employer's true identity.

Botches should be flukes and interesting story hooks. They should only rarely reflect direct injury against the character. Always favor the weird and unfortunate setback as opposed to the victimization of a character. A good botch should be fodder for entire stories to come.

Tens and Specialties

A character with four or more dots in an Attribute or Ability may choose a *specialty*. This is a refinement of that particular trait. For example, a character with five dots of Strength might choose "lifting" as a specialty, or a character with four dots of Archery may choose "longbows" as a specialty. Any time a specialty applies to a roll, any dice that come up as tens count as two successes, instead of one.

So with our lifting specialist above, if he rolls 2, 3, 8, 10, 10 on a difficulty 8 roll, he would normally have three successes. But if the roll was to lift, he'd have five successes.

Degrees of Success

1 success	Marginal; you get what you want, but at a cost, with potential consequences or imperfections
2 successes	Moderate; you get what you want, but with a cost, consequence, or imperfection
3 successes	Complete; you get what you want within reason
4 successes	Exceptional; you get what you want, beyond expectations
5 successes	Phenomenal; you perform with perfection, or you've created lasting greatness

Automatic Successes

As stated, sometimes the dice can get in the way of the action. Failure isn't likely or won't impact for the story. In these cases, the Storyteller should consider automatic successes. An automatic success is not rolled; the player proceeds as if they rolled a single success. As a suggestion, consider automatic success whenever the dice pool meets or exceeds the target difficulty.

Automatic successes should not be used when named characters are contesting one another or there's injury at stake, such as in a fight scene. As well, always roll when Road ratings are involved; they should never be automatically successful.

However, automatic successes aren't required. If the player wishes to make the roll anyway in hopes of scoring a greater success, she can.

One other way to guarantee success on an action is spending a point of Willpower before taking an action (see p. 339), which guarantees one success on the roll. This success cannot be canceled by a 1.

Trying Again

Many times, a failed action isn't the end of the world and the character can reasonably try again. However, frustration and complexity make repeat attempts more difficult. Each successive attempt increases the action's difficulty by 1. If this increases the difficulty to 10, the action is too difficult for the character and she may not attempt it.

As the Storyteller, consider the story ramifications of repeated attempts. Is time of the essence? Will failure have a cost? If the action didn't have stakes for failure, why did it need a roll in the first place?

Complications

The basic dice rules above will carry you through most actions. However, these optional tweaks and permutations can add complexity to your gameplay. These are tools in your toolkit as a Storyteller. In the following chapter, we provide numerous situation-specific rules.

Extended Actions

Sometimes actions don't fall into the purview of simple actions. Some actions take time and feature complexity that goes beyond a single roll. We call these *extended actions*. In an extended action, you roll your dice pool multiple times – each roll reflecting a set interval of time – in an attempt to accumulate a target number of successes.

For example, if your character tries to sway a village's public opinion against its local duke, you might roll Manipulation + Persuasion, requiring 10 total successes. The rolls represent weeks passed, during which your character seeds rumors and sows dissent against the ruler.

When taking an extended action, you usually receive as many turns as need be, unless mitigating factors limit the amount of time allowed. However, a botch during an extended action means you have to start over or possibly cannot proceed as planned.

As Storyteller, determine the interval of time required for an extended action, as well as its dice pool, difficulty, and required successes. Determine the interval by the very minimum amount of time the character could realistically finish the action in, under perfect circumstances. More required successes reflect more complicated actions. Most reasonable activities should not require more than 15 to 20 successes; only the most epic efforts should go above that.

Resisted Actions

If two characters work against each other, a simple action with a difficulty might not be sufficient. These cases call for *resisted actions*. In a resisted action, both players roll their dice pools; their difficulties are determined by the others' dice pools or traits, up to a limit of difficulty 9. Whoever rolls the most successes succeeds. However, the number of successes the victor exceeds her opponent by determines the action's degree of success. So if you roll five successes, and your opponent rolls two, your action succeeds as if you rolled three successes. In the case of a tie, neither character succeeds.

Actions can be both resisted and extended. In these cases, both players make repeated rolls until one reaches the target number of successes.

Teamwork

Sometimes, characters work together to the same ends. These efforts are called *teamwork actions*. When making a teamwork action, determine one character to act as the primary actor. All other players make their rolls first. Their successes add dice to the primary actor's dice pool.

Their rolls might not share the same dice pools. For example, if one character acts as a distraction while another sneaks through a crowded hall and pickpockets a noble, the distracting character's player might roll Charisma + Expression, while the sneaking character's player might roll Dexterity + Legerdemain.

In these cases, the Storyteller might determine a limit to the number of characters that can reasonably aid in the action. For every character that exceeds that number, all players must roll at a cumulative +1 difficulty.

Using the Storyteller System

As stated, these tools are just that. Mix them and match them to suit the needs of your story and the players' interests. If players want to keep dice rolling to a minimum and favor portraying their characters, avoid extended actions. If you don't think it suits the story for certain Storyteller characters to have a chance at overcoming the players' characters, don't use resisted actions.

Time

The Storyteller System divides time in a few different ways, mostly for the purpose of determining how long an effect ends. Outside of combat turns, these times are all very abstract and come down to narrative framing and story relevance.

Turn – The time it takes to perform a simple action. This is between three seconds and three minutes, depending on the pace of the scene.

Scene – A scene is a unit of drama in the story. It's an event, in a place, at a time. Usually, when location or characters change significantly, the scene changes. A scene is broken up into however many turns as is required.

Chapter – A chapter is a fancy way of referring to a typical game session. A chapter is a series of scenes, which link together to tell part of an overarching story.

Story – A story is a complete tale with an arc that progresses and concludes over the course of one or more chapters.

Chronicle – A chronicle is a series of stories, featuring mostly the same characters, overarching plot, or themes. A chronicle may be the story of a city, of a dynasty, or any other extended series of stories told across many game sessions.

Downtime – Downtime happens "off camera," and is described in broad strokes instead of receiving detailed playtime. Downtime typically happens between scenes, chapters, and stories. Downtime is a tool to gloss over tedious aspects of a story, reflecting the sorts of periods that would be passed over with a time marker in a book or television show. Downtime ends the moment that something dramatic or important begins.

Example of Play

Jen, the storyteller, has gathered three of her friends for a game of **V20 Dark Ages**. The game takes place in Paris, France, in 1242. Players Matt and Jacy are veterans at the game and play Petrosian, a local Nosferatu, and Tevlar, a Gangrel wanderer, respectively. Newcomer Angel plays Dalia, a Ramanga masquerading as a Brujah scholar. To help Angel get in character, Jen opens the game with Dalia.

Dalia wakes up early, as she always does. She can feel the sun set over the horizon as she slowly regains control over her body and mind. Rising, she ventures from the hidden basement where she sleeps to the small Jewish bookstore above. To her dismay, she finds the place ransacked and the owner, her ghoul David, missing. A quick search yields no further information, but when Dalia ventures outside she can smell smoke and fire on the air. The Beast stirs, uneasy by the mere hint of fire, but Dalia subdues it. Slipping quietly into the night, she makes her way to Elysium, where all vampires must meet by order of the Prince, in the hopes of finding assistance.

Doing some research on Paris in 1242, Jen discovered that it was the year of a massive Talmud burning by French king Louis IX. She handily ties this to the bookstore in Dalia's background to create a plot hook for Angel. Jen already decided that the ghoul escaped safely when Louis' forces came to the door, since she doesn't want to deny Dalia access to her Background. She lets Angel roll Perception 3 + Investigation 2 at difficulty 7 to find the hidden note left for Dalia, but Angel rolls 5, 1, 7, 6, 6 – no successes, since the 1 cancels out the 7 – and the ghoul's absence remains a mystery. Jen further alludes to the book burning by referencing smoke and fire on the air, as well as the faint stirring of Dalia's Beast. As the threat is far away, this requires no Rötschreck roll.

Tevlar and Petrosian are already at Elysium. The Nosferatu is sitting in a corner, quietly observing the other Cainites. Natural shadows obscure his beak-like face, as the Prince has forbidden the use of powers at Elysium. He is looking for dumb muscle to aid him in a new endeavor when Tevlar passes by. The Nosferatu leans forward sharply, unable to resist the opportunity to startle the Gangrel, but finds that he may have bitten off more than he can chew.

"Keep playing games, crow," Tevlar snarls as he turns, "and see where that gets you."

Petrosian raises his hands in the air in a disarming gesture. "Relax, my friend, relax. I meant no harm. In fact, I have a business proposal for you. If you will only hear me out?"

Tevlar eyes the Nosferatu suspiciously; the creature's head is bobbing up and down like a misshapen bird and does nothing to engender confidence. "Speak quickly," he agrees with visible reluctance.

"Yes, of course, I would not want to keep you needlessly," Petrosian says agreeably, still bobbing his head. "It has come to my attention that a most valuable book lies in Paris; a book for which I, in all humility, have already found a buyer. I fear the current owner, a miser of the foulest sort, will not wish to part with it. However, between the two of us, we might liberate this book from its owner's clutches. It promises to be a most dangerous of undertakings, for which I shall handsomely pay you ten livres." The book is worth considerably more to the right buyer, for its author is rumored to be a Methuselah who hid her true name amid the text, but Petrosian conveniently forgets to mention this.

Tevlar considers the offer. Truth be told, he has gotten bored in the great city of Paris. Petrosian's offer does sound like an adventure of sorts and ten livres is a tidy sum. "You have a deal, crow."

The encounter starts by Matt rolling Dexterity 2 + Stealth 3 at difficulty 6 (Tevlar's Perception + Alertness) and Jacy rolling Perception 3 + Alertness 3 at difficulty 5 (Petrosian' Dexterity + Stealth). Matt rolls 2, 4, 7, 7, 6 for a total of 3 successes, whilst Jacy rolls 5, 8, 6, 6, 7, 2 for five successes. With two net successes in Jacy's favor, the Gangrel is well aware of the Nosferatu sitting in the dark.

Jacy and Matt roleplay the conversation in character, ending the scene with a roll to determine who gets the upper hand. Matt rolls Manipulation 4 + Expression 2 at difficulty 5 (Tevlar's Perception + Subterfuge) and gets 10, 8, 5, 6, 2, 8 for 5 successes. Jacy rolls Perception 3 + Subterfuge 2 at difficulty 6 (Petrosian' Manipulation + Subterfuge) and gets 8, 7, 8, 5, 10 for 4 successes. Matt beats Jacy's successes by one, meaning that Petrosian persuades Tevlar.

With Tevlar on board to deal with any physical opposition, all Petrosian needs now is an expert to identify the correct tome in the collection. Luckily, the rumor mill, no less efficient for its participants being dead, has already informed him about a new Cainite scholar who specializes in old books. The moment Dalia enters Elysium, Petrosian is waiting for her.

"Greetings, most noble of ladies," the Nosferatu croons with a half-bow, though his hunch makes it hard to tell. "Might I take a moment of your no doubt valuable time?"

Dalia inclines her head, indicating for Petrosian to continue, but does not respond yet.

"My associate and I," Petrosian includes Tevlar, who visibly does not appreciate being dragged into the conversation, "are on the trail of an ancient and rare tome. We have the determination and brawn to acquire this book, but, alas, I fear we lack the brain. Perhaps you, fair and learned lady, would help us?"

Dalia is about to decline, since she has troubles of her own, when Petrosian continues. "The book is called a Talmud Yerushalmi, a holy book of Judea. I'm sure you have heard of it."

This gets the Ramanga's attention. Could Petrosian's scheme be tied to the ransacking of the Jewish bookstore that hides her haven? If so, he might lead her to the people responsible. "Say no more," Dalia says in the friendliest voice Petrosian has likely heard since his Embrace. "Of course I will lend you my aid. However, I am new to Paris and there is little I need at the moment. Perhaps we can agree that you will return the favor sometime in the future?"

Bowing to hide his annoyance at having to grant a boon, Petrosian bobs his head. "I agree, lady."

Having struck a bargain, the unlikely trio leaves Elysium and sets out into Paris. Petrosian leads the way to make sure they are not followed.

The characters have another social encounter, which the players act out in character and back up with opposed rolls. Matt rolls Manipulation 4 + Expression 2 at difficulty 6 (Dalia's Perception + Subterfuge) and gets 3, 4, 6, 3, 3, 3 for 1 success. Angel rolls Manipulation 4 + Subterfuge 3 at difficulty 5 (Petrosian' Perception + Subterfuge) and gets 10, 4, 4, 2, 4, 8, 7 for 3 successes – Dalia successfully hides her own interest in the situation and gains a boon as well.

To make sure the characters are not followed, Jen lets Matt roll Wits 4 + Stealth 3 at difficulty 6 to avoid detection. Matt rolls 6, 8, 4, 7, 1, 8, 10 for 4 successes.

The moon has risen far overhead, reflecting a pale light on a single, looming tower. Petrosian points to the third floor. "The library is up there."

Dalia and Tevlar merely nod, the former wondering how they'll get inside and the latter listening for the sound of dogs or guards. The area is eerily silent, with even the wind barely rising above a whisper. Still no sound, no voices calling out in alarm, as the trio sneaks across the lawn and into the tower. By now, the silence is more disconcerting than any attack could be.

Tevlar, put on edge, slides his hands against the wall to sharpen his nails until they're preternaturally sharp. Dalia frowns and considers telling him that he'd better not be handling any books with those hands, but by now the silence has become too prohibitive to speak.

The players are as worried as their characters and ask Jen if they can make Perception + Alertness rolls. Jen lets them and sets the difficulty at 6. Matt and Angel both roll Perception 3 + Alertness 2 and come up with 0 successes (4, 3, 1, 3, 8) and 3 successes (8, 8, 4, 7, 2) respectively. Jacy rolls Perception 3 + Alertness 3 and gets 2, 10, 4, 3, 3 10 for 2 successes. Jen tells them that there is nothing out of the ordinary to see or hear, but that does not quell the players' nerves. Jacy decides that Tevlar spends a blood point to activate Feral Weapons.

The vampires ascend the winding staircase to the third floor and enter the library. Tevlar enters first, with Dalia second and Petrosian bringing up the rear. The windowless room is filled with bookcases in double rows, creating two circles of books inside the tower. It will certainly take time to find the book they're looking for.

The moment Dalia picks up the first book, however, she notices something is wrong. The outside of the books are elaborately gilded, but the pages are filled with gibberish and messed-up pages. A too-tall man steps out from the inside circle of books. His eyes are shining red and he is flanked by two ghouls. Realization passes through Dalia with cold shock: not only did this Cainite know they were coming, he had time to prepare and set up a fake library.

Petrosian decides discretion is the better part of valor and steps back to quietly disappear. Tevlar, meanwhile, is grinning like a madman as the first retainer storms at him. The second retainer launches at Dalia, who deftly dodges his attack, whilst the red-eyed Cainite merely observes — for now.

Jen asks Matt, Jacy and Angel to roll Initiative: Dexterity and Wits plus the roll of a single die. Matt starts with Dexterity 2 + Wits 4 and rolls 9 for a total of 15. Jacy's character has Dexterity 3 + Wits 3 and she rolls 7 for a total of 13. Dalia has Dexterity 3 + Wits 3 and Angel adds 8 from her roll for a total of 14.

Jen rolls a 5 for both retainers simultaneously and adds it to their Dexterity 3 + Wits 2 for a total of 10. The red-eyed man has Dexterity 3 + Wits 4, but as Jen only rolls 5 for him too, his total is 12.

Actions are declared in order of initiative: Matt (Petrosian), Angel (Dalia), Jacy (Tevlar), Jen (Red-Eye) then Jen again (Retainers). Jen says that Red-Eye stands back this round, whilst the two retainers attack the first vampires into the room: Tevlar and Dalia.

Jacy wants to spend a blood point to raise Tevlar's Strength and then move in to attack. Angel, on the other hand, wants to spend a blood point to raise her character's Dexterity and opts to dodge.

Matt, acting first, moves Petrosian behind the half-opened door to use as cover while he activates Unseen Presence. Petrosian is at the back of the group and has a clear line to the door, so Jen lets the movement succeed without a roll. Since he moved less than half his running distance, he can immediately activate Unseen Presence. Given that there is a chance of the retainers or red-eyed man noticing Petrosian, Jen rules that Matt needs to succeed at a difficulty 8 roll for Petrosian to use the power. Matt rolls Wits 4 + Stealth 3and comes up with 8, 6, 9, 6, 4, 7, 3. With 2 successes, the Nosferatu disappears from sight.

Dalia is next and wants to dodge the ghoul's attack. Jen rolls Dexterity 3 + Brawl 2 at difficulty 6 for the retainer and comes up 1, 1, 10, 8, 7 for 1 success. Angel spends a blood point to raise Dalia's Dexterity, then rolls Dexterity 4 + Athletics 3 for 5, 2, 8, 6, 7, 5, 6. With 4 successes, the retainer doesn't come close to hitting Dalia. Angel could make Dalia's defensive action part of a multiple action, but Dalia has no offensive abilities and using Aizina would certainly clue the other vampires in that she is not really a Brujah.

Now it's Tevlar's turn and Jacy spends one blood point to raise Tevlar's Strength from 4 to 5. She then rolls Dexterity 3 + Brawl 4 for 7, 4, 8, 6, 6, 3, 7, getting 5 successes! She subtracts one die to hit and rolls the remaining 4 successes + Strength 5 + 1 for Feral Claws: 3, 10, 2, 3, 6, 3, 5, 6, 6, 7, which is another 5 successes. Tevlar's damage is aggravated thanks to Feral Claws, but the ghoul has one dot of Fortitude, which he rolls to soak the damage. The single die comes up 7 and Tevlar's damage is reduced to 4.

The ghoul is now Wounded and suffers a -2 on his dice pool, but he does not back down. Jen rolls Dexterity 3 + Brawl 2 minus 2 for being Wounded and comes up 4, 6, 10 – still 2 successes. The retainer rolls the 1 extra success + Strength 3 – 2 (Wounded) and comes up 10, 6 for 2 successes. Jacy chose not to have Tevlar dodge, as that would mean splitting her dice pool, and instead relies on the Gangrel's Stamina 4 + Fortitude 1 to soak the damage, rolling 7, 3, 7, 10, 9 – more than enough to soak the retainer's damage.

The first round of combat went well for the characters, but with Petrosian seemingly gone and Dalia holding back on her powers, things might go downhill for them later. Not to mention that the red-eyed man hasn't made his first move yet. Assuming the characters survive the encounter, they have some interesting questions to tackle. How did the red-eyed man know they were coming? Was Petrosian set up from the start, or is he the one that betrayed Tevlar and Dalia? And how does this relate to the Talmud burnings? Continuing the story is the only way to find out.

Examples of Rolls

The Storyteller rules system is designed with flexibility in mind, and as a result, there are about 270 combinations of Attributes and Abilities. This daunting number is just the beginning, too — you can certainly devise more Abilities if the need arises. The following examples of rolls are meant to give you some idea of the possibilities that might come up in a game.

- You've been on guard in your haven all night after your rival publicly threatened you, and it's nearly dawn. Roll Stamina + Alertness (difficulty 9) to keep watch through the day.
- You want to prove yourself at the Prince's hunting party and bring a newly trained brace of dogs to show off. Roll Wits + Animal Ken (difficulty 7) to keep them under control.
- You've found the perfect gift at the bazaar that will catch the eye of the lady you've been trying to seduce. Roll Manipulation + Commerce (difficulty 6) to get haggle the price down to something you can afford.
- You've always been quick with a needle, but tonight you need to be able to pass as one of the nobility. Roll Dexterity + Crafts (difficulty 8) to alter your old gown into something fashionable enough to fit in modern nights.



- You pay homage to the Prince, measuring your smile and tone as you introduce yourself; your survival hinges on how good of a first impression you can make here tonight. Roll Appearance + Etiquette (difficulty 7).
- The glower on the sheriff's face is never a good sign. Roll Wits + Empathy (difficulty 5) to determine whether you're the one he's unhappy with.
- You've intercepted a letter you're sure contains information that would be useful to blackmail your nemesis. Roll Intelligence + Enigmas (difficulty 7) to break the code it is written in.
- Several villagers have died and the rest are getting nervous but no one wants to talk about it. Roll Wits + Hearth Wisdom (difficulty 6) to decipher the charms and wards the villagers have displayed to determine what they think is going on.
- You got their attention; now to convince them to do what you want or risk getting their heads knocked in. Roll Strength + Intimidation (difficulty 6).
- You know they're going to try to make a move at the celebration tonight. You're just not sure who is a member of the conspiracy against the Prince. Roll Perception + Investigation (difficulty 8) to watch for the subtle tells of body language that give them away.
- You stepped up to lead when the blood hunt was called on your sire, and now you must prove yourself capable or risk your own standing in the city. Roll Charisma + Leadership (difficulty 7) to sway others to follow you.
- Getting into the prison isn't an issue, but getting your coterie mate's irons unlocked will require the key hanging from the guard's belt. Roll Dexterity + Legerdemain (difficulty 8).
- You didn't intend to drink so deeply and now he looks a little too pale. Roll Intelligence + Medicine (difficulty 6) to determine whether your victim can still recover.
- You've studied the various things that go bump in the night since before your Embrace, but this is out of even your experience. Roll Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 9) to identify its weaknesses.
- You've practiced for this one performance at Elysium for weeks. Roll Dexterity + Performance (difficulty 6) to hit every note perfectly.

- It's not how fast you can ride, but how good you look doing it. Roll Appearance + Ride (difficulty 5) to impress others with your horsemanship.
- Your estate hasn't been as profitable as usual in spite of a good harvest. Are your servants stealing from you? Roll Wits + Seneschal (difficulty 7) to find out.
- You didn't intend to raise the alarm, but now the guards are up and looking for you. Roll Stamina + Stealth (difficulty 8) to stay still and hidden until they give up and the streets clear enough to get to safety.
- You didn't intend to be out on the steppes without shelter, but now you need shelter somewhere the hunters not far behind you won't discover. Roll Perception + Survival (difficulty 9) to find a suitable place to hide during the day.
- You need to convince the local priest that you are a faithful member of the flock or risk being declared a heretic and run out of town – or worse. Roll Manipulation + Theology (difficulty 7) to allay his suspicions with Holy Scripture.





The leaves fell early this year on the seaward side of the hills, swept away by a storm before they turned. Underfoot they are soft and rotten. My passage is soundless. The sickly sweet smell of the leaf mold combines with the wet pinewood smoke of the village, covering my scent. The birds have gone silent, and the wind is still.

Here, the chalky birch bark and the soft pines are marred by the buck's antlers. They will come to this place tonight, to fight over their does and their territory as they always have and always will. There are others, too, who will come, to watch them exhaust themselves in their struggle, and then to strike.

I see the wolf. The wolf does not see me.

He is an adolescent. I see him wandering the hills alone, cast out from his pack to find his own way in the world. He has not fared well, though he is large and powerful for his age. One ear hangs by a thread of cartilage from a festering stump, bulbous and peeling like a rotten cabbage. His wide, dull eyes list across the forest floor. His flesh stretches tightly over his ribs and hips. His nostrils flare as he searches for the scent of his prey. He is hungry, desperately hungry.

I know his hunger well.

Tonight is the Blood Moon. The bucks will spar. The cat-fiadhaich will howl and rut in the starlight. The men of the village in the lea come into the hills. They will drink and hunt and drink some more to keep the cold and the dark away. I hear them in the distance, their footfalls heavy and careless with drink. They speak in low voices, thinking themselves unheard. The wolf hears them. He turns his massive head toward them. He slinks slowly down the slope. He is hungry enough to risk picking off a stray hunter – a risky prospect.

I am not so hungry.

I step on an ash branch – a heavy, plodding step, like a human's. Immediately the wolf turns to me. He pins his ears back. He sees me now. To him, I must look almost like a man, but he knows I am something else. I do not have the scent of a man, that pungent, mammalian, earthy scent of sweat, blood, and stale breath. He growls at me, uncomprehending.

I am his death. He cannot fathom this. He knows nothing of death. He knows only pain and suffering and struggle, but his own mortality is beyond him. He is immortal, knowing only the moment in which he lives.

He is young, strong, and desperate, but I pin him to the soft earth easily with my claws. Our struggle stirs leaves of autumn up in to the air, smelling already of rot and mildew. His teeth clamp on to my shoulder. In a living man, he would shred skin, bone, nerve, and sinew. He would taste my blood and sap my strength. In my shoulder, he leaves only dents like impressions in pale clay.

I bite into his throat. I taste his mortality, deep and rich and raw. It invigorates me. For a moment I am whole again – a part of this brutal and terrible world. I am alive as the forest and raw as a screaming infant. My flesh burns from the blood coursing through my body as a frostbitten limb burns when immersed in warm water. I am whole and pure as when I was a living man, a living man on a bitterly cold autumn evening so many years ago, when we slaughtered the cats for the taghairm and they sewed me into an ox's raw hide and threw me into the fire until I heard the voices of the gods. I am the heat of the sun and the chill of the night and the blood-red claws of the earth.

And – just for a moment – I too am immortal.

And then there is nothing. There is nothing left of the wolf now; he is now a small, broken thing, as cold and lifeless as I am.

The forest falls silent. The wind picks up again out of the north, sharp and cold. A tawny owl cries out once, and then is silent. The men finish their hunting early and go home to their warm beds and their wives. They lock the doors behind them to keep out the cold and the darkness.

Winter will come early this year.

Chapter Seven: Systems and Drama

You are not Nommos, we told the great beast Kaneh. We do not need your sins. We do not need your crimes. We do not need your blood. We have sins, crimes, and blood of our own. Grow your dog's tail and run, we told him, for our spears are sharp with sins, crimes, and blood. And he did.

-Unknown Dogon Text, from the Library of Elpis the Cappadocian

This chapter covers specific mechanics, including general dramatic systems, combat, injury, and recovery. If you come up with a resolution system you like better, by all means use it, as discussed on p. 321 ("The Golden Rule"). Also – particularly when dealing with social actions like seductions and diplomacy – the dice should never get in the way of roleplaying; they should only complement it.

Dramatic Systems

Dramatic systems simplify the Storyteller's job by supplying rules for a number of common activities. A character attempting to accomplish a task adds together an Attribute and Ability and rolls that number of dice. Each die that rolls a result higher than the difficulty assigned to the roll counts as one success. If a task falls within a character's specialty (p. 323), that character gains two successes instead of one for each "10" the player achieves on his roll. The list of systems below is not exhaustive, but provides a foundation to base events on. For rolls involving Talents and Skills, characters lacking a specific Ability may default to the Attribute on which the Ability is based. Skill-based actions have the difficulty of their rolls increased by one. Talent-based actions impose no penalty. Knowledge rolls cannot be made without the relevant Ability.

Most of these systems involve taking one or more actions (p. 320) over one or more turns (p. 324). A number of these systems may be tried again if the first attempt is unsuccessful. Subsequent efforts may suffer a difficulty penalty (see "Trying It Again," p. 323).

Automatic Feats

Automatic feats require the character to take an action, but don't involve a roll under most circumstances. The following are common automatic feats.

Blood Use (Healing, Augmenting Attributes, etc.)

Vampire characters may spend blood to heal themselves by concentrating for a turn. A character may attempt other actions while healing if she earns a success on a Stamina + Survival reflexive roll (difficulty 8). Failing means the vampire loses all expended blood points with no effect, while a botch causes the vampire to lose both an additional blood point and an additional health level. Spending blood to

raise Physical Attributes or power Disciplines is done automatically. A character may spend an amount of vitae equal to her per-turn rating, as dictated by her Generation (p. 184).

Getting to Your Feet

Characters may rise from the ground in one turn without making a roll. If a character wishes to get to her feet while doing something else in the same turn, she must take a multiple action (see "Multiple Actions," p. 322) with a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 4).

Movement

A character walks 7 yards/meters per turn. If jogging, a character moves at (12 + Dexterity) yards/meters per turn. If all-out running, a character moves at (20 + [3 x Dexterity]) yards/meters per turn.

Characters may move at up to half maximum running speed, then attack or perform another action. Taking another action while moving is possible, but each yard/meter moved subtracts one from the other action's dice pool. Note that injured characters cannot move at maximum speed. Also note that Celerity modifies the character's movement speed.

Readying a Weapon

If the character wishes to ready a weapon while doing something else in the same turn, the player must reduce his dice pool (see "Multiple Actions," p. 322) and roll Dexterity + Melee or Archery (difficulty 4) for the readying attempt.

Yielding

The character allows the character with the next-highest initiative (p. 343) to act. She may still act at the end of the turn. If all characters (player and Storyteller) yield during a turn, no one does anything that turn.

Physical Feats

These systems cover actions involving the Physical Attributes. These feats typically require a roll. Celerity, Fortitude, and Potence add dice to Physical Attributes when making many of these rolls.

Carrying Capacity [Strength]

A character can carry 20lbs./10 kg per point of Strength without penalty. When exceeding this total, the difficulty of every action involving physical skills automatically increases by one due to the weight. Also, every 20lbs./10 kg over the limit halves the character's base movement (see "Movement," p. 333). A character bearing a total weight of double her Strength allocation can't move. This system is a guideline, so the Storyteller should not call for an inventory accounting every time your character picks up a quill.

Travel Speeds

A rider could travel up to 40 miles/65km in a day. Merchant caravans traveled slower at 15-30 miles/30-50km a day while messengers with a change of horses along the route could go as far as 60 miles/95km a day under ideal conditions though mountains, weather, and poorly maintained roads slowed even the most experienced traveler.

Climbing [Dexterity + Athletics]

Climbing is typically an extended Dexterity + Athletics roll. For an average climb with available handholds and nominal complications, your character moves 3 yards/meters for every success. The Storyteller adjusts this distance based on the climb's difficulty (easier: 5 yards/meters per success; more difficult: 2 yards/meters per success).

The number of handholds and environmental factors can affect rate of travel. A short, difficult climb may have the same difficulty as a long, easy climb. The extended action lasts until you've accumulated enough successes to reach the desired height. If you botch a climbing roll, your character may slip, get stuck, or fall. If the character grows claws with Protean, constructs bone spurs with the Vicissitude power of Rend the Osseous Frame, or a similar power to assist them, all climbing difficulties are reduced by two.

Driving [Dexterity/Wits + Riding]

A Driving roll isn't needed to steer a cart under normal circumstances, assuming your character has at least one dot in the Riding Skill. Bad weather, the vehicle's speed, obstacles, and complex maneuvers may require rolls even the most competent teamster. Specific difficulties based on these circumstances are up to the Storyteller, but should increase as the conditions become more hazardous. For example, the difficulty of rolls for driving in heavy rain or heavy traffic are increased by one, but going fast while also trying to lose pursuers increases the difficulty by three. A failed roll indicates trouble, requiring an additional roll to avoid crashing or losing control of the horses or oxen. Characters who have no dots in the Riding Skill need a

roll for almost every change in course or procedure when controlling a vehicle. On a botch, the teamster may lose control of the animals and carriage.

Hunting [Various]

For each hour the vampire spends searching for human prey, allow the player to make a roll against a difficulty based on the area in which the vampire hunts. The Attribute and Ability combination used should correspond to the character's hunting technique. For example, Appearance + Subterfuge might represent a lusty tryst at a tavern, while Wits + Streetwise might be a deadly game of cat-and-mouse.

Area	Difficulty
Slums/The Circus	4
Lower-class neighborhood	5
Market district	6
Merchant-class neighborhood	7
Heavily patrolled area	8

Success on this roll indicates that the vampire has caught her prey and may now ingest as many blood points as she wishes to take from the victim (or, if the Storyteller prefers, a single die's worth of blood points). Failure indicates that the hour is spent looking fruitlessly, while a botch indicates a complication.

If the character catches prey but currently has fewer blood points in her body than [7 - Self-Control or Instinct], the character is considered to be hungry and a frenzy check (p. 357) is necessary. The player rolls Self-Control to see if the character frenzies, or Instinct to see if the character can control her frenzy while feeding. If the player fails, the character continues to gorge on the vessel until she is completely sated, the victim dies, or she somehow manages to regain control.

The Fame and Domain Backgrounds reduce difficulties of hunting rolls by one per dot (to a minimum of 3), while an appropriate Herd Background adds one die per dot. Storytellers may increase hunting difficulties for particularly inhuman vampires as they find it difficult to blend in with a crowd.

Intrusion [Dexterity/Perception + Legerdemain]

Intrusion covers breaking and entering and picking locks – and preventing others from doing the same. Intrusion rolls can range from 5 (standard locks) to 9 (Tower of London), depending on complexity. Certain tasks might require a minimum level of the Legerdemain Skill for the character to have any chance of succeeding. Bear in mind that most intrusion tasks require lockpicks or other tools. On a botch, the character's break-in attempt goes horribly awry. Setting up security measures is a standard action, but multiple successes achieved in the effort increase the system's quality, adding to the difficulty to breach it.

Jumping [Strength, or Strength + Athletics for a running jump]

Jump rolls are made versus a difficulty of 3. Each success on a jump roll launches your character 20 inches/50 cm vertically or 1 yard/meter horizontally. A character must clear more distance than the distance between her and her destination. On a failure, the player may make a Dexterity + Athletics roll (typically versus difficulty 6) to allow the character to grab onto a ledge or other safety as she falls. On a botch, your character may slip on the precipice, leap right into a wall, or fall to her doom. If the player makes a Perception + Athletics roll (difficulty 6, three successes required) before attempting a jump, he may gauge how many successes are needed to make the leap.

Lifting/Breaking [Strength]

The chart provides the minimum Strength needed to deadlift various weights or break objects without a die roll. Characters of lower Strength may roll Willpower (difficulty 9) to affect heavier weights than their Strength ratings allow for. Each success advances the character by one level on the chart.

Strength	Feats	Lift (kg)
1	Throw a rock	20
2	Break a wooden chair	45
3	Break down a wooden door	115
4	Break a wooden plank	180
5	Bend a sword	295
6	Throw a small pony	360
7	Throw a riding horse	410
8	Throw a warhorse	455
9	Punch through a simple stone wall	545
10	Rip open a reinforced door	680
11	Punch through a heavily reinforced door	910
12	Lift a small portcullis	1360
13	Throw a fully loaded wagon	1815
14	Throw a small boat	2265
15	Lift a large portcullis	2720

Characters can work together to lift an object. This is a teamwork roll for which the individual players roll separately and combine any resulting successes. Lifting is all or nothing — if you fail the roll, nothing happens. At the Storyteller's discretion, your character's effective Strength may be raised if all she wants to do is drag something a short distance instead of pick it up. On a botch, your character may strain or injure herself.

Opening/Closing [Strength]

Opening a door with brute force calls for a Strength roll (difficulty 6 to 8, depending on the material of the door). A standard interior door requires only one success to bash open or slam shut. A reinforced door takes five successes. A vault door might take 10 or more successes. Characters may accumulate these successes in an extended action. While teamwork is possible, a door can still be forced open through a single individual's repeated hammering. A botch causes a health level of lethal damage to your character's shoulder. Certain doors (metal vault doors and the like) may require a Strength minimum just to make an attempt.

Pursuit [Dexterity + Athletics/Riding]

Generally, calculating movement can automatically resolve pursuit; if one party is clearly faster than another, the faster party catches or evades the slower party eventually. However, dramatic situations may occur if two characters move with nearly equal speed or if one character might lose the other or make it to safety before she catches him. In these cases, use the system below.

Basic pursuit is an extended action. The target starts with a number of free extra successes based on his distance from the pursuer. This breaks down as follows: on foot, one free success for every 2 yards/meters ahead of pursuers; on horseback, one free success for every 10 yards/meters ahead of pursuers. The target and pursuers make the appropriate roll (depending on the type of pursuit) each turn. When the pursuer accumulates more total successes than the target has, she catches up and may take further actions to stop the chase. As the target accumulates successes, he gains distance from his pursuers and may use that lead to lose his opponents. Each success that the quarry accumulates beyond the pursuer's total acts adds one to the difficulty to any Perception roll a pursuer must make to remain on the target's tail. The Storyteller may call for the pursuer to make a Perception roll at any time. If the pursuer fails this roll, she loses her target, who can then successfully escape. On a botch, the pursuer loses her quarry immediately. If the quarry botches, he stumbles or ends up at a dead end.

Riding [Dexterity/Wits + Riding]

A roll isn't needed to ride under normal conditions, assuming your character has at least one dot in the Riding Skill. That said, bad weather, the horse's temperament, pace, and terrain can challenge the most competent riders. Specific difficulties are up to the Storyteller, but should increase as the conditions become more hazardous. For example, riding in rough terrain adds one to the difficulty of the roll, but doing so quickly raises the difficulty by three. A failed roll indicates trouble, requiring an additional roll to retain control or avoid falling. On a botch, the character may injure herself falling.

Shadowing [Dexterity + Stealth/Riding]

Shadowing someone requires that your character keep tabs on the target without being noticed. At the Storyteller's discretion, or if the target suspects she's being pursued, the target's player can roll Perception + Alertness whenever she has a chance to spot her tail. The pursuer's player opposes this with a Dexterity + Stealth roll (or Dexterity + Riding, if on horseback). The difficulty for both rolls is typically 6, but conditions (heavy crowds, empty streets, etc.) can modify it. The target must score at least one more success than her shadow does to spot the tail; if she does, she may act accordingly. Shadowers who have trained together can combine their separate rolls into one success total.

Sneaking [Dexterity + Stealth]

A character uses Dexterity + Stealth to resist Perception + Alertness rolls from anyone able to detect her passing (difficulty 6 for both rolls). Unless observers score more successes than the sneaking character does, she passes undetected. Noise, unsecured gear, lack of cover, or large groups of observers can increase Stealth difficulty. Guard patrols or superior vantage points may add dice to Perception + Alertness rolls. On a botch, the character performs some act that compromises her stealth.

Note that vampires using the Obfuscate Discipline may not have to make rolls at all.

Swimming [Stamina + Athletics]

Swimming requires one dot of Athletics, and long-distance or long-duration swimming requires successful swimming rolls versus a difficulty determined by water conditions. The first roll is necessary only after the first

hour of sustained activity, and only one success is needed. If a roll fails, the character loses ground – perhaps pulled off-course by a current. If a roll botches, she starts to sink, or might even be hit by a heedless ship.

Vampires caught in shallow water during the day will take damage from sunlight (assume that a submerged vampire has protection equivalent to being under cloud cover).

Throwing [Dexterity + Athletics]

Objects (knives, beer bottles) with a mass of two pounds/one kilogram or less can be thrown a distance of Strength x 5 yards/meters. For every additional two pounds/one kilogram of weight that an object has, this distance decreases by five yards/meters. As long as the throwing distance isn't reduced to zero, your character can pick up and throw it. If an object can be lifted, but its mass reduces throwing distance to zero, the object can be hurled aside at best — about one yard or meter of distance.

The Storyteller may reduce throwing distances for particularly unwieldy objects or increase them for aerodynamic ones. Throwing an object with any degree of accuracy requires a Dexterity + Athletics roll versus difficulty 6 (to half maximum range) or 7 (half to maximum range). This difficulty can be adjusted for wind conditions and other variables at the Storyteller's discretion. On a botch, your character may drop the object, hit an unintended target, or she might toss something that she didn't mean to throw.

Mental Feats

These systems cover tasks involving the Mental Attributes as well as tasks using the Virtues, Paths, and Willpower. Mental tests can provide you with information about things your character knows but you, the player, don't. Still, try depending on your own creativity when solving problems over dice rolls.

Awakening During the Day [Perception, Path]

Vampires find it difficult to awaken during the day. A vampire disturbed in his haven while the sun is in the sky may roll Perception + Auspex if the vampire has it (difficulty 8) to notice the disturbance. Upon stirring, the vampire must make a Road roll (difficulty 8).

Each success allows the vampire to act for one turn. Five successes mean the vampire is completely awake for the entire scene. Failure indicates the vampire slips back into slumber, but may make the Perception roll to reawaken if circumstances allow. A botch means the vampire immediately falls into deep sleep until sundown.

While active during the day, the vampire may have no more dice in any dice pool than his Road rating.

Creation [variable]

When trying to create something, a variety of rolls can be used, depending on what it is the character wishes to create. Perception + Expression or Crafts is a common roll. In all cases, the player must decide the general parameters of what she wants her character to create. The difficulty is variable, depending on the nature of the creation. The number of successes governs the quality of the creation. With one success, the character creates a mediocre work. With five successes the character creates a literary or artistic masterpiece. Some works might require extended rolls to accumulate an even higher number of successes. On a botch, the character creates what she knows is the greatest work ever known (while everyone else immediately realizes its true quality), she embarrasses a patron, or leaves out a pivotal figure. At the Storyteller's discretion, a vampire who creates a particularly inspired masterwork might be eligible for a rise in certain Roads via experience points. Likewise, a creative epiphany may be suitable for working through and curing a humor (see p. 352).

Investigation [Perception + Investigation]

Any search for clues or hidden contraband involves Investigation. The Storyteller may add to the difficulty of investigations involving obscure clues or particularly well-concealed objects. One success reveals basic details, while multiple successes provide detailed information and may even allow deductions based on physical evidence. On a botch, obvious clues are missed or even destroyed accidentally.

Repair [Dexterity/Perception + Crafts]

Depending on the precise specialty, the Crafts Skill allows for repairs of everything from pottery to wagon wheels. Before repairing a device, your character must identify its problems. If repair is required, the Storyteller sets the difficulty of the repair roll. A simple wheel change is difficulty 4, while rebuilding an entire carriage might be difficulty 9. Basic repairs take at least a few turns to complete. More complex repairs are extended actions that last 10 minutes for each success needed. On a botch, your character may simply waste time and a new part, or may make the problem worse.



Research [Intelligence + Academics/Occult/Theology]

Characters perform Research when searching for obscure references in ancient documents, or when trying to learn the true name of a Methuselah. In all cases, the number of successes achieved determines the amount of information discovered. One success gives you at least basic information, while extra successes provide more details. The Storyteller may assign a high difficulty for particularly obscure information. On a botch, your character may not find anything at all or may uncover completely erroneous facts.

Tracking [Perception + Survival]

Tracking consists of following physical evidence such as footprints, broken twigs, or other physical signs which lead the tracker to his target. Following such a trail is a standard action; multiple successes provide extra information (subject's speed, weight, number of people followed). The quarry can cover her tracks through a Wits + Survival roll. Each success on this roll adds one to the difficulty of tracking her. Abnormal weather, poor tracking conditions, and a shortage of time also add to difficulty. On a botch, your character not only loses the trail, but destroys the quarry's signs of passage.

Social Feats

These systems cover tasks involving the Social Attributes. Roleplaying usually supersedes any Social skill roll, for better or worse. Storytellers may opt to ignore the Social systems when a player exhibits particularly good or excruciatingly bad roleplaying. Alternatively, roleplaying can offer difficulty penalties or bonuses to relevant Social dice pools.

Carousing [Charisma + Empathy]

You influence others to relax and have fun. This might include showing a potential ally a good time, loosening an informant's tongue, or making instant drinking buddies who come to your aid when a brawl starts. The normal difficulty for this roll is 6, though it might be higher in the case of large or surly groups. On a botch, your character

comes off as an obnoxious boor or people begin to question why your character hasn't touched her own food and drink.

Credibility [Manipulation/ Perception + Subterfuge]

The Subterfuge Talent is used with Manipulation when perpetrating a scam, or Perception when trying to detect one. All parties involved make an appropriate roll (typically difficulty 7). The mark must roll higher than the perpetrator to detect any deception. False credentials and other props may add to the difficulty of uncovering the dupe, while teamwork may help reveal the scam. On a botch, the entire plan falls apart, or in the case of trying to detect a scam, the mark falls for it to his spectacular detriment.

Fast-Talk [Manipulation + Subterfuge]

When there's no time for subtlety, baffle them with nonsense. The target can be overwhelmed with a rapid succession of almost believable half-truths. This is a resisted action – your character's Manipulation + Subterfuge against the target's Willpower. The difficulty of both rolls is typically 6, and whoever scores more successes wins. On a tie, more babbling is needed. On a botch, your character goes too far, angering the target and rambling without effect.

Interrogation [Manipulation + Empathy/Intimidation]

Interrogating someone peacefully (Manipulation + Empathy) involves asking strategic questions designed to reveal specific facts. This method is a resisted action between your character's Manipulation + Empathy and the subject's Willpower (both at difficulty 6). Both players roll at key points during questioning, probably every few minutes or at the end of an interrogation session.

Violent interrogation (Manipulation + Intimidation) involves torturing the victim's mind and/or body until she reveals what she knows. This is a resisted action between your character's Manipulation + Intimidation and the target's Stamina + 3 or Willpower (whichever is higher). Both players roll every minute or turn, depending on the type of torture used. The subject loses a health level for every turn of physical torture, or one temporary Willpower point per turn of mental torture. The combined effect of physical and mental torture has devastating results. A botched roll can destroy the subject's body or mind.

Two or more interrogators can work together, even if one interrogator is using Empathy while another is using Intimidation. If you roll more successes in the resisted action, the target divulges additional information for each extra success rolled. If your extra successes exceed the victim's permanent Willpower rating, she folds completely and reveals everything she knows. The extent and relevance of information are up to the Storyteller.

Intimidation [Strength/ Manipulation + Intimidation]

Intimidation has two effects. Passively, the higher your character's Intimidation rating, the wider the berth that others give him. Actively, intimidation works through subtlety or outright threat. Subtlety is based on a perceived threat. Roll Manipulation + Intimidation in a resisted action against the subject's Willpower (difficulty 6 for both rolls); the target must get more successes or be effectively cowed.

The blatant form of intimidation involves direct physical threat. In this case, roll Strength + Intimidation in a resisted roll (difficulty 6) against the subject's Willpower or her Strength + Intimidation (whichever is higher). On a botch, your character looks patently ridiculous and doesn't impress anyone in attendance for the rest of the scene.

Oration [Charisma + Leadership]

When your character speaks to an audience, roll Charisma + Leadership (difficulty 6). The Storyteller may increase the difficulty for a huge, cynical, dispassionate, or openly hostile audience. Oration is hit or miss — your character either succeeds or fails. On a botch, your character may damage her reputation or even be assaulted by the audience.

If the character has time to prepare a speech beforehand, the Storyteller may roll the character's Intelligence + Expression (difficulty 7). Success on this roll reduces the subsequent Charisma + Leadership difficulty by one. Failure has no effect, while a botch increases the difficulty.

Performance [Charisma + Performance]

When a character performs before an audience, roll Charisma + Performance (difficulty 7). As with oration, the audience's mood changes the difficulty, as can the performance's complexity. One success indicates an enjoyable (if uninspired) effort, while additional successes make the performance a truly memorable event to even the surliest crowd. On a botch, your character forgets lines or otherwise flubs the show, which can result in the same drawbacks as botching oration.

Seduction [variable]

Vampires are master seducers, often coaxing potential prey into a liaison. The particular situation and style of the seduction determine which Ability is used.

Seduction is an involved process involving several different rolls and Abilities:

First roll (approach): The player rolls Appearance + Subterfuge versus a difficulty of the subject's Wits + 3. Each success beyond the first adds one die to the pool for the second roll. A failure means the subject expresses his disinterest; a botch means the subject might grow disgusted or angry.

Second roll (witty repartee): The player rolls Wits + Subterfuge versus a difficulty of the subject's Intelligence + 3. Each success beyond the first adds one die to the final roll. If the roll fails, the subject breaks off the contact, but might prove receptive at a later date since the first impression was good. A botch gives the subject some sort of dangerous insight about the character.

Third roll (intimate conversation): The player rolls Charisma + Empathy versus a difficulty of the subject's Perception + 3. If the third roll succeeds, the subject is enamored with the character and agrees to accompany him to a private spot. If the roll fails, the subject breaks off the contact, but might prove receptive at a later date. On a botch, the vampire likely ends up with a drink in his face.

Spending Willpower

Willpower is one of the most important Traits in **Vampire**. Because there are so many ways to spend and regain Willpower, it fluctuates more than any other Trait (besides blood pool).

A Willpower point may be spent to gain an automatic success on a single action. You must declare you are spending the point before you make the roll. You may use only one point of Willpower in a single turn in this manner, but the success is guaranteed and may not be canceled, even by botches. By using Willpower in this way, it is possible to succeed at a given action simply by concentrating. For extended rolls, these extra successes may make the critical difference between accomplishment



and failure. The Storyteller may declare that a Willpower point may not be spent on a given action.

A character may automatically take some action based on instinct or urge – for example, leaping away from a patch of sunlight through a window. A player may spend a Willpower point to avoid taking this reactive maneuver. The impulse may return at the Storyteller's discretion; a player may need to spend multiple Willpower points over the course of a few turns to stay on task. Sometimes the force of the character's will may overcome the urge in question. At other times, the character has no choice but to follow his instinct when the character runs out of or no longer spends Willpower.

A Willpower point may prevent a Derangement from manifesting. Eventually, if the Storyteller determines the player has spent enough points, the character may overcome the Derangement, as enough denial of the Derangement can remedy the aberration. Malkavians may never overcome their initial Derangement, but they may spend Willpower to temporarily deny it.

By spending a Willpower point, wound penalties can be ignored for one turn. This allows a character to override pain and injury in order to take one last-ditch action. However, a character at the Incapacitated health level or in torpor may not spend Willpower in this manner.

Regaining Willpower

Characters may recover Willpower as well as spend it. The following situations earn the character back a point or more of Willpower, though a character's Willpower pool may never exceed her Willpower rating. The only way to increase a character's Willpower *rating* is through spending experience points.

Generally, a character's Willpower pool may be replenished whenever the character fulfills a goal or has an opportunity to restore her self-confidence. Specific instances of Willpower restoration are up to the Storyteller. For this reason, Storytellers are advised to take a balanced approach in allowing characters to regain Willpower; allow it when appropriate, but not to the point that players can spend Willpower to sail through any obstacle. Willpower is a powerful and versatile Trait, and permitting players to rely on it too much strips much of the challenge from a story.

Characters' Willpower pools replenish fully at the end of a story (which may take multiple sessions). The Storyteller may restrict this by requiring that the characters achieve a goal or otherwise boost their self-confidence.

Characters regain one Willpower point each night when they first rise. This is easy on the bookkeeping, and allows a steady stream of Willpower replenishment.

If a character attains some extraordinary goal or fulfills an outstanding objective, the Storyteller may reward her with a point of Willpower.

If a character behaves in a manner that fulfills her Nature Archetype, the Storyteller may reward the character with one to three Willpower points.

Storytellers should create their own systems or modify our systems to suit their group's style of play. The manner in which a Storyteller allows (or refuses to allow) Willpower replenishment can determine the overall mood of the chronicle.

Blood Pool

Nightly, a vampire rises from slumber with one fewer blood point than she had when she went to sleep for the day. Joining the land of the living costs her one blood point, one small measure of human life. The monster must hunt to replenish her lost reserves. However, this is not the only thing that expends her reserves.

Blood pool limits the Self-Control and Instinct Virtues. No roll using those Virtues may use more dice than the vampire's current blood pool. For example, if a vampire has three blood points in her pool and four dots of Self-Control, she has access to only three of her Self-Control dice to resist frenzy.

Using Blood Pool

Depending on a Cainite's Generation (see p. 341), she may reflexively spend one or more blood points per turn. Characters may spend their blood pool for the following purposes:

- **Healing:** A character may spend one blood point to reflexively heal one health level of bashing or lethal damage. Wounds seal. Bruises fade. Bones knit. Limbs regrow. Indeed, if the vampire spends enough blood to heal a wound in the turn it's inflicted, the body never fully suffers the wound; the blood wells up and draws the broken body back together effortlessly. Note that vampires may only heal through blood, unlike humans.
- **Quickening:** A vampire may spend one blood point to raise a Physical Attribute – Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina – by one dot for the remainder of the scene. While she may do this reflexively, it must be announced before a roll is made. She may raise a given Attribute *one dot higher* than her Generational maximum. For example, a Sixth Generation vampire may increase her Attributes to eight, not the normal seven dots. She may raise Attributes beyond that level, albeit temporarily. Anything above that level fades three turns after she stops spending blood.

- **Transference:** A vampire's blood can feed other Cainites on a one-for-one basis. The vampire makes a wound, another feeds and gains sustenance. This does impose a stage of the Blood Oath, however (see p. 342).
- **Ghouls:** Vampires may feed their blood to humans or animals, thus creating ghouls. See p. 399 for more on ghouls.
- **Imitating Life:** While forever stuck in the state in which they died, vampires still show the signs of death. Her flesh is as cool as the air around her. She does not naturally breathe. Her body does not expel sweat or sexual fluids. However, by spending a variable amount of blood, she may feign the signs of life for the scene. Her body warms. She presents as sexually capable. Her chest rises and falls without thought. This costs one blood point for every dot of Road less than eight. So, a Cainite with Road of Humanity at four dots must spend four blood points to imitate life. At Storyteller discretion, characters on particularly wicked Roads may not imitate life.
- **Disciplines:** Some vampiric Disciplines require blood to use. Chapter Five details Disciplines and their costs.

Replenishing Blood Pool

Cainites replenish expended or lost blood points by feeding on the living. While this does not necessarily mean humans, they are the most common and fulfilling victims.

Drinking blood carries risks for the vessel. If the vampire takes more than two blood points (about two pints, or one liter), a human might pass out or suffer health risks. Functionally, they roll Stamina -1 for every blood point taken after the second. Failure means they pass out. A botch means they will likely die without immediate and severe intervention. Additionally, a vampire's bite may pass on any communicable diseases if she's not careful.

A vampire can take up to three blood points per turn. If the turn represents a short time, the feeding is rushed and forceful. However, most feeding happens at the vampire's behest, as once her fangs penetrate her victim, they are awash with ecstasy called The Kiss. They cease fighting, if they would have fought to begin with. Mortals with nine or more dots of Willpower may fight back regardless of the pleasure. The ecstasy of The Kiss addicts some mortals (and indeed, some Cainites), who will seek out that objectification in the future.

Cainites still find The Kiss pleasurable, but they're aware of its danger, and thus have the urge to fight. They may make a Self-Control or Instinct roll at difficulty 8 to resist abandoning themselves to the assailant.

Mortals are considered to have one fewer blood points for each health level of damage they suffer. Without outside intervention such as ghouling, a mortal recovers one blood point per day. The blood of beasts carries with it little respite for Caine's brood. Even large animals with massive quantities of blood simply do not nourish vampires the way human or Cainite blood does. They have fewer blood points, as noted on the chart.

Blood also rapidly loses its nourishing properties once leaving the body, or once the body passes to death. It tastes awful to even the least discerning pallet. For every ten minutes outside a living vessel, halve the effective number of blood points in a source, rounding down.

Elder blood, however, is rich, potent, and delicious. Elders of lower Generations have higher blood pools, despite having the same physical amount of blood in their systems. Thus, drinking elder blood may actually provide more than three blood points per turn. Other supernatural creatures, such as werewolves, may have more potent blood as well.

Vessel	Blood Pool
Vampire	10+
Werewolf	20
Average Human	10
Child	5
Cow	5
Dog	2
Cat	1
Bird	1/2
Bat/Rat	1/4

Generation	Max Traits	Blood Pool	Blood/ Turn
Third	10	???	???
Fourth	9	50	10
Fifth	8	40	8
Sixth	7	30	6
Seventh	6	20	4
Eighth	5	15	3
Ninth	5	14	2
Tenth	5	13	1
Eleventh	5	12	1
Twelfth	5	11	1
Thirteenth+	5	10	1

Max Traits: This is a character's trait limit for Attributes, Abilities, Backgrounds, and Disciplines.
Blood Pool: This is the maximum number of blood points the vampire may store.
Blood Per Turn: This is the number of blood points a vampire may spend in a turn.

The Blood Oath

What is an act of intimacy for a creature that uses intimacy to sustain herself? What does reckless abandon and submission look like for creatures who revel in taboo and require theft and violation just to exist?

If there is an answer, it is in the Blood Oath, a unique property of the blood that creates an intense and irrational love the likes of which otherwise exist only in literature and the grand stories of minstrels. This affliction results from the consumption of Cainite blood. This dark infatuation keeps ghouls in service far beyond reason and may be the reason that the Princes war indirectly with one another.

Make no mistake: the Blood Oath is as real as any chaste courtly romance or worshipful devotion to providence. If any difference exists, it is that a vampire can force the bond on others. This often leads to states of twisted obsession and a love-hate so deep it destroys anyone in its wake.

- **The first drink:** On first swallow, the drinker becomes a thrall to a regnant, though his strong feelings are intermittent. The unaware thrall may dismiss it as little more than a minor preoccupation. The aware thrall, one who understands what the bond is, may experience exuberance whenever his regnant comes to mind. All in all, this stage is similar to the fresh blush of a youth's first love. He may dream of his regnant unexpectedly. His mind wanders. He'll haunt the places they have met and inadvertently put himself in the path to be around his regnant again. Most childer experience this gradation of the bond toward their sire. Preoccupation can lead to frustration, of course, and the seeds of loathing can well be planted even in this stage of the bond.

There are no mechanics for this stage of the oath, though the Storyteller should feel free to manipulate events to bring the thrall to his regnant over and over, as if by accident.

- **The second drink:** Now, the thrall's mood and actions fall under the sway of her love. Her preoccupation grows into prioritization as her regnant is no longer a distraction, but a major focus of her life. She's no slave, and her frustration or anger could grow to obsessive hate, but nonetheless, she finds it harder and harder to resist or even act against her regnant. Any action to directly harm her regnant requires a Willpower roll modified by her Nature and how positive or negative the regnant has acted toward her thrall. The regnant gains an advantage when manipulating her thrall's feelings and behavior. The difficulty of all the regnant's Social rolls against the thrall decrease by one.
- **The third drink:** At the third drink, the oath of blood is formed and the bond is complete. The regnant is the single most important figure in the thrall's life, and passion and obsession drive just about everything he does.

Now, a regnant can use the Dominate Discipline on her thrall without the need for eye contact. The difficulty of all the regnant's Social rolls against the thrall decrease by two. Her voice alone can control him. The difficulty for any roll the thrall makes to resist any sort of mental or emotional control from the regnant increases by two. High-Generation vampires still cannot use Dominate on a lower-Generation thrall.

Love and its expression are difficult to define, and so a guideline or series of mandates can't possibly cover the way in which the bond manifests. When in doubt, a player or Storyteller playing a thrall should ask, "Does this put my regnant front and center in my life right now?" Answering that question may help guide decision making for the character. Some thralls with appropriate Natures or less than five dots in Willpower may be driven to kill, destroy, or even commit suicide out of love. Those with more Willpower or certain codes of honor may be harder to push toward degeneration.

At the first and second taste, the thrall is euphoric, and that pleasure can be shared among others. A vampire can form several first and second step blood bonds at once. However, at the third step, when the full blood oath is taken, all lesser bonds vanish and new ones cannot be formed. It is not unheard of for lovers to enter into a mutual oath, though this dangerous step can lead to terrible regret and tragedy.

Without reinforcing the bond with additional drinks for the thrall, a bond may fade over time. Cruelty and degradation, if not carefully couched in gentleness, blood, and gifts, may cause the bond to strain.

A vampire can temporarily resist her bond. He must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 8, modified by his Nature and any recent kindness or abuse from the regnant, plus the number of times the thrall has fed from his regnant). The thrall must then spend a Willpower point. Upon doing so, the bond is negated for a variable amount of time, from one scene (if the thrall merely wishes to plot against the regnant, deliver confidential information to an enemy, etc.) to one turn (if the thrall wishes to attack the regnant physically). The thrall can continue to expend Willpower to extend the rebellion.

With a great deal of effort, a blood bond can be broken. This requires the thrall to avoid the regnant for a great many months. This also can require a great deal of Willpower in order to resist the addiction. If he does not feed from his domitor after a number of months equal to 12 - the thrall's Willpower, the bond reduces by one step. For example, a

character with four dots of Willpower in a full, third-stage blood oath that goes eight months without feeding from his domitor falls to a second-stage blood oath. If the oath falls to zero in this fashion, the bond disappears entirely.

The most surefire way is escape a Blood Oath is to kill a regnant, but even that is no guarantee the bond will end, leaving the thrall hopelessly in an eternal mourning for the object of her love and hate.

Combat Systems

In **V20 Dark Ages**, tensions run high and tempers run hot. Cainites pretend they're civil creatures, but they are monsters capable of massive devastation at a second's notice.

A single dice roll can handle most violent encounters like any other action. When a Brujah with Potence decides to invest the blood of Caine to fuel her undead muscles in order to snap a mortal's neck, a Strength + Brawl roll works fine in the heat of the moment. But when relatively matched opponents square off or when numbers or mitigating circumstances come into play, the following rules allow for a more detailed, dramatic combat scene.

Types of Combat

Characters may engage in two major categories of combat: close combat and ranged combat.

Close Combat: This includes unarmed, grappling, or hand-to-hand weapon combat. Unarmed combat uses Dexterity + Brawl rolls, and armed combat uses Dexterity + Melee. Unarmed attacks normally must occur within one yard or meter. Armed attacks normally occur within two yards or meters.

Ranged Combat: This occurs when characters use thrown or ranged weapons like stones, daggers, bows, or slings. Characters must normally be within line of sight to engage in ranged combat.

Combat Turns

Normally, a turn takes whatever time it needs to take. In a combat scene, turns are about three seconds. At the start of each turn, everyone determines their characters' Initiative placement. Then, in order of initiative, players take and resolve their actions. After all actions resolve, the Storyteller sums up the scene, and if the fight has not ended or moved beyond dice rolls, you determine initiative anew and start a new turn.

Setting the Stage

As each turn begins, the Storyteller should give a lay of the land, putting everyone into position and describing what they see. This moment of recap will save frustration on the back end, and help the scene to flow quicker.

Consider a map. You don't need a table full of complex miniature terrain (unless you want that!), but at least draw a little sketch to keep everyone aware of positioning and the tides of battle. This is particularly helpful in large-scale combats. If you have extra dice, use them to position characters, and you can even turn their faces to track initiative or wounds in an easy-to-see manner.

Initiative

Initiative determines how quickly your character moves to action, and in what order actions are resolved.

Every character possesses an Initiative rating equal to their Dexterity + Wits + Celerity dots. At the beginning of every turn, roll one die, and add the Initiative rating to the result. Any wound penalties subtract from this number. That's your character's Initiative for the turn. Every player involved rolls, including the Storyteller for any participating Storyteller characters. If two characters share a result, the character with the higher Initiative rating goes first. If they share Initiative ratings, their actions occur simultaneously.

Once all characters determine their Initiative scores for the combat, the character with the highest Initiative goes first. After that, move through each character's action in descending Initiative order. Any player may choose to delay his character's action to a later point in the roster.

If a character chooses to take a defensive action, that action may occur at any time in the initiative roster in response to another character's action.

Lastly, any addition actions taken as result of a multiple action (see p. 322) occur at the end of the turn. If multiple characters are using multiple actions, resolve their additional actions in Initiative order as well.

Resolving Actions

In a combat scene, most actions will be attacks. Other actions are handled normally, with standard dice pools.

At the Storyteller's discretion, some actions might not be allowed in the scope of a combat turn. For example, repairing a suit of armor most certainly takes longer than a normal combat allows. Attack rolls depend on the actions in question:

Close Combat: Roll Dexterity + Brawl for unarmed attacks, or Dexterity + Melee for armed attacks.

Ranged Combat: Roll Dexterity + Archery for bow attacks, or Dexterity + Athletics for thrown weapons.

Most attack rolls are made at difficulty 6. Weapons and other circumstances may modify these dice pools or difficulties. For example, firing a bow at extreme distance should levy a difficulty penalty. If you roll no successes, the attack fails and the character causes her opponent no damage. With a botch, she makes a major error, her weapon breaks or jams, or perhaps she strikes an ally or unintended bystander.

Defensive Maneuvers

Characters may dodge, block, or parry attacks, so long as they're willing to devote their action to defense or penalize their dice pools appropriately (see multiple actions, p. 322). Before a player makes an attack roll, the opponent must declare any defensive maneuvers he wishes to take.

Successes on a defensive maneuver subtract from an attacker's successes. If this reduces an attack to zero successes, the attack fails. Otherwise, it reduces the damage dice pool.

A character may take the following defensive maneuvers, if he's properly equipped:

- **Block:** The character may block attacks that cause bashing damage by strategically using his body to deflect the blow. Roll Dexterity + Brawl. He may block lethal and aggravated attacks if he has Fortitude or is wearing appropriate armor.
- **Dodge:** The character may dodge any attack he's aware of. Roll Dexterity + Athletics. If he has no room to maneuver, a block or parry may be required at Storyteller discretion. If dodging an arrow or other very fast ranged weapon, the difficulty of dodge actions increase by 2. Active use of Celerity mitigates this penalty.
- **Parry:** The character uses a weapon to deflect a brawling or melee attack. Roll Dexterity + Melee to parry. When parrying an unarmed attack, if the defender rolls more successes than the attacker, apply those additional successes as a successful attack against the attacker. The attacker may not roll to defend against this attack; she may only soak. Shields and certain weapons can be used to influence parry attempts (see the chart on p. 350).

Full Defense

You may choose to forgo other actions in the turn and dedicate your character's action to defending. Instead of using the normal multiple actions rules, roll his full dice pool against the first attack. Reduce each subsequent defensive roll by one die for the rest of the turn, cumulatively. If you have no dice, you cannot roll. There's no difficulty penalty when using full defense.

Damage

After defense is factored in, if any successes remain on the attack, the attack hits. In that case, you roll a damage dice pool to determine how hard the hit sinks. Damage dice pools are almost always difficulty 6.

Every weapon has a damage rating. Add that damage rating to the net successes rolled on the attack. Some damage ratings are based on the character's Strength, whereas ranged damage tends to be rated by the weapon alone.

Once you've rolled the damage, each success means one health level of damage. First, characters are allowed to soak damage, however.

Damage Types

Damage comes in three types; bashing, lethal, and aggravated. Each increases in severity, lethality, and difficulty to defend against and soak. See healing times on p. 352 for mortal healing times; vampires heal only with blood.

Damage rolls may never botch; treat a botched roll as a normal failure.

Health

Bruised		☒
Hurt	–1	☒
Injured	–1	☒
Wounded	–2	☒
Mauled	–2	☒
Crippled	–5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

Bashing: Bashing damage comes from punches, sticks, and other sources of blunt trauma that are unlikely to instantly kill a victim. All characters use their full Stamina ratings to soak bashing damage. Vampires shrug off bashing damage as trivial; halve all bashing damage a vampire takes after soaking, and round down. Mark bashing damage down the health track with a slash "/". Mortals with a health track full of bashing damage fall unconscious. Cainites continue moving as if they were Crippled (-5). Further bashing damage past the health track turns into lethal damage.

Lethal: Lethal damage comes from bladed weapons and other sources of injury that cause immediate, threatening wounds to mortal flesh. With Storyteller discretion, blunt attacks aimed at a mortal's vitals (difficulty 8 or 9 to target) cause lethal damage. Cainites soak lethal damage with their full Stamina. Mortals may not soak lethal damage without armor. Mark lethal damage with an "X" on the health track. Cainites with a health track full of lethal damage fall to torpor (see p. 351). Mortals die. Further lethal damage to a Cainite becomes aggravated damage.

Aggravated: Aggravated damage is a damage type specific to Cainites and other supernatural creatures. Mortals treat aggravated wounds just like lethal wounds. Aggravated damage reflects those deadly banes to vampiric existence such as the sun, fire, and the teeth and claws of other vampires and lupines. This damage may only be soaked with a vampire's Fortitude dots. A single level of aggravated damage requires a full day's rest and five blood points. The vampire may spend these five over any number of days, but the wound will not heal until the fifth is spent. He may spend five additional blood points to heal additional levels while he slumbers. A Cainite with a health track full of aggravated damage suffers Final Death.

Soak

After rolling damage, victims may soak damage. This reflects the body's ability to shrug off some degree of physical punishment. As noted above, characters may soak different types of damage with different traits. Roll the soak dice pool (usually Stamina + Fortitude + Armor), difficulty 6. Each success removes one health level from the wound caused. Note that soaking is always allowed; a character does not need to use her action to soak, nor does she need to be aware of the attack. Soak rolls may not botch; treat botches as standard failures.

Armor

Worn armor adds its rating directly to your character's soak dice pool. Armor protects against bashing, lethal, and aggravated wounds. However, the Cainite banes of fire and sunlight ignore armor.

A character may attempt to bypass armor by adding two to the difficulty of her attack roll. This reflects finding weak points or breaches in the armor. If successful, ignore the armor's soak dice. Armor can also be destroyed; any time an attack's damage roll doubles the armor's rating, the armor is rendered useless.

The armor chart on p. 350 features a variety of armors. Each has a rating to add to soak pools, as well as a penalty applied to initiative and all Dexterity-based actions. Additionally, some weapons pierce armor. If a weapon has Armor Piercing: X, it denies the victim X dice of armor soak.

Shields and Parrying Weapons

Characters may carry shields, or weapons designed to defend her from attacks. These weapons impose an increased difficulty to attack her. Additionally, they influence the difficulty of Parry maneuvers she takes.

Combat Maneuvers

These maneuvers add complexity and nuance to your combat scenes. As with all rules, use them if they work at your table. If you want a quicker, less strategic experience, they're not necessary.

Maneuvers may list the following game statistics, reflecting rules changes reflecting the maneuver:

- **Dice Pool:** The dice pool used for the action. This includes relevant traits and modifiers.
- **Difficulty:** Any modifiers to the action's difficulty. This is expressed as a + or - number.
- **Damage:** The damage dice pool if the attack is successful. Remember to add the net attack successes. Damage depends on the weapons used (or lack thereof).

General Maneuvers

These maneuvers are not specifically attacks or defense, but affect the battlefield in noticeable ways.

- **Ambush:** Ambushes are all about the element of surprise, and striking first while an opponent stands unaware. Roll Dexterity + Stealth as a resisted action against the victim's Perception + Alertness. If the attacker scores more successes, she gets one free, unopposed action against the victim. On a tie, the attacker still attacks first, but the victim may perform a defensive maneuver. If the defender gets more successes, initiative proceeds normally.

Combat Turn Summary

Initiative

Roll a die and add the result to your Initiative rating. Compare totals. Move down the roster from highest to lowest Initiative, resolving actions.

Attacks

Unarmed close-combat attacks use Dexterity + Brawl.

Armed close-combat attacks use Dexterity + Melee.

Ranged attacks use Dexterity + Archery or Dexterity + Athletics for thrown objects.

Before attack rolls, the victim's player may choose to take a defensive action. Blocking uses Dexterity + Brawl, Dodging uses Dexterity + Athletics, and Parrying uses Dexterity + Melee. Defense successes reduce the attacker's successes.

Damage

Roll damage rating plus the net attack successes. Every success is a health level of damage.

Soak

Once damage is rolled, roll soak. Soak rolls depend on the character type and the damage type used, but generally use Stamina + Fortitude + Armor for a dice pool. Successes reduce the damage caused.

- **Blind Fighting:** Rolls to attack while blind or in pitch darkness must be made at +2 difficulty. Ranged attacks cannot normally be made blind.
- **Diversion:** A character may attempt to distract an opponent, opening him up to attacks from allies. To do this, use a relevant dice pool such as Charisma + Subterfuge, resisted with Wits + Alertness. If the character achieves more successes than her victim, the victim's defensive actions are all taken at +2 difficulty for the next turn.
- **Flank and Rear Attacks:** Characters attacking from flank gain an additional die to their attack pool. Attacking from the rear awards two dice.
- **Movement:** A character may move half her running distance (see Movement, p. 333) and still take an action.
- **Multiple Actions:** If you need to take multiple actions in a combat turn, this must be decided before the first action you take. The first action is taken at +1 difficulty, and -1 die. The second is at +2, and -2 dice. Each additional action increases in difficulty, and subtracts further dice. Multiple actions cannot be made if their difficulty would be 10 or higher. A character may still only make a single attack action per turn, without the Celerity Discipline. If the character chooses to only use defensive actions, use the Full Defense rules on p. 344. The Storyteller should adjudicate what actions are appropriate for multiple actions and which should take an entire turn alone.
- **Tactics:** Characters may issue tactical commands or enact live strategies to make her team fight more efficiently. With an Intelligence + Leadership roll, for each success you may offer one ally a -1 difficulty to their next roll. You may offer additional bonuses to the same character, but they affect subsequent rolls; they don't "stack" greater difficulty bonuses on a single roll.
- **Targeting:** Aiming for a specific location increases the difficulty of the roll to attack an opponent, but may offer certain advantages and/or heightened damage dice at Storyteller discretion. One such example is a crippled limb (see p. 347).

Target Size	Difficulty	Damage
Medium (Limb, Shield, Sword)	+1	No Modifier
Small (Head, Hand, Knife)	+2	+1
Precise (Eye, Heart, Ring)	+3	+2

Close Combat Maneuvers

These are some sample maneuvers for use in close combat situations.

Bite: Once a vampire (or lupine) has successfully used a clinch, hold, or tackle maneuver, she may bite her opponent as her next action in order to cause harm or to feed. A bite to harm causes aggravated damage, but does not cause The Kiss (see p. 341). If she bites to feed, she does not cause damage but causes The Kiss, and may drain three blood points per turn.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Brawl + 1

Difficulty: Normal **Damage:** Strength + 1

Claw: This attack is available to characters with claws caused by Protean, Vicissitude, or other Disciplines. It's

also available to lupines and other creatures with natural claws. The claw's source determines the damage type.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Brawl

Difficulty: Normal **Damage:** Strength + 1

Clinch: The character clinches with the target. On the first turn, the attacker rolls Strength damage. On additional turns, both characters act on their Initiatives. A combatant can cause Strength damage automatically or attempt to break the clinch. A character may take no other physical actions until he's broken free. To escape a clinch instead of causing damage, roll a resisted Strength + Brawl roll. If you roll more successes, you escape. If not, the clinch continues.

Dice Pool: Strength + Brawl

Difficulty: Normal **Damage:** Strength

Disarm: To disarm requires striking an opponent's weapon. If successful, roll damage normally. If the damage successes exceed the victim's Strength dots, he takes no damage but the weapon flies yards or meters equal to the additional successes over the opponent's Strength.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Melee

Difficulty: +1 **Damage:** None

Great Blow: The character puts her all into the attack, swinging her whole body into causing the most harm possible. Use the appropriate dice pool for the attack (Dexterity + Brawl or Dexterity + Melee) with +1 difficulty. Your character may take no defensive actions in the turn.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Brawl/Melee

Difficulty: +1 **Damage:** Normal +2

Hold: The attacker grabs and holds the target until the victim's next action. When that action occurs, roll resisted Strength + Brawl actions. If the subject does not exceed the attacker's successes, he remains immobilized, unable to take other physical actions.

Dice Pool: Strength + Brawl

Difficulty: +1 **Damage:** None

Kick: Attacking with a kick causes more damage than normal, but is more difficult than a punch. With more dramatic kicks, the Storyteller can further modify these rules.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Brawl

Difficulty: +1 **Damage:** Strength + 1

Multiple Opponents: A character attempting to fight off multiple opponents suffers a cumulative +1 difficulty to all actions for every opponent beyond the first (to a maximum +4 penalty).

Riposte: After a successful defense, your character strikes back, using her opponent's momentum to her advantage. To Riposte, you must have already used a defensive maneuver successfully this turn (a block or dodge applies, not just parry). This means using multiple actions, so note the multiple action difficulty penalty in addition to the Riposte penalty. When Riposting, the difficulty for your opponent to defend against your attack increases by two.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Brawl/Melee

Difficulty: +1 **Damage:** Normal +1

Stake: The character attempts to plunge a piece of sharpened wood into (probably) a vampire's chest. With three damage successes, the heart is pierced. This immobilizes vampires (see p. 347) or kills humans.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Melee

Difficulty: +3 **Damage:** Per Weapon or Strength +1

Strike: This is the basic unarmed attack action. The character lashes out with fists.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Brawl

Difficulty: Normal **Damage:** Strength

Sweep: The character attempts to trip her opponent. If successful, this maneuver causes knockdown (see Maneuver Complications, p. 348) in addition to its damage. Some weapons, such as quarterstaffs or whips, may be used to trip an opponent. Use the weapon's damage instead.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Brawl/Melee

Difficulty: +1 **Damage: Strength:** Knockdown

Tackle: The attacker rushes her opponent, shoving him to the ground. If successful, both combatants must roll

WEAPON TRAITS

Damage: The number of dice used to determine damage. Add this number to the net successes rolled on the initial attack, and roll that many dice. B denotes bashing damage, L denotes lethal damage, and A denotes aggravated damage.

Conceal: Roughly how difficult an item is to conceal, based on clothing. P = Pouch, C = Loose Clothing, L = Long Cloak, N = May Not Be Concealed.

Min Str: The minimum Strength required to use the weapon. Difficulty increases by one for each dot beneath the minimum. Attempting to use a weapon marked Two-Handed with one hand raises the Min Str by two.

Range: For ranged weapons, this is how many yards (or meters) in which the weapon can be used without penalty. It can be used at twice that range at +1 difficulty, or three times at +2. Longer shots cannot be attempted.

Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 7) or suffer knockdown (see Maneuver Complications, p. 348). Even if successful, the character is unbalanced, and the difficulty to all their actions for the next turn increases by one.

Dice Pool: Strength + Brawl

Difficulty: +1 **Damage:** Strength + 1; Knockdown

Weapon Length: One of the primary advantages weaponry offers in hand-to-hand combat is reach. Less armed characters must close in distance, which takes valuable time and puts them at risk. A character attacking a character with substantially larger weapon suffers -1 die to his attacks, and -2 to his Initiative. This may put him later on the initiative roster once he's declared his action.

Weapon Strike: A standard blow, thrust, or jab with a weapon. See Melee Weapons, p. 349, for specifics.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Melee

Difficulty: Normal **Damage:** By Weapon

Ranged Combat Maneuvers

Ranged weapons such as thrown spears and longbows are a staple of warfare in the Dark Medieval World. At this moment, the Welsh longbow is coming to prominence on the battlefield. These maneuvers are for use with thrown or fired weapons.

Aiming: The attacker adds one die to her dice pool for a single shot for each turn spent aiming. She may benefit from a number of turns equal to her Perception dots, but must have a dot in Archery (or Athletics for thrown weapons) to use this maneuver. The attacker may not take other actions while aiming. She may not aim at a target moving faster than a walk.

Cover: Seeking cover increases an attacker's difficulty to hit your character. Consult the chart below for difficulties dependent on cover. Ranged attacks from cover have their difficulty increased by one less than the difficulty increase to hit the covered target.

Cover	Difficulty to Hit	Difficulty to Attack
Light (lying prone)	+1	None
Good (behind wall)	+2	+1
Superior (only head exposed)	+3	+2

Hail of Arrows: A sufficiently trained archer may fire multiple arrows in rapid succession. This breaks the normal prohibition against multiple attacks in a turn. An archer may launch as many arrows as she has Archery dots using the multiple action rules. Remember that an attack cannot be made at difficulty 10 or higher as part of a multiple action. However, she may only benefit from the aim maneuver on the first attack of the hail.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Archery

Difficulty: Normal **Damage:** Per Weapon

Impale: As with staking (see p. 348), an archer can put a shaft of wood through a victim's heart to devastating effect.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Archery

Difficulty: +3 **Damage:** Per Weapon

Reloading: Reloading mechanical weapons, such as crossbows, requires five full turns minus one turn per dot of Archery.

Suppressive Fire: A skilled archer can hold off an enemy advance with rapid, strategic use of a bow. Performing this maneuver requires three or more dots of Archery. An archer may only use this maneuver at long or medium range, and she may not use it as part of a multiple action. She fires off a handful of arrows in front of her advancing opponent. If the opponent stays back, he is in no direct danger. If he advances, any defensive maneuvers he takes are at +2 difficulty, and the archer's attack is made at -2 difficulty.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Archery

Difficulty: -2 **Damage:** Per Weapon

Maneuver Complications

The following complications are examples of occurrences that can influence the flow of combat. The Storyteller should use these and add her own as the need arises. Some are mentioned as parts of maneuvers (such as knockdown), but don't let those maneuvers limit you.

Blinded: Add two dice to attack a blinded character. Additionally, blinded characters are at +2 difficulty on any action requiring vision, including defensive rolls.

Crippled Limb: If a character suffers a targeted attack, it may cripple a limb temporarily at Storyteller discretion. Actions using that limb are at +2 difficulty so long as the health levels of damage causing the complication remain.

Dazed: Any time a single attack causes more damage after soak than a mortal's Stamina, or a vampire or other supernatural being's Stamina + 2, the victim is dazed. The target spends his next turn shaking off the attack.

Immobilization: If a target is struggling but immobilized (held, for example), make attacks against him with two additional dice. Completely immobilized (tied, staked, or paralyzed) targets are hit automatically. Cause damage equal to the damage dice pool, without rolling.

Knockdown: The victim falls to the ground. After suffering knockdown, the victim can stand with a Dexterity + Athletics roll at difficulty 6. If he fails, he loses his action trying to stand. If he succeeds, reduce his Initiative by two for the next turn.

RANGED WEAPONS

Missile Weapons

Weapon	Damage	Range	Conceal	Min Str	Notes
Crossbow	3L	90	L	3	Armor Piercing: 2
Heavy Crossbow	4L	90	N	4	Armor Piercing: 3
Longbow	4L	120	N	4	Armor Piercing: 4
Shortbow	2L	60	L	3	Armor Piercing: 2
Sling	3B	40	P	2	
Thrown Weapons					
Dagger	Str +1L	20	C		
Hatchet	Str +1L	20	C	2	+1 difficulty
Javelin	Str +2L	50	N	2	Armor Piercing: 2
Knife	Str +0L	15	P	2	+1 difficulty
Rock	Str +0B	40	P	2	+1 difficulty
Spear	Str +2L	40	N	3	Armor Piercing: 2

MELEE WEAPONS

Weapon	Damage	Conceal	Min. Str	Notes
Axes				
Hatchet	Str + 1L	C	2	Can be thrown
Hand Ax	Str + 2L	L	3	
Battle-Ax	Str + 4L	N	4	Two-Handed
Pick Ax	Str + 2L	N	4	Armor Piercing: 3
Blunt Weapons				
Club	Str + 2B	C	2	
Mace	Str + 2L	L	3	
Morning Star	Str + 3L	L	3	
Quarterstaff	Str + 3B	N	2	+2 dice to Sweep
Warhammer	Str + 4B	N	4	Two-Handed
Blades				
Knife	Str + 0L	P	1	
Dagger	Str + 1L	C	2	Armor Piercing: 2
Saber	Str + 2L	L	3	
Broadsword	Str + 2L	N	3	May be used Two-Handed, with Min Str 2, Str + 3L
Greatsword	Str + 4L	N	4	Two-Handed
Polearms				
Halberd	Str + 4L	N	3	Difficulty +1, Two-Handed
Javelin	Str + 0L	N	2	
Lance (Mounted)	Str + 3L	N	3	Armor Piercing: 3
Pitchfork	Str + 1L	N	2	Armor Piercing: 1, Two-Handed
Spear	Str + 2L	N	2	Armor Piercing: 2, may be used Two-Handed, with Min Str 3, Str +3L

CLOSE COMBAT MANEUVERS

Maneuver	Dice Pool	Difficulty	Damage
Bite	Dex + Brawl + 1	Normal	Str + 1 (A)
Block	Dex + Brawl	Normal	None (R)
Claw	Dex + Brawl	Normal	Str + 1 (A)
Clinch	Dex + Brawl	Normal	Str (C)
Disarm	Dex + Melee	Normal	+1 Special
Dodge	Dex + Athletics	Normal	None (R)
Great Blow	Dex + Brawl/ Melee	+1	Normal +2
Hold	Str + Brawl	Normal	None (C)
Kick	Dex + Brawl	+1	Str +1
Parry	Dex + Melee	Normal	None (R)
Riposte	Dex + Brawl/ Melee	+1	Normal +1
Stake	Dex + Melee	+3	Special
Strike	Dex + Brawl	Normal	Str
Sweep	Dex + Brawl/ Melee	+1	Str (K)
Tackle	Str + Brawl	+1	Str +1 (K)
Weapon Strike	Str + Melee	Normal	Weapon

(A): The maneuver inflicts aggravated damage.
(C): The maneuver continues into further turns.
(K): The maneuver causes knockdown.
(R): The maneuver reduces an opponent's attack successes.
Str = Strength, Dex = Dexterity

RANGED MANEUVERS

Maneuver	Dice Pool	Difficulty	Damage
Aiming	+1 per turn	Normal	Weapon
Hail of Arrows	Dex + Archery	Normal	Weapon
Impale	Dex + Archery	+3	Special
Suppressive Fire	Dex + Archery	-2	Weapon

ARMOR

Class	Rating	Penalty
Class One (Heavy Clothing)	1	-
Class Two (Cloth/Textile Armor)	2	1
Class Three (Composite Armor)	3	1
Class Four (Heavy Armor)	4	2
Class Five (Knight's Armor)	5	3

SHIELDS AND PARRYING WEAPONS

Item	Parry Difficulty	Attack Penalty	Notes
Small Shield	4	+/-0	—
Standard Shield	6	+1	—
Dagger	5	+/-0	—
Sword	6	+1	Penalty only applies to hand-to-hand attacks

Health

In the combat rules, we mention the health track with its seven health levels. These levels reflect your character's physical condition as she withstands the punishments of the Dark Medieval World.

Here, we'll give a bit more detail on health levels and how they work.

Dice Pool Penalties

As your character suffers damage, she's less capable of acting with her full ability. Every health level has a corresponding dice pool penalty. Subtract this from all active dice pools you form. This does not apply to reflexive actions like Discipline resistance, but it does apply to Initiative. Only the current wound penalty applies; ignore less severe health levels.

Movement Penalties

Wounds cause a character to move at a fraction of her normal speed. Each level has its own conditions.

Incapacitated

Once a character is at the Incapacitated health level, she cannot take any normal actions. Mortals fall unconscious at this level if they're Incapacitated with bashing damage. Vampires can still act at -5 if they're full of bashing damage. Lethal damage beyond Incapacitated causes death to a mortal, or torpor to a vampire.

Torpor

Torpor is a deathlike sleep that vampires fall into when immensely injured. They can also enter this state voluntarily, as after centuries, ennui sets in and the Cainite may wish to awaken in a more hospitable time. Once in torpor, her Road determines how long she stays asleep. If she falls into torpor from damage, she can only awaken after the designated time, and after receiving blood from an external source.

Road	Torpor Length
10	One Day
9	Three Days
8	One Week
7	Two Weeks
6	One Month
5	One Year
4	One Decade
3	Five Decades
2	One Century
1	Five Centuries
0	Millenium+

Following this rest, the player may spend a blood point and make a roll to awaken (see p. 360) to rise. If she has no blood in her system, she cannot rise until fed. If the roll fails, she can wait a night, spend another blood point, and attempt again. If she wakes, she's considered Crippled, and should either spend blood to heal or hunt immediately.

If the character enters torpor voluntarily, she can attempt to rise after half the designated time.

While in torpor, a vampire loses no blood with the passage of time; her husk is in hibernation.

Extras

In order to strike home with the fragility of life and keep combat scenes running smoother, incidental Storyteller characters — particularly unnamed characters — only have four health levels: Hurt -1, Maimed -3, Incapacitated, and Dead. These rules should represent guards, highwaymen, peasantry, and other characters not meant to pose immense threats to the characters.

Final Death

If a vampire is Incapacitated or in torpor and suffers one more level of aggravated damage, she dies permanently. This can also come about through massive bodily destruction, such as full dismemberment. This is at Storyteller discretion.

Applying Damage

As addressed in combat rules, there are three types of damage in **Vampire**. Bashing damage is blunt trauma humans heal rapidly. Lethal damage is serious tissue damage, lacerations, and other wounds that would leave a human to bleed out. Aggravated wounds are supernaturally deadly injuries.

All damage types are cumulative, and combined injury determines your character's health level.

Always mark the more serious type of damage higher on the health track. Which is to say, if your character has two aggravated wounds, two lethal wounds, and two bashing wounds, she'd have aggravated wounds on Bruised and Hurt, lethal on Injured and Wounded,

Final Death Health Levels

Health Level	Dice Pool Penalty	Movement Penalty
Bruised	0	No movement penalty
Hurt	-1	No movement penalty
Injured	-1	Halve the character's maximum running speed
Wounded	-2	Character may not run, only walk
Mauled	-2	Character may only hobble three yards/meters per turn
Crippled	-5	Character may only crawl one yard/meter per turn
Incapacitated	-	Character cannot move
Torpor	-	Character is in torpor, and cannot act at all
Final Death	-	Character dies permanently

and bashing on Mauled and Crippled. Remember that bashing damage is marked with a slash, lethal with an X, and aggravated damage an asterisk.

If the health track is full, further damage "upgrades" other damage to the next worst type. With a health track full of bashing damage, further bashing damage becomes lethal damage at the top of the track. When the health track fills with lethal damage, further lethal damage becomes aggravated.

Mortal Healing Times

Whereas Cainites heal through the power of vitae, mortals heal with time. They possess the same seven health levels as a vampire, but each level has its own healing time associated with it. The worst health level always heals first, then proceed up the track to the lightest. Bashing damage heals far quicker than lethal damage.

Bashing Damage

Mortals heal bashing damage at times listed in the following chart. A mortal with injuries up to the Wounded level can heal without medical attention. Beyond Wounded, the mortal may suffer a concussion, internal bleeding, or other complications. Medical attention mitigates these issues.

Health Level	Recovery Time
Bruised to Wounded	One Hour
Maimed	Three Hours
Crippled	Six Hours
Incapacitated	12 Hours

Once bashing damage goes to Incapacitated, the mortal falls unconscious. Further bashing wounds become lethal.

Lethal Damage

Lethal damage, as its name suggests, can be deadly. Without attention, lethal wounds will bleed out or become infected.

Any lethal damage past Hurt requires medical attention to prevent further harm. Untreated lethal wounds worsen by one health level per day. Once the mortal reaches Incapacitated, she's one level away from death.

At Maimed or higher, the mortal may recover with the times listed below. A Crippled or Incapacitated character may never recover, and indeed cannot without extensive medical care. Many become comatose or delirious.

Health Level	Recovery Time
Bruised	One Day
Hurt	Three Days
Injured	One Week
Wounded	One Month
Maimed	Two Months
Crippled	Three Months
Incapacitated	Five Months

Derangements

I have seen Agnes's affliction before, though never in adults. My sister Margaret was a normal child before the headaches. Her speech slurred, hands grasping as if working a cow's udder. Father beat her to stop the twitching gasps. Margaret loved the outdoors, but now she was not permitted lest neighbors spy her affliction. Even Mother became frustrated at how Margaret insisted on sorting herbs into insensible patterns. Mother was unsurprised when the fever took Margaret, treating the shudders and rheum with cow bile, eggs, and nettle tea with milk. When the moon grows heavy, I shall entreat Agnes to ply the kine with nettle rather than wine, that blood may salve both body and soul.

—Matthias, childe of de Lille, childe of Agathodaimon, childe of Rayzeel

Much as they'd like to deny it, Cainite minds are derived from humanity. Even those walking alien Roads still stalk much as mortal men and women do. For all they style themselves monsters hiding in the Long Night's shadows, Cainites are susceptible to the same frailties of mind and soul as those they hunt.

Much of the learned knowledge describing Derangements in the Dark Ages derives from the work of the ancient Greeks, who held the result of a mind's illness to be from organic causes, namely the deficit or surplus of humors within the body. Muslim scholars of the era codify and extrapolate from the Greek texts. Christian clergy, on the other hand, holds that Derangements stem from moral flaws in the individual, sins and vices cracking open the soul and allowing demons to nest within. No few animist cults, or those descended from ancient religions, hold Derangements to be supernatural in cause.

Roleplaying Derangements

Derangements create challenges for the player to solve, but they're not intended to provide an impediment to play. Derangements are aspects of a character that fre-

quently impact their unlives negatively, and subsequently require adjustments to their interactions to manage or avoid this negative impact. Most Derangements lie somewhat dormant, with their traits present in small mental and verbal traits or tics and only manifesting fully during periods of stress — generally, *most* stimuli that could potentially cause frenzy or any stress that calls for a Self-Control or Instinct roll will automatically trigger a Derangement. The player and Storyteller should agree on what stimuli triggers the Derangement for the character.

Once the stress triggers the Derangement, it remains in effect for the rest of the night. By spending a Willpower point, a Cainite may experience a single turn of lucidity, holding the Derangement at bay by sheer force of will. Each Derangement stipulates how it affects vampires; while mortals much the same way vampires can, the actual mechanical effects are up to the Storyteller.

Players can use Derangements to show a different side of the character, or to show how their human side deals with itself during times of stress. If the character doesn't succumb to frenzy, it can be an opportunity to reinforce those human traits. Besides indicating how a vampire's mind fractures under the weight of ages, Storytellers can also use Derangements to emphasize the different parts of the vampiric experience: dyscrasia is a purely material concern (internally focused), whereas divine displeasure is a curse from outside the character, dealing with the wider spirit world around the Cainite. Sins of the soul deal with the religious nature of the character's unlife, a major force in the existence of many around the vampire.

Dyscrasia

A disease of the body. The four humors of the human (and Cainite) body lie in a delicate balance, though individuals are predisposed towards different temperaments depending on how much of one humor they've got in their body. However, factors both internal and external can lead to one humor's ascendency over the others, causing a physical and mental reaction.

Players of characters with a humor imbalance should choose one that's fairly close to the character's personality. Humor imbalances are personality traits magnified to extremes.

- **Melancholics** are introverted, introspective, and irritable. They can be startlingly dispirited (even when the situation calls for or demands a more spirited response). They tend to stare off listlessly, lost in sadness deep and dark as black bile. They lose track of themselves, and can't touch their emotions easily. Melancholia causes a -1 penalty to all dice pools, but a -1 difficulty for all manner of frenzy.
- **Phlegmatics** are calm, thoughtful, and patient. The temperament is common amongst academics, and they tend to be extremely orderly about their area of expertise. However, due to their inward focus, they have trouble adapting quickly or adroitly to changes in their environment (-1 die to Wits and Dexterity rolls).
- **Sanguines** are lively, sociable, optimistic, and passionate, sometimes overly so. When the blood sings in their veins, every emotion is heightened and verges on the inappropriate. They have deep difficulties in focusing on the moment. The Storyteller chooses three Abilities at random; the difficulty for rolls using these Abilities increases by one, due to the character's lack of focus. Increase the difficulty of all rolls featuring Mental Attributes by one as well.
- **Cholerics** are restless, aggressive, and impulsive. They tend to be ambitious, but may become angered or even violent when their ambitions are thwarted. When gripped by an imbalance of black bile, increase the character's difficulty to resist frenzy by two, but reduce the difficulty to perform any acts of painful physical violence by one.

Divine Displeasure

A curse upon the mind. Sacred curses are, hearth wisdom holds, the result of incurring the displeasure of pagan gods and spirits.

- **Compulsion:** The disorder of nature causes a physical discomfort in the character, resulting in an obsessive desire to order the world around them. Nervous and meticulous, they have some form of ritual taboo that they obsessively practice during periods of stress — frequent bathing, counting coins, or sorting books and possessions by size or type. If they can't practice this ritual, they suffer from extreme agitation (-3 dice to all frenzy rolls; the Storyteller should call for a frenzy roll more often than normal when this Derangement is triggered).
- **Lunacy:** First codified by the Romans but well-known for centuries, this Derangement is caused by a curse of Luna, the moon's goddess. The character experiences mania and depression according to the lunar cycle. While the moon waxes, the character slowly grows more irritable until they're manic and full of energy during the full moon (-1 difficulty to all extended rolls, +1 to all difficulties to frenzy). Waning moons cause a deepening lethargy resembling melancholia, and the new moon requires more effort to from their

blood to rouse them (vampire's Willpower rating is reduced by half the normal value, rounding up; the vampires requires an additional blood point to rise on the night of the new moon).

- **Sacred Disease:** Even great Caesar himself suffered from the same curse the character does. No matter how implacable or stalwart the character is, they're a victim to a trembling disorder that renders them insensate. On a Derangement trigger, the player rolls Stamina (difficulty 8). On a failure, the character feels the disease overpowering them, collapsing into a seizure within three turns. They writhe and slam their limbs about, frothing blood at the mouth as their veins bulge and distend. Unlike other Derangements, the sacred disease only lasts for the rest of the scene, though the character is worn out for rest of the night (-1 die penalty to all Physical tests).
- **Saint Vitus's Dance:** Related to the Sacred Disease, the dance causes involuntary movements of the face and limbs, with a sweating fever and bloody rheum streaming from the eyes. While the individual's mental faculties aren't impaired, the difficulty for all her Social rolls increases by two. Saint Vitus's Dance can spread throughout a group, leading to mass outbreaks of the "madness."

Sins of the Soul

A damning pall over the soul. The Church and its adherents hold that the moral failures of the impious are what cause these Derangements, but they can affect even the holiest individuals.

- **Sanguinary Animism:** This uniquely Cainite Derangement leads sufferers to believe they drink the souls of their victims with the blood. Feeding causes intense guilt in sufferers of sanguinary animism; their victims communicate with them as voices in their heads and memories seeping into their consciousness. The suffering vampire often blames his actions on these voices, claiming that they are an effort to pacify his tormentors. The vampire is compelled to reply to the voices, and must utter these replies aloud (even if it's just a low muttering). This may result in variable difficulties to Social rolls.
- **Visions:** You've transgressed against your culture, causing potentially irreparable harm to your soul. You've struggled to put your guilt behind you. But someone, or something, forgives you — and they let you know. During times of stress, the character sees holy figures encouraging her to act according to her better nature, ready to punish her if she fails again. She is especially wary of the holy figures' watchfulness (-2 dice to all degeneration rolls).
- **Voices:** The demons know your sins, and they're hunting you for it. Victims of demon voices become paragons of self-persecution, fearing divine retribution and seeing it in every angle. Their paranoia exhibits during times of stress; they're wary of social interactions (+1 difficulty to Social rolls) and fearful that anyone could be a demon in disguise. A botch on a Social roll (from either party) will invariably result in panicked flight from the perceived demon (an automatic fear frenzy).

States of Being

Deterioration

A vampire who is staked spends blood at the rate of one point per night. A vampire with no blood begins consuming all excess moisture within his body at a rate of one health level per day. At first the vampire appears merely emaciated, but as the body completely dehydrates, it begins to wither. By the seventh day, when the character has reached Incapacitated on the health chart, the character mummifies and enters torpor. Once in torpor, the character cannot rise unless supplied with enough blood to bring him back to Injured on the health chart.

Diablerie

Diablerie, or Amaranth, is the act of feeding on a vampire in the way that a vampire feeds on a mortal. In so doing, not only does the murderer consume the victim's blood (and vampire blood is far, far sweeter than any mortal's), but the victim's power as well. In this manner, even the youngest vampire can gain the power of the elders.

Committing Diablerie

A vampire committing diablerie must drain all the blood from his Cainite victim, then continue to suck, for (according to Cainite legend) the very soul is withdrawn from the victim's body. Once a vampire's body has been drained of all blood, the diablerist's player makes an extended Strength roll (difficulty 9). Each success inflicts one automatic health level of unsoakable aggravated damage (even with Fortitude) on the victim. When all the victim's health levels have been drained, the victim's essence is taken into the attacker and the emptied body begins decaying immediately. Total concentration goes



into the struggle to draw forth the essence of the victim, and stopping for even a moment ruins the chance of capturing the spirit. The difficulty to attack a vampire attempting diablerie is 2.

The Rewards of Diablerie

Upon successful completion of diablerie, the diablerist is overwhelmed by euphoria, and a Self-Control/Instinct roll is necessary (difficulty 10 minus the character's Road rating) to avoid losing control. The sensation is akin to orgasm, but much more powerful. Over time, certain Cainites grow addicted to the sensation. All other Cainites fear these vampires, for their addiction to Amaranth makes them a threat to everyone. Even vampires too weak to provide additional power are devoured for the simple pleasure of the act.

The true benefit of diablerie becomes evident if the diablerist feeds on the vitae of a vampire of lower Generation. The diablerist literally steals the power and potency of the victim's own blood, and thus permanently lowers her own Generation by one, bringing her closer to the mythical power of Caine. The vampire receives all benefits of the lowered.

If the victim was of far greater power (five or more Generations lower) than the diablerist, the Storyteller may rule that the predator lowers her Generation by more than one step.

Moreover, drinking the vitae of elder vampires can induce a temporary increase in the diablerist's Discipline levels by one, two, or even more dots, as the potent blood augments the predator's own mystic arts. If the elder vampire was several Generations removed from the diablerist's own Generation, the effects can seem miraculous, even if they are short-lived. These increased powers last for a single scene, unless the Storyteller decides otherwise.

To commit diablerie, the diablerist must take blood directly and immediately from the victim; the blood may not be stored and used later. Moreover, only one diablerist may commit the act on a given victim; a pack of neonates cannot swarm around an elder and all gain the benefits of diablerie, no matter how potent the victim's blood.

The Perils of Diablerie

Committing diablerie seems like the perfect crime. However, those who commit the atrocity soon learn that diablerists wear the evidence of their crime on their souls. Vampires with the Auspex Discipline can detect a diablerist by using Aura Perception. The stolen energies of the victim mingle with the energies of the diablerist, leaving thick black marks running through the diablerist's aura. These marks remain in evidence for a number of years equal to the difference between the victim's Generation and the diablerist's original Generation. Additionally, practitioners of Thaumaturgy can use the Path of Blood to detect the diablerist's sin, even centuries after the crime was committed. For that reason, in particular, practitioners of the Amaranth fear the Tremere.

Even those without special perceptions often sense a taint about the diablerist. For one month per Generation removed from the victim, a diablerist leaves more sensitive Cainites unsettled. The vampire in question may not actually know what the diablerist did, but they'll feel uncomfortable around him just the same. A player whose vampire comes in contact with a diablerist may make a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty of 12 minus the sensing vampire's Road rating — centered and attuned vampires are more aware of such things) to determine the source of their unease.

A few rumors speak of diablerists displaying certain mannerisms of their late victims, particularly if the victims were of great psychic fortitude (Willpower 10) and of much stronger blood than their murderers.

Lastly, many Roads prohibit murder. If murder is a sin for the vampire, the Road loss is automatic, not rolled.

Disease

One of the biggest advantages to being a walking corpse is a natural immunity to most diseases. Any illness that can be transmitted by the blood is a potential problem for vampires, because they can carry the illness and transmit it from victim to victim. By drinking from someone infected and then feeding on different victims, these vampires have helped to spread a particularly virulent infection.

An Intelligence + Medicine roll (difficulty 7) will allow characters to detect the presence of blood-related diseases. On a failed roll, the vampire does not notice the symptoms and exposes himself to disease (Stamina roll, difficulty 6, to avoid). A botch indicates the character feeds sloppily and automatically becomes a carrier for the disease.

Faith

According to Cainite legend, the Curse of Caine has made all vampires forever outcast in the eyes of God. This might or might not be the case, but it is quite true that symbols or persons of great religious faith can cause discomfort or even harm to the Damned. Potently pious mortals — those with the True Faith Trait — can use their devotion as a defense or weapon against vampires. See p. 392 for more information.

Falling

Even vampires can suffer great damage from falling significant distances. The Storyteller rolls one die of bashing damage for every 10 feet or 3 meters (rounded down) that your character falls before hitting something solid. Falling damage may be soaked normally. Landing on sharp objects can change the damage from bashing to lethal at the Storyteller's discretion.

If your character plummets 100 feet (30 meters) or more, she reaches terminal velocity. The damage effect reaches a maximum of 10 dice at this point, and it is considered lethal damage. Additionally, any armor your character wears in a terminal-velocity fall functions at only half its rating (rounded down).

Fire and Burns

Vampires fear fire, for it is one of the few things that can end their immortal existences. Fire damage is aggravated and ignores armor; it may be soaked only with Fortitude. A fire's size determines the levels of aggravated damage per turn, while its heat determines the difficulty of the Fortitude soak roll. A character suffers the full damage effect for each turn that she's in contact with the flames. All damage inflicted by fire is automatically successful unless soaked.

Soak Difficulty	Heat of Fire
3	Heat of a candle
5	Heat of a torch
7	Heat of a bonfire
8	Heat of a forest fire
9	Heat of a forge
10	Molten metal

Health Levels/Turn	Size of Fire
One	Torch; a part of the body is exposed to flame
Two	Bonfire; half of the body is exposed to flame
Three	Raging inferno; entire body is engulfed in flame

If your character falls to Maimed, she is scarred temporarily by the flames (reduce Appearance by one until her wounds recover to Bruised). If she is reduced to Crippled or Incapacitated by the fire, the burns cover the majority of her body, reducing Appearance by two.

Frenzy and Rotschreck

Vampires are monsters, possessed of an inner Beast. They have the capability to overrule their baser instincts, but sometimes they fail. When this occurs, the Hunger and the Beast become uncontrollable.

The Nature of the Beast

During frenzy, a character literally gives into the darkest instincts of his vampiric nature. The character is consumed with rage or hunger, unable to consider the effects of any action. If a vampire in frenzy is hungry, he will feed from whoever is closest without regard for the vessel. If the vampire is angry, he will do everything in his power to destroy the cause of his anger. A vampire struck by fear will commit any atrocity to remove himself from the source of his terror, regardless of the consequences. The character completely surrenders to the basest aspects of his Nature, shunting aside the Demeanor most commonly presented to those around him. He is, in short, the Beast.

Many things can induce frenzy, but episodes of great rage or hunger are the most common provocations. It is dangerous to deny or humiliate the undead. Ultimately, the Storyteller can call for a vampire to make a frenzy roll at any time he feels the character might have cause to lose control.

A vampire in frenzy gains several temporary benefits from the state. Vampires in frenzy completely ignore all dice pool penalties inflicted by injury until the frenzy ends. Once the frenzy is finished, the pain comes back and the crippling effects of the wounds take hold again. All difficulties to Dominate or otherwise mentally control a frenzied character are increased by two, and all difficulties to resist the effects of such mental control are reduced by two. The character never needs Willpower rolls to overcome mundane fear and apprehension, because the rage fueling the vampire's actions is both a catalyst to heightened state of mind and a barrier against unwanted intrusions. Lastly, characters in frenzy are immune to the detrimental effects of Rötschreck.

Systems

The rules for handling frenzy are deliberately vague, and the Storyteller is encouraged to make whatever changes she deems necessary to accommodate her chronicle.

With struggle, Cainites can sometimes conquer the Beast and overcome frenzy. A vampire on the verge of frenzy can use Self-Control against a variable difficulty (see below) to resist frenzy. Characters using Instinct technically resist the same way, but usually direct that aggression in a more conscious, desired fashion. Resisting frenzy requires five successes. Actions which violate the character's deepest beliefs can be resisted with a difficulty of 9 minus their Conscience or Conviction.

For each success below five, the character can resist the urge to frenzy for one turn. After this, the character may try again to gain extra successes and thus continue to resist the frenzy. Once five successes are acquired, the vampire resists the Beast's urges and the urge to frenzy subsides.

Failure means the character goes into an emotional rampage, doing exactly what she wants to do with no worries of later repercussions. Botching the Self-Control roll means the character remains in frenzy until the Storyteller decides otherwise, and she may gain a Derangement related to the frenzy.

The following list shows common stimuli that can incite frenzy and the typical difficulty for a character to resist. If the frenzy has the potential to cause the vampire to commit an atrocity, the Storyteller can rule that the difficulty is (9 minus Conscience/Conviction) instead.

Provocation	Difficulty
Smell of blood when hungry	3
Sight of blood when hungry	4
Being harassed	4
Life-threatening situation	4
Malicious taunts	4
Physical provocation	6
Taste of blood when hungry	6
Loved one in danger	7
Outright public humiliation	8

The Storyteller has final say in what can or cannot provoke a frenzy, where a frenzy can make a point about a character's personality, or enhance the events of a story.

Roleplaying Frenzy

Characters in frenzy are not themselves — or, more accurately, reveal more of themselves than they normally would. They will do anything to sate their hunger or destroy the source of the frenzy, even attacking other players' characters. Characters in frenzy generally at-

tack their enemies first, but if no enemies are present, friends are perfectly acceptable fodder for their baser instincts. The character might feel remorse and guilt later, but while the frenzy occurs, nothing matters save the immediate gratification of the character's desires. This can lead to degeneration checks (p. 114).

Some players might feel hesitant about roleplaying frenzy, but such is the nature of the vampire. Players are encouraged to portray the frenzy effectively. A player whose character is in the midst of frenzy may choose to spend a Willpower point to control one action of his character for one turn. This moment of relative lucidity and control lasts for only a turn, possibly two; it does not stop the frenzy, but only allows the character to control it slightly.

The Storyteller decides how long any frenzy lasts, but one scene typically suffices. If a character is knocked unconscious or trapped alone for an extended period, she will eventually regain control of herself.

Rotschreck: The Red Fear

Sunlight and fire provoke a terrified flight-or-fight mentality in vampires. While under the spell of this Rötschreck, a vampire flees in panic from the source of her fear. Rötschreck is in most ways similar to any other frenzy; just as the Beast sometimes seizes control in times of anger, so it does in times of great fear.

Innocuous stimuli directly under the character's control are unlikely to induce Rötschreck. However, a lamp waved threateningly or fireplace suddenly flaring up may call for a roll.

A vampire seeking to avoid Rötschreck requires a Courage roll. As with frenzy, five successes must be accumulated to ignore the Beast completely, though fewer successes enable the vampire to overcome her fear for a period of time. Failure means the vampire flees madly from the danger, making a beeline for safety and tearing apart anything or anyone that gets in her way. Any attempt to restrain a vampire suffering from Rötschreck results in an immediate attack, just as if the character were in frenzy. One Willpower point may



be spent to maintain control for one turn. A character who is the victim of a botched Courage roll immediately frenzies and remains in frenzy until the Storyteller decides otherwise.

Provocation	Difficulty
Lighting a lamp	3
Sight of a torch	5
Bonfire	6
Obscured sunlight	7
Being burned	7
Direct sunlight	8
Trapped in burning building	9

Golconda and Other Means of Salvation

For most Cainites, to be vampire is to be eternally Damned. Many legends speak of vampirism as the curse not only of Caine, but of the Devil himself. Even those vampires who scorn such superstition nonetheless see a secular hell of sorts in their Beast, their Hunger, and the all-consuming ennui of centuries.

It is not surprising that some Cainites speak of a state transcending their eternal hunger and rage. Vampires who attain this state, which is called Golconda, are said to have mastered the Beast to such an extent that it no longer controls their actions. While vampires in Golconda still blood to survive, they need far less of it. Moreover, they are able to quell the urges of the Beast to such an extent that they need never fear losing control to it. They are no longer properly vampires, but a different, higher species of creature entirely.

As the stories go, Golconda is known only to a few among the undead. They live in the wild places, at one with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky. Even the werewolves leave the masters of Golconda be. Vampires who have attained Golconda occasionally enter the larger society of undead, seeking disciples whom they can guide along the path to Golconda.

Attaining Golconda cannot be simulated with charts or experience points. It is as ephemeral, yet as powerful as love or self-acceptance, and its attainment should be the focus of an entire chronicle. In general, characters learn of Golconda only after spending some time among the undead, for Golconda lore is spread in puzzling riddles and whispered from seeker to seeker. It is certain that vampires who wish to attain Golconda must feel remorse. The greater a vampire's sins, the greater the penance necessary. Vampires wishing to enter Golconda must seek out the families of old victims and make amends, protect those weaker than they, and try to make the World of Darkness a better place. This inevitably entails maintaining one's Humanity and spending Willpower to commit good deeds whenever possible. Vampires on other roads are believed to be unable to achieve Golconda.

Attaining Golconda should come only at the end of a long and arduous chronicle. During this chronicle, characters must meet certain criteria. They must attain a rating of 7 or higher on Road of Humanity and Conscience ratings of 4 or higher, and they must maintain those ratings over lengthy periods. Moreover, they must consistently display penitent, abstinent, and honorable behavior over dozens of stories.

Typically, at about the midpoint of the chronicle, prospective Golconda-seekers travel in search of a mentor reputed to harbor the secrets of Golconda. If they find a mentor, the vampires must prove themselves worthy. Such tasks often lead the questers through grave perils to both body and soul. The culmination comes when a worthy vampire undergoes a ritual called the Suspire. The precise effects of the ritual are unknown, save that it involves a journey into the world of dreams and, ultimately, into the vampire's own soul. It is extraordinarily difficult, and many vampires fail to survive it with their unlives or sanity intact. Still others return from the Suspire whole, but having forever failed to gain Golconda.

Should a vampire actually gain this legendary state, the effects are most miraculous. Foremost among them is a total immunity to frenzy or Rötschreck. In addition, the character does not need to drink blood as often. The character loses only one blood point per week rather than one blood point per night. He must still spend blood normally to power Disciplines, heal wounds, etc.

A vampire in Golconda partly transcends the Curse binding his own blood; he may increase any Trait to as high as 10 regardless of Generation, though his blood pool remains as it was.

A vampire in Golconda must maintain rigid standards of purity. Should his Humanity rating ever slip below 7, or his Conscience rating below 4, the vampire loses all benefits of Golconda, including heightened Traits.

Becoming Mortal

Besides the tales of Golconda, certain Cainite legends speak of vampires who have thrown off the Curse completely and become mortal once more. No vampire seems to actually know any of their kind who has done such a thing. The catalysts behind such a change can be

anything from slaying one's sire to finding true love to sacrificing oneself unselfishly for another (and becoming mortal in the dying). Ultimately, the truth of such things is up to the Storyteller.

Poisons and Drugs

Vampires have little fear of conventional poisons. However, they may succumb to poisons or drugs contained within the bloodstream of their victims. Indeed, certain vampires actively seek out victims under the influence of alcohol or drugs to receive a vicarious buzz.

Following are some examples the effects of drinking blood from a poisoned or drugged victim. A vampire with low Willpower (4 or less) or an appropriate Nature might risk addiction to a certain substance, but this is unlikely. In general, the effects of most drugs on vampires are far less than their effects on humans.

Note that the following examples use modern terminology. These types of drugs exist in the Dark Medieval World, but come from specific plants from specific regions. We encourage you to look into any drugs you intend to introduce to your chronicle for appropriateness, and research their effects.

Alcohol: Subtract one from Dexterity and Intelligence dice pools for every two drinks' worth of alcohol in his victims' blood. This effect fades at the rate of one die per hour, as the alcohol purges itself from the bloodstream.

Hallucinogens: Lower all dice pools by one to three. He suffers effects similar to the Level Two Dementation power Soul Haunting. Depending on the precise nature of the hallucinogen, he may gain extra dice in one particular Ability (such as Awareness) or find his Auspex Discipline raised by a dot or more. The effects last for (8 minus Stamina) hours.

Sedatives: Subtract two from Dexterity and all Ability dice pools for (10 minus Stamina) minutes. She experiences a dreamlike state for (12 minus Stamina) hours. Difficulties of frenzy rolls are decreased by one.

Psychoactives: Subtract one from Perception pools. The vampire experiences a slightly altered perception of time. Difficulties of frenzy rolls are decreased by one due to the calming effect of the herb. The effects last for about half an hour.

Poison: Subtract one from all dice pools and take from one to three levels of lethal damage per scene or even turn, depending on the intensity of the poison. Few poisons have any real effect on the undead, and most inflict a fixed maximum amount of damage before wearing off. The vampire may purge the blood at his normal expenditure rate, and the effects heal automatically within minutes to hours after purging the blood.

Food Poisoning: The vampire becomes nauseated, unable to consume more blood (roll Stamina, difficulty 6, to overcome), and suffers one health level of bashing damage. The effects last for one night.

Sunlight

Sunlight is even deadlier than fire to vampires. Unless a character has Fortitude, the rays of the sun cause burns. Characters with Fortitude may attempt to soak sun damage, using a soak dice pool equal to the level of the Discipline. The difficulty to soak the damage depends on the intensity of the light, while the amount of damage taken depends on the amount of protection between the vampire's skin and the sunlight.

No part of a vampire is immune to the rays of the sun. Any character looking into direct sunlight is blinded instantly.

Soak Difficulty	Intensity of Light
3	Faint light coming through a closed curtain; heavy cloud cover; twilight
5	Fully protected by heavy clothes, gloves, and a wide-brimmed hat
7	Indirect light coming through a window or light curtains
9	Outside on a cloudy day; hit by one ray of direct light; catching the sun's reflection in a mirror
10	Direct rays from the sun

Health Levels/Turn	Exposure
One	Small part of body exposed – a hand or part of the face
Two	Large part of body exposed – a leg, an arm, or the whole head
Three	Fifty percent or more of the body exposed – wearing thin clothing

Temperature Extremes

Vampires suffer little from the privations of temperature. However, very high (200+ °F or 100+ °C) temperatures might have the same effects as fire, at the



Storyteller's discretion. Vampires suffering from extreme cold might be forced to spend additional blood points or suffer from the effects of frostbite (losing one or more dice to Dexterity-based dice pools). However vampires should not suffer greatly from most "normal" temperature fluctuations.





There was no telltale sign of his arrival, save perhaps a sudden, almost imperceptible stillness falling over the orchard. "I knew you would come." Panelo knew the presence of his lover, though he knew not how.

Panelo felt Lucha's strong arms around him, and leaned into the embrace. He inhaled Lucha's scent deeply, a mixture of frankincense, velvet, and leather.

"I came as quickly as I could," Lucha murmured into the young man's ear, his hand stroking his hair. "Matters at court kept me—"

"I care not why you have been delayed," Panelo said. "You are here now, and that is all that matters." He looked up into the nobleman's hazel eyes. Although Lucha was Panelo's elder and a clearly learned gentleman, his pale skin showed no sign of weathering or age.

They kissed for a long while, and then stood leaning together in silence.

"In truth," said Panelo, "I was afraid that you might not return."

"There is nothing that could keep you from me, beloved," said Lucha.

Panelo smiled, and stepped back, lacing his fingers behind his head. "I hear your poets talk of how passionate affairs, once consummated, lose their appeal." He turned to face the coming dawn. "The say that romance is all about pursuit, and once the chase is done, the wolf has no use for the hart."

Lucha ran his hand along Panelo's ribs, down his waist and to his hips, pulling the young man's body to his. "On the contrary," said Lucha. "Learned men will tell you that true love concerns the irresistible pull of a man to his opposite – a yearning for union with the great unknowable, a way to become one with something truly alien to oneself."

Panelo pulled away. "And where does that leave a love such as ours, then? We are not opposites like man and woman. I suppose I am merely a nobleman's fancy boy—"

"I'm sorry," Lucha murmured.

Panelo started. He had never heard Lucha apologize to anyone before. "I was merely teasing—"

"You are a man," said Lucha. "But I can hardly be called as such. You are a man of honor and strength won with your own hands. You are noble in spirit, and honest when honesty does you no credit. I can hardly be called the same."

Panelo laughed. "I can hardly begrudge you the duties of your station, Lucha. You shovel the doge's shit around and keep the animals at court happy. You have more in common with a man like me than you think." Panelo stroked Lucha's cheek. It was a smooth and white as the bauta he had worn when they met at Carnival.

Lucha clasped Panelo's hand, and leaned forward slightly before pausing, his eyes flicking to one side. "Go," said Lucha.

Panelo looked into his eyes squeezed his hand only briefly before slipping off into the darkness. He trusted Lucha – he knew he should not – and he knew that the nobleman always heard footsteps before he did.

Lucha watched him leave. He could still smell the scent of his lover on his hands: fresh-cut straw, sun-warmed earth, and clover. He lingered a moment, then stepped back and felt the cool shadows embrace him. He could hear a horse in the distance, and the creaking wheels of a carriage. Closer: footsteps and dragging skirts. A woman. Well enough; she would not see him, not unless—

"Lucha. Darling. Do come out and say hello." The woman was richly dressed, with her black hair in tight ringlets and her skin like smoky quartz.

"Madam," said Lucha. "I'm afraid you've mistaken me for—"

"Cut the bullshit," the woman, Alegreza, said daintily.

Lucha shrugged and smiled blandly. He closed his eyes and dispelled the magics that disguised him. It pained him – what if Panelo was watching? – but he knew that it would please the Toreador to see him in his natural state. "Gentle lady, forgive me," rasped Lucha. "I should have not attempted such a base deception against you. To what do I owe your visit?" He stepped forward and bowed as gracefully as he could. She did not offer her hand.

"You poor thing," Alegreza said. "Your little pet has no idea, does he?" She sighed delicately. "The courtly Nosferatu and his lovely stable-hand. It's so absurd it's almost beautiful."

Lucha felt the Beast begin to stir. Alegreza smiled; she was nothing if not perceptive.

You wouldn't dare to turn him into a ghoul, I assume," she continued. "It would be a crime to destroy such a face." She looked over her shoulder where her carriage waited. "Good men are hard to find."

"Forgive me for being brusque, my lady, but it will soon be dawn. What would you ask of me?" said Lucha.

Alegreza smiled. "Claudius Giovani is sending a letter to Alvise. The letter departs for Constantinople tomorrow; I know not which vessel it will sail upon. I will have the contents of that letter, and you will ensure that it is resealed and delivered."

Lucha flexed his hands and looked over her shoulder at the coachman. The coachman nodded his head slightly to the east, and gave Lucha a questioning look.

Lucha turned his gaze back to Alegreza. "I'm unsure, my lady. The Giovani are not to be trifled with. The Cappadocians have eyes everywhere." Out of the corner of his eye, the coachman nodded in acknowledgement.

"Do not test me," said Alegreza. "Or the little stablehand that you're fucking will be my bound servant. I will possess him utterly."

The Beast in him howled and bit deeply into his heart. His hands balled into fists, and then relaxed. "Very well, my lady," he growled. "It shall be done."

Alegreza smiled. "Excellent. I will see you in my chambers after midnight tomorrow. Do not disappoint me, Lucha." She offered a hand and Lucha walked her back to the carriage.

"To allow your beautiful face to be marred with a frown would be unconscionable, my lady," he said, helping her into the carriage. She rolled her eyes as he shut the door behind her. The coachman looked over at Lucha again, and nodded to the east. Lucha sighed, then nodded.

Alegreza was a perceptive woman. There was no use in deceiving her directly. On the other hand, like most of her kind, she did not pay attention to practical matters, such as where her carriage was driving, or whether she would arrive back at her haven before dawn. Neither did she pay much attention to her carriage driver, whose resemblance to his cousin Panelo was not terribly striking, but noticeable nonetheless.

Chapter Eight: Storytelling

We don't tell you these stories to remember, childe. We tell you these stories so that when the time is right, you may forget. Until that time, they will pursue. They'll pursue, and if they find you, they will murder you. Then, your soul will have no choice to remember these stories forever and all time.

-Excerpt from The Great Nosferatu Blood Apocrypha of Prague

In this chapter, we offer advice and ideas for Storytelling. Storytelling is not a hard science; as Storyteller, you have to balance a number of spinning plates, and inevitably, some will fall and some will need to be replaced from time to time. What we can do is offer our techniques to make your games flow well and stand as memorable events for your players.

In particular, it's worth noting that this section is a series of essays and stream-of-consciousness from multiple perspectives. It's a collection of things that have worked at our tables. Some of the following ideas might be contradictory or confusing at a glance, but give them a try. Feel out your table and your chronicle's needs and find what works. Storytelling is an exercise in experimentation.

If you want some more basic Storytelling guidelines, **Vampire: The Masquerade, 20th Anniversary Edition** has a wonderful section on the topic.

Storytelling Commandments

Just to get you started, here are ten guidelines to keep you on track.

Rule I: Have Fun

V20 Dark Ages is a game. As with most games, the purpose of this game is to have fun. In particular, to have fun telling stories. In all planning and execution, favor fun. If you have two paths you could walk, two options you could take, choose the one that's more fun for your group.

This sounds like common sense. However, if you look a little closer, you might find that it's not. If you find yourself digging through the rulebook for a minor, menial rule, that's time wasted. You could just make a ruling and move on. As Storyteller, you're empowered to do so. Most of the Dramatic Systems chapter is meant as guidelines and inspirational points; it can't hope to cover everything that'll come up in your chronicles. If you think something will go smoother, run quicker, or be more fun, do it!

Rule II: Don't Say No

This relates back to rule one. If your players propose something, try to avoid saying "no" to their offer. Try to find a way to make it work, or at least find a good compromise. The players propose things because they want them to occur in the story. That might not fit your vision, or in some cases, it might even break the rules. But it's your responsibility to bring fun to the table, and player proposals are clear statements that they think a thing will be fun.

Storytelling Commandments

I. Have Fun
II. Don't Say No
III. Celebrate The Players
IV. Name Storyteller Characters
V. Always Listen
VI. Kill Your Darlings
VII. Embrace Darkness and Grace
VIII. Let Dice Add To Your Game
IX. Communicate Goals
X. Make House Rules

If you feel yourself saying "no" to a request, ask yourself why you're saying no. What makes that item dissonant for you? Take that element, and ask the player how we can make that work. For example, if a player wants to try a rare bloodline that only occurs in certain regions, ask the player how we can make that work in a different region, or allow the bloodline for side scenes and subplots related to that region. The particularly challenging question is, "What about this thing sounds interesting to you?" It might not be that the bloodline itself sounds interesting. Maybe it's their Discipline. Maybe it's their weakness. In that case, offer a Mentor with the Discipline, or offer the weakness as a unique Flaw.

Rule III: Celebrate Your Players

As Storyteller, you're setting the stage and providing plot. You're portraying supporting cast and helping adjudicate conflicts. The story, however, is about the players' characters, and with any story, if you don't love the characters, the story falls flat.

You need to like the players' characters. If you don't, dig in deeper, and find reasons to like them. Give the players a chance to shine. Give them opportunities to show their best. This doesn't always mean "let them win," but it means you should let them showcase their strengths and weaknesses on a dramatic stage.

Rule IV: Name Storyteller Characters

The inverse is, everyone should also care about the Storyteller characters. The easiest way to accomplish this is to give every character a name. Spend a few minutes before game compiling a list of period and region appropriate names for your chronicle. That way you can cross them off as you've used them, and you don't need to bother with thinking too hard during play. If you name characters, there's an inherent identity in them, and the players are more likely to associate the character with individuality.

Sometimes, you can't introduce a character's name. That's fine. But try where possible. Use passing dialogue to your advantage. Usually, if the characters intend to browbeat a city guard into allowing entrance, they don't need to hear his name. However, if he's just ending a little dalliance with his mistress when the characters approach, she can use his name. Better still, he can use her name. Then you have two seeds sown, and the characters have two threads they can follow up with later.

If you want to take this a bit further, write every character name on a sticky note or an index card, and keep it on the table. Then, if the players want to reference it later, they can. This can sometimes help to build a more cohesive setting, and guarantee call backs to earlier exploits.

Rule V: Always Listen

Pay attention to everything you can. Every laugh. Every groan. Every complaint. Every compliment. Your job requires constant improvisation, and you have to gauge your audience.

Sometimes, this means listening to silence. If a player isn't engaging actively, experiment. Try to find out how to bring everyone into the narrative. It's very easy to ignore player reactions, particularly when the momentum picks up. But this isn't a closed show. Your players are not just actors, but also a focus group for your story.

Rule VI: Kill Your Darlings

Nothing is sacred. Part of listening to your players and celebrating them and their characters is being willing to make change. If you like an antagonist, it might be difficult to let him die. But if it fits the story, or even just makes the experience better for the players, let him die. A Storytelling game is about choices, and if choices don't have palpable results and consequences, they don't matter.

Part of this rule is to embrace moving on. Always favor motion over exposition. If you're not sure where to go with a scene, just stop it and figure out what happened later. If your players' eyes are glossing over, call cut, or

have brigands attack. Storytelling isn't high art; don't be afraid to pull from the brash immediacy of pulp novels for inspiration. You might find this guideline particularly useful any time a large group of characters gets together. Vampires like to gather, but trying to keep up with motivations and proactive actions for a dozen or more Storyteller characters can become daunting. So find the heart of what you're doing, hit home with it, then move on.

Rule VII: Embrace Darkness and Grace

Darkness and Grace make for a fine line to walk. It's the Dark Medieval World, after all; it has to be dark. But at a certain point, it becomes a drag. At a certain point, it becomes pastiche. Everyone has to be on the same page and know what levels they're in for. If possible, communicate these intentions before the game starts.

The first time you're slapped, it's awful. The second time, it's a little less awful. The third time, it's just starting to piss you off. After the tenth time, you should be long gone, or you should have hit back.

On the other hand, if someone gently caresses your skin, teasing your senses and relaxing you, that slap can be kind of nice. Followed by some more soft touches, kisses, and enticing words, you'll welcome the sharp sting and ask for more.

This all comes back to the previous rules, particularly Rule Five: Always Listen. Pay close attention to your players. You can usually tell if they're enjoying the levels of darkness and grace in your chronicle. You can usually tell if you're pushing a little too hard. Find the balance. Don't push unwelcome boundaries.

Rule VIII: Let Dice Add To The Game

Let dice add to the game, not take away from it. In **Vampire**, dice act as a method of conflict resolution. If, as Storyteller, you're not comfortable letting the direction of a story element come down to dice results, don't use them.

To use a popular example, if Indiana Jones's player had to roll to avoid a rolling boulder, the dice result comes down to "he survives or dies," that makes for a pretty anticlimactic character arc. Instead, don't bother with the roll. Narrate the moment. Let the character's traits dictate how it goes. If you want to use the dice, change the stakes. Maybe the boulder crushes an important possession on a failed roll, while Indiana escapes narrowly with a cracked ankle. Or maybe failure means his mode of escape left without him, leaving him stranded. Have you ever groaned because a death or other massive failure just did not feel dramatically appropriate to the story? Don't let that happen. The dice should foster drama, not squash it.

Rule IX: Communicate Goals

We've mentioned this already, but it's important to note goals up front. Do you want a high-powered romp through the High Middle Ages? Do you want a highly personal cautionary tale? Do you want an epic political drama? If the players don't craft characters to suit, the story falls flat. Communicate and discuss goals as much as you can in advance, that way everyone is on the same page.

In fact, if you have the time to prepare ahead, craft a "style sheet" where you can communicate moods, themes, and important plot lines and styles you want to address. You can even add a few dots in Backgrounds, Merits, or Flaws to add to character creation, or changes to certain clans or bloodlines. This is a good place to mention house rules. Speaking of house rules…

Rule X: Make House Rules

The game is not in this book. The game is at your table. The game is within your players' imaginations. The game is in the way you interpret the dice. The game is in the stories you're telling. Every bit of **Vampire** is about taking the seeds we've given you and growing them into something unique and different. The rules are not exempt from this truth.

Don't just make changes to the rules because you think something needs to be "balanced" in comparison to other rules. Change rules to emphasize and de-emphasize themes. If you want a high-action game, you might make it easier to heal aggravated damage, for example. Or you might want to develop extended, expanded social challenge rules for a game focusing on political debate. This book assumes a 'default' experience. It's up to you to make the game what you want it to be.

If you're making house rules or any other shifts and changes, you must communicate these things to your players. Everyone should be playing by the same rules, no matter what those rules are.

On Storytelling

Storytelling is the oldest form of entertainment. Long before the medieval era, people huddled by the fire telling tales of their forefathers, of the hunt, and of mythic creatures, gods, and demons. You are the continuation of that tradition in a modern era. Your stories will make your players believe: perhaps they will feel anger or pain or passion on behalf of their characters. You will allow them to step outside of themselves for a few hours and your skill and commitment to your story will make the difference.



Making Your World Dark Medieval

When describing a scene for your characters, use as rich a language as you can muster. Paint a picture with your words. It helps to consider the following questions.

How does it smell?

Smell was a prominent experience in the medieval era. Imagine the world before the internal combustion engine, before factories and mechanization. No stink of diesel, so the air is free of that, but lots of wood-burning fires, mingled human and animal waste and offal, garbage piled in the streets, and urine in the gutters. Before plumbing, people used chamber pots and dumped their waste out their windows. It was a perilous time to be a passer-by.

This is a time when heretics burned in the marketplace. What is the smell of charred flesh? Travel is on foot, unless you were fortunate to have a beast of burden or access to a cart or wagon. What is the smell of human of the road, of dirt and open air, of animal sweat and leather?

How does it taste?

Diets were extremely limited, depending on your social circumstance. Many of the fruits and vegetables we take for granted were unavailable to the medieval diner. If you were poor, there's a good chance that your diet rarely varied beyond what you could grow yourself or trade with your neighbors. The wealthy had much more choice, but the food often suffered from blandness, as many of the spices of the Far East could be prohibitively expensive if you didn't live along the Mediterranean coast. Spices from Africa trickled north, especially through Spain.

A lot of people drank weak (by modern standards) beer and cheap wine as a regular beverage, especially those with limited access to potable drinking water. As a result, it was not unusual for most of the people you meet to have a light buzz. Tea was also quite popular. Let your characters taste the salt in the air of your seaport, the dew on the honeysuckle growing along the road.

What do you see?

If you were a peasant, your clothes were often rough homespun, patched bits of cloth and sewn-together animal skins. Earth tones predominated. You would have one or

maybe two outfits. Rich dyes were limited to the wealthy and their fabrics were far more diverse: soft-woven woolens, delicate silks coming over on the Silk Road, fine cottons, and luxury furs like mink, ermine and sable.

People constructed buildings by hand out of stone and wood, and sometimes were found very far apart, leading to a great sense of isolation outside of villages and townships. It was a primarily agrarian society, with a heavy focus on agriculture and handicrafts.

If you could not make it with your own hands, you may not be able to get it. Trading was uncertain and goods were often priced beyond the average person's means.

What do you hear?

Combustible engines, planes, and phones do not exist in the Dark Medieval. The only music you hear is the voices and instruments of any musicians around you. Wildlife was louder and more prevalent, as it could be just outside your door.

Men chopped wood with axes and brute strength, and crackling fires burned to ward off the chill of thatched-roof cottages and castles of stone with no central heating. Armies marching could be heard a long way off, as could the cries of dying men. The unpaved streets muffled the hoof beats of a single horse, but not the hoof beats of a hundred horses.

What were they like?

Remember, different forces impact your characters than the ones in modern times. Death was a very real specter and people danced with him daily. Lifespans were shorter. For those employed, work days were usually longer. Families were larger, as infant mortality was much higher. Surviving childhood was an accomplishment, and seeing your 21st birthday meant you might have a chance of seeing your grandchildren before you died, if childbirth or infected wounds didn't kill you first. And always, in the background, is the awareness that someone stronger and better armed could come along and take away everything you have. For feudal states, a lord and his manor can only provide so much protection against a superior fighting force, and even with the promise of protection to his serfs, many lords had no problem sacrificing those beneath them for the greater (and their own) good. In kingdoms where idealized feudalism did not hold sway, even if you served a monarch or court of nobles, you could very well be on your own in the event of an attack from the king's rivals.

Otherwise, they were much like us. People are not so very different, even with over eight centuries separating them. They still have hopes and dreams, fears and jealousies. They are rarely content with their lot and striving for more, like many of us.

As you prepare your chronicle, jot down some notes as to the answers to those questions. It will create a much more vivid and textured image in your players' minds. You are the artist and their imagination is the canvas, so don't be shy about painting with both broad and fine brushes.

Specificity is generosity. Sometimes the tiny details really catch a player's interest and help your world spring into three dimensions for them. These are just guidelines. They may be adapted, added to or broken as needed. You (probably) know your players and what will work best with their specific needs.

You are the Storyteller. Think about that for a moment. You are not the Game Master or the Dungeon Keeper. You are the Storyteller and it is your story that will entertain your group for the session. What kind of a story will you tell? A romance? A tragedy? An action-filled saga filled with battles against foul creatures? You make those decisions.

Keep in mind that the best Storytellers know their audience. Some gamers have no patience for endless dice-rolling, so limit the mechanics in those cases. Some gamers really get into the role playing; be extra expressive when describing scenes with them.

An easy way to determine preferences is to ask your players at the beginning of the chronicle. However, don't constrain yourself with their preferences. Use them as a guideline, but feel free to bend or even break their ironclad choices. You create the world; they create the important people in it. It is a true collaboration.

And don't be shy to break their hearts. Your players want to feel emotions about their characters. They want to feel invested in the chronicle. They want their breath to stop when they fail an important roll. They want to be taken out of themselves. So accommodate them by reducing all real world distractions. Encourage your players to put their phones on mute or vibrate. Designate one phone line as an emergency line and share that information with your players' friends and family. That will allow them to relax during the session and not feel as if they might miss some emergency.

Sometimes reality cannot help but intrude, but it's best if your players aren't distracted with a ping every time someone checks their smartphone. Dim the lights, if possible. Candles add greatly to the ambiance.

This game is not called Medieval Times – it is called Dark Ages. Even though historians now consider it a misnomer, for our purposes we will focus on the darkness of the Dark Ages. People got up with the sun and went to bed when it went down. Those that went about in the dark unnecessarily were often viewed with

suspicion. Good, God-fearing people are snug in their beds early, especially in the wintertime. This game is not about those people. Your players take action. Something has jolted them from their mundane daily routine and launched them into a world where they do not understand all the rules.

You lead them on a journey to parts unknown. It's not just about filling in more dots on a piece of paper. Some characters will die and some will be hurt, but a memorable chronicle will allow your players to learn something about their characters and perhaps maybe even a little about themselves.

Creating Nuanced Storyteller Characters

As Storyteller, your job is not only to sketch out your world, but to fill it with people: rich and poor, cruel and benevolent, ordinary and peculiar. Remember, they are the players. You are everyone else, from the most significant to the least.

Give your Storyteller characters weaknesses and quirks. Every zealot has a crack in her faith that can be exploited, one that might shatter under pressure. Every lover has a soft spot when the one they love is in danger. Give your Storyteller characters something to fight for: a cause, a loved one, a religion, a leader.

In appearance, give them a memorable feature: a mole, a scar, a missing limb, crooked teeth. With the diseases prevalent in the Dark Ages, disfigurement was common and dental care was non-existent. When a tooth bothered you, you plucked it out. Wounds festered and required amputations.

Avoid the Storyteller character trap of making every encounter predictable. The big oaf of a swordsman, the barmaid with a heart of gold, the weak scholar with a magnificent mind, and the cruel lord of the castle get old after a while. If you must use a stereotype, offer a surprising twist. Lead your players into thinking they know exactly what will happen and then twist the figurative knife: have the beatific nun betray them, give the hardened mercenary a love of chamber music, ambush them in the peaceful glen, give them shelter in a graveyard.

Add diversity if you can. While the majority of people in an area may be one particular race or religion or credo, there were always people of all colors and backgrounds passing through. Set your chronicle in a non-Western European country. **Vampire** is a game about exceptional people. Use the exception to dramatic effect.

The most engaging Storyteller characters are ones who could stand as player characters in their own right: fully fleshed and detailed personalities, with shaded strengths and flaws. If you find yourself bored with a Storyteller character, try turning their story around and have them do something unexpected or kill them off. If you are bored, odds are good that your players are as well.

Do not treat your Storyteller characters as mere plot vehicles, such as the knight who delivers the message, the king who threatens the group's leader, or the peasant whose broken-down cart keeps them from getting away. While it is fine to occasionally rely on a Storyteller character to push the plot forward, it's more entertaining to help the characters find ways to grasp their destiny.

For Storyteller characters who do not need to be sketched out in fine detail (Storyteller characters in passing), at least give them a concept and a reason to be "in the room," even if it's a basic, simple reason.

Do not underestimate the significance of mortal characters. They far outnumber their supernatural counterparts and while they have no special powers, they wield knowledge and righteousness of cause.

Choosing Names

It's easy to overlook names when creating characters, choosing instead to go with something that feels appropriate to the period or location as informed by movies and other popular media. This strategy is quick and to the point, but can lead to repetitive naming, robbing you of meaning, setting depth, and story seeds.

Unless you're very passionate about a specific place and time, odds are you don't have time for thorough onomastic research, so here are some tips and suggestions to find resonant, evocative and useful names.

As a general rule, last names were rare in the 1200s. Some up-and-coming merchant families tried to create a respectable past by inventing themselves a Roman heritage. This ruse that might work for humans, but doesn't hold much water for a Cainite that was actually around at the time of the Republic. Most people in Europe were identified by a first name and a specifier, which could refer to their origin, their religion, their father's name, their profession, or simply a prominent physical characteristic. These specifiers are at the root of the modern last names, and became necessary as people in cities needed to distinguish themselves in larger crowds. You can thus use Wikipedia to find a name and append a descriptor to it:

for example, Manfredi da Procida (first name and origin), Elazar ben Samuel of Prague (first name, father's name and origin), Marguerite la Rouge (first name and hair color), Nasir ibn-Kamal al Tusi or The Physicist (father's name, origin, and profession), Jutta von Mainz (origin), and so forth.

Browse articles related to the time and place you're playing in and move liberally among related articles. Be sure to check out literary collections of the time (often available directly via Wikisource). You'll find a wealth of names to draw from to build a vast arsenal of story hooks and paint a vibrant picture of the people of the time.

Build a list before play if possible. Look to your intended region and put together twenty or so potential names that you can draw from in the moment. This will provide an air of authenticity to your characters, and help move the game along.

Representing Other Cultures

Reaching across time and space to portray people respectfully can be a perilous undertaking, and the pitfalls of stereotyping are always just one step ahead. Here are three basic principles to help you play in a rich and variegated world.

Focus on the Local

In a world of slow communication and transport, the local community is even more crucial than it is today. While it can be tempting to broadly apply religious ideologies and national identities, remember that these concepts were highly challenged in the Middle Ages, as nationalistic sentiments were still far in the future and piety was a subject of constant debate. Apply modern sensibilities, and consider that large-scale religious clashes tend to be pretexts that hide power struggles. Ask yourself what happens when they trickle down to the daily life of neighbors.

Play Real People

Ideals, laws, and tenets all hold well in theory, but everyone follows them however they wish. The existence of a common cultural principle doesn't necessarily mean that people will accept it. Conversely, a law or a prohibition can show a common behavior that the authorities wished to curtail. Most of all, remember that people are always fundamentally the same. Think of the complex reactions and behaviors of the ones around you, and identify what moves them. Bring these real facets of humanity to your characters.

Engage with Respect

You might wish to erase problematic content from your game, and that is fine. But should your group want to play in a realistic setting, consider the extant issues through the lens of respect and playability. For example, class divisions certainly exist in some regions, but don't make them insurmountable, and do not negate the agency of characters. Respect the people you're imagining in order to give them authenticity and a rounded, compelling portrayal. Prejudices do not exist without individuals expressing and interpreting them. No behavior is blatantly universal among all its practitioners.

Improvisation for Storytellers and Players

Here are a few tips and techniques for bringing an air of authenticity to your **Vampire** games.

For Storytellers

So much of the game experience hinges upon the ability for the Storyteller and the players' characters to interact with each other freely. The very best chronicles offer mutual suspension of disbelief. Even if only one player character doesn't buy in, it can make the rest of the group feel foolish.

Consider creating voices for each of your Storyteller characters. Speak with their voice. A sailor is not going to sound the same as a king; a duchess will not sound like a milkmaid. What do they sound like? Play with the pitch and timbre of your voice when planning your chronicle. Try and keep your accents appropriate to the milieu. If your chronicle is set in France, the majority of your Storyteller characters should have at least a touch of French accent. Listen to native speakers and pay attention to which vowels change tone and which consonants get clipped. This will help you avoid stereotyping so far as to be comedic, unless comedic is what you're going for.

Remember, America as we know it does not exist; it is a big, empty gray area of unknown on the map. American accents are not desirable in a Dark Ages game, so try and limit them in yourself and your players. Of course, not everyone feels comfortable speaking in an accent, so feel free to allow your players to speak in a normal

voice with as few regionalisms as possible. Although, with a little research, you might be surprised how many local regional speech behaviors parallel historical groups and periods. For example, lower class language has some global similarities.

Bring some small hand props to help your players' imaginations. There's no need to spend a great deal of money; you can find plenty of thematic props at used shops. A plastic wine glass can become a goblet. A bed sheet can become the stained cloak of a murdered king. A small pouch full of metal washers is a payoff for a duke's silence.

If you find your game growing stale and your characters taking your plotlines for granted, it's time to change it up and raise the stakes. Take their breath away. Kidnap a member of the party, have them survive an assassination attempt from a very well-connected nobleman, kill a family member, or entangle them in a horrifying plot where their loyalty is questioned at every turn. Dire inflictions create more memorable stories. You are there to help entertain them, to guide them along the way. Don't let them rest on their laurels too long; keep them invested.

Be ready to be flexible. Your players will surprise you at times. Just when you think you've foretold every possible outcome, they fling a wrench in your perfectly splendid plot, or they may give you an idea for an even better one. The best chronicles are a blend of Storyteller planning and character reaction, each one feeding and blossoming from the other. For this reason, it's important to never plan outcomes, only seeds. Improvise. React. A reactive Storyteller is infinitely more enjoyable than one with meticulous, hard planning.

Make the game a safe space for your characters. Don't allow players to mock each other too much, out of character, for it can lead to great conflict. Encourage the shy players by shaping plotlines to draw them out. Keep the boisterous ones in check, while still keeping them engaged.

For Players

Do your best to inhabit the skin of your character. He or she does not necessarily sit or stand the way you do. They do not talk like you. If you are playing a high-born lady, keep your posture strong and straight. Conversely, if you are a warrior, you stay alert for potential threats, your eyes roaming the room constantly.

To get into character, ask yourself: who am I? What am I doing here in this moment? Am I getting what I want? If not, how can I?

If you are defying societal expectation, let it be for a reason that makes sense in the setting of the game, not because you are indifferent for the evening.

On the night of the game, consider wearing a piece of clothing that evokes your character to you. It can be subtle. Try a scratchy sweater if you are playing a low-born character or a long skirt for a duchess.

Bring a prop (though be sure to clear it with your Storyteller before the game). While a real sword is not necessarily acceptable, who says you can't carry a rubber dagger at your belt? Bring along a rabbit's foot for a superstitious character or a guitar for a minstrel.

Listen to the music of your voice. Does it sound like the voice of your character? How can you adapt it to be more like? Vary your tone. Whisper if something must be kept secret and raise the volume when speaking in anger. You don't speak in monotone – why should your character?

Avoid deeply modern phrases in speech. Nothing is more jarring than hearing someone say an obviously modern phrase. Even the cursing was different then. Be creative with your curses; in this time period, people believed in the power of a curse to potentially damage enemies.

If you have something important to say in character, whether addressing a bar full of drunken merchants or an army about to break on the battlefield, think about standing to say it. It will add weight to your speech.

When improvising in character, the easiest way to get going is to accept what the other character/Storyteller is telling you and add to it. You don't have to agree with it, but spending your time negating everything told to you is very disruptive to the game.

For example:

Thomas and Melanthea are players in a scene together. Their Storyteller, Michael, is trying to set the scene.

Michael: You've just entered a tavern. The door hangs half off the hinges and most of the people in the room are standing. You've clearly interrupted a fight.

Melanthea: I don't go in. My character doesn't drink.

Thomas: Well, my character can't go in if yours doesn't. He doesn't consider the street safe. [In character] Lady Melanthea, shall I escort you back to your estate?

Melanthea: Thank you, but no. I will summon one of my knights to accompany me back.

[Thomas is left standing outside the tavern. Both characters missed meeting the Storyteller character with a crucial clue that they were supposed to encounter inside.]

Compare that exchange with this one, where the player characters accept what the Storyteller is telling to them, as well as adding to the experience:

Michael: You've just entered a tavern. The door hangs half off the hinges and most of the people in the room are standing. You've clearly interrupted a fight.

Melanthea: Melanthea edges into the bar, clearly uncomfortable. She clasps and unclasps her hands and moves as far

from the unsavory men at the bar as possible. [In character] Thomas, must we be here? It smells like wet oxen.

Thomas: Thomas stands in between Melanthea and a sailor with one eye who is staring at her necklace. His hand is on his sword hilt, ready for trouble. [In character] My apologies, m'lady, but this is where we were to wait for the message from the priest.

In the second example, not only do both player characters play along with the scenario their Storyteller has carefully constructed, but they have added small details of their own to the scene to give it dimension. They might inspire the Storyteller to create a new subplot on the spot.

If you are naturally a shy person, remember that your character is likely not. Remember that you are surrounded by people who want to enter this world with you and support you. Pushing through your discomfort can bring rewards.

Note as much backstory for your character as you can. Knowing the details of your character's life, even the seemingly insignificant ones, can help you determine how to react in a specific situation. If your character was bitten by a dog as a child, a dog guarding a gate might deter him more than most. If your character is from London and traveled to China, she is better traveled than most of the people she will encounter. She will talk different and think different than a milkmaid who has lived in the same village her entire life. What is your character afraid of? What does she hope for? Knowing the answers will make performing your character all the easier.

It might also help to jot down phrases or words your character might say. Avoid cliché when possible (unless that's a character trait), but create a list of fallback phrases for moments when the muse isn't present.

Improvisation is as much about *listening* as it is about speaking. Listen to how your Storyteller describes the scene and devise a way to interact with it. Listen to what the other members of your party are saying, but also the context clues they provide to indicate how their characters are reacting and behave accordingly. If a character says they are well, but they are clutching a quill with a white-knuckled hand, it's reasonable to assume they are angry or agitated.

If you are truly uncomfortable in trying out improvisation in the game setting, try practicing with a trusted friend or your mirror. Imagine a scenario in the game where you are happy, conflicted, furious, smug, etc. Pay attention to the expressions on your face, the tilt of your head, and your smiles and frowns.

When making character choices, go towards the conflict; this is an oversimplification, but no one wants a character going about their daily life with no ruffling or interruptions. Your game is not about a normal day in the life of your character. It is about an *extraordinary* day.

With that in mind, why pick the boring choice? If your Storyteller gives you a chance to stretch your character, take it. Stretch beyond your comfort zone. It will make your character and your game far richer to take the risk. You might lose, but you also might win. Be bold; the reward for playing **Vampire** is story. Story is about highs and lows. Try to find something within yourself that is similar to something in your character and latch onto it.

Most of all, don't be afraid. Everyone is there to have fun. Many players spend a great deal of time worrying that the other players are judging them and it makes them feel awkward. But a great performance in character will inspire your fellow players and raise the quality of the entire game.

Collaborative storytelling is an art that endures because it brings people together to create a world of their making. Get ready: your tale is about to begin.

Play Styles

When you decide to run a game of Dark Ages Vampire, or any game for that matter, you need to decide what kind of game you are running. Will it be high adventure with characters performing epic feats and experiencing dreadful failures? Will it be full of political intrigue with the characters uncovering plots against the Prince of the city? Will the chronicle circle around arcane investigations into the mystical side of the vampire nature? Will the player characters work together to solve a problem, or against each other in secret societies bent on destroying each other? Determining what kind of play style you and your players want prior to starting the game will help keep design aspects in focus when planning for the chronicle.

Collaborative Storytelling

The first thing you should do when you decide you want to run a game is find out what your players are interested in playing. If this is their first time playing a **Vampire** game, it might be best to give them guidance in the types of stories that you are willing to tell. Often, players have an idea already of the kind of characters they want to play, and talking with them will help you decide what kind of chronicle to run. If you have a group of players who all want to portray Ventrue and Lasombra socialites vying for political power within their city, you

are more than likely not going to run a chronicle based on investigating arcane ruins or demon hunting. While those story elements may well have a place in your chronicle, they should not be the focus. Then again, if you want to run a game filled with high adventure and epic plots, you should make your players aware so they can design their characters appropriately. This kind of collaborative chronicle building helps the players and the Storyteller get the most out of the game.

A good start to collaborative chronicle building is to have the players create their characters together, with the Storyteller present. As they design their characters, use their enthusiasm for their own stories to craft the shared chronicle setting. During this session, encourage the players to collaborate amongst themselves to create shared histories and meaningful backgrounds. Prompt your characters with some of the following questions to help them give you information on what they want from the game.

- Where does your character come from? Where is she now?
- Does your character observe a religion? If so, how does that color her views on others?
- How politically-minded is your character? Does she have any ambitions in that arena?
- How much does your character care about the mystical? Has she had any interactions with magic in the past?
- How martial is your character? How does your character deal with a fight?
- Name one other player character your character has had positive interactions with, and describe those interactions.
- Name one other player character your character has had negative interactions with, and describe those interactions.
- Name one other player character who knows a secret about your character. What is that secret?

Not all of these questions are always necessary, and these questions are just examples to get your players talking. Be sure to share expectations for the game with your players as they create characters. Shared stories between players help them have reasons to be together at the start of the chronicle.



Sometimes players prefer their characters to not know each other before the games starts, allowing them to roleplay first impressions and character connections. This is perfectly fine, and you can have Storyteller characters fill the roles of other player characters in the last three questions, just as long as the players spend some time considering what their characters do and how they interact with others. Still knowing about character histories and interactions can help players design characters that will eventually work well together.

The Social Contract

When you create a story using collaborative storytelling, you and your players enter into a social contract. The players promise to create characters appropriate to the ideas of theme and mood you have all agreed upon, and you promise to use their ideas to craft an engaging story that uses the elements they have provided you. Maintaining this social contract is imperative. A player who creates a character only to have him act vastly different from originally described can easily disrupt the mood of the shared setting. Conversely, a Storyteller who makes setting changes and mood shifts without consulting the players can destroy her own game. When the Storyteller and the players engage in this kind of social contract, all parties must agree on the outcome they are looking for.

Expectations are the central driving force in transparency. Players must share their expectations for the chronicle with the Storyteller, and vice versa. By understanding player expectations, the Storyteller is capable of creating story elements and plots that play off those expectations. As such, players who are aware of the Storyteller expectations of play style and chronicle length will feel more at ease when creating characters within the shared setting. Expectations can and will change as a chronicle advances, and the social contract promises that these changes will be shared when they come up.

Transparency

As a Storyteller, you must remain faithful to the shared vision of the game. The players put their trust in you to craft their characters into a story which is both engaging and fun. Collaborative storytelling techniques can be difficult to master. You must engage your players in conversation about expectations and desires, and then remain faithful to whatever the group decides together. During these discussions, you should also be as transparent as possible about your intentions for the game. If you plan to play it fast and loose with the rules, let the players know up front to prevent confusion in the future.

Share with the players ideas for specific setting elements, such as major Storyteller characters, important locations, and even hooks for plot ideas. Of course, Storytellers will always have secrets, but giving the players insight into the type of setting you are crafting based on their own characters provides them with agency to decide what to do with those elements. Also, players often come up with interesting elements on their own, so feel free to accept suggestions and use their ideas when crafting your story.

Story Crafting

Some Storytellers prefer to create an entire setting and story, and then have players create characters to fit that story. This is a valid strategy, but puts all the burdens of play style and setting elements on the Storyteller. When story crafting, the Storyteller must decide on the setting, pacing, and chronicle length on his own. All of these elements should be decided at least loosely before the players make their characters so that the Storyteller can direct them to make characters that interact well with the setting. Even in story crafting, the players and the Storyteller must work together to create an engaging story. Transparency in story crafting only needs to go so far as the setting and a few key Storyteller characters when necessary. The social contract between player and Storyteller still exists, though it is a little different. The Storyteller is promising to share his idea for a game and remain faithful to it in return for the players creating characters that fit within the setting and help the story.

Storyteller and player expectations are still very important in this kind of game creation. The players must be fully cognizant of the Storyteller's expectations for how the chronicle will play out so that they can make characters faithful to the story. The players must also share their expectations for their characters with the Storyteller so that he can be sure to shape his already robust setting around these main characters.

Using the Rules

Determining when, how often and how faithfully to use mechanics is a play style element that requires forethought on the Storyteller's part. When telling a story or creating a collaborative fiction with a group of people, sometimes the rules of the game can get in the way of excellent narrative. Sometimes the players are having a run of bad luck, and the rolls just aren't in their favor. Sometimes this can generate unexpected challenges and brilliant story elements. Sometimes this only causes a negative play experience

and disappointed players. As a Storyteller, you decide how heavily your chronicle will rely on the rules versus relying on player action and agency.

Certain types of scenes require more rule use than others. During an important combat or political scene in which the outcome determines where the story will go next, using printed mechanics can be especially important. In side scenes, information gathering scenes, and some combat scenes against minions and other less competent opponents, the use of hard and fast mechanics is less necessary. This isn't to say that the Storyteller should allow all of any player's actions to succeed or fail just because it is good for the story. But sometimes it is okay to allow player decision and creative problem-solving skills direct the outcome of a scene, regardless of what the printed rules state. Some players come up with exceedingly interesting or creative ways to deal with a situation that just isn't covered by the mechanics presented in this book. Storytellers should encourage this kind of lateral thinking and reward it with giving the players a chance to try, even if their characters are likely to fail.

Some of the best uses of mechanics come when a player comes up with a rather intriguing idea, but her character is not suited for that kind of action. Instead of the Storyteller deciding that the action should just fail because it is unlikely for the character to succeed, allowing the player a chance to roll adds an element of agency as well as drama. Every now and then a character can get lucky, and the reward for a player's thinking is to give her that chance. The reverse is true for actions that a character is exceptionally skilled in, with the Storyteller allowing an action to succeed without a roll due to its rote nature.

A lot of Storytelling is reactionary, in which the players attempt an action and the Storyteller decides how likely that action is to happen. When the Storyteller decides a player is likely to succeed at an action, he has two choices. Either he can set the difficulty for the action at a low value, hoping to increase the chances of success, or he can just allow the action to happen. By allowing automatic success for these actions, the Storyteller removes the possibility of failure. While this may seem anathema to most roleplaying games, incidental actions should not take up the bulk of your Storytelling time, and having a player roll for every single small action she takes wastes everyone's time. Also, when a player does not have to roll very often, it increases the tension and drama when she does have to make a roll to succeed at an action.

Mechanics can enhance a story, but can sometimes detract from it. Storytellers should set boundaries on the types of actions that are important for story progression, and those that are inconsequential. A good rule to help determine if a player should roll for an action is to decide if a story progressing scene can result from either success or failure. If the story will progress, no matter how differently depending on success or failure, then the characters should make rolls to determine the outcome. If the outcome is inconsequential to the story, then making the players roll is arbitrary.

Player input into utilizing mechanics or not can make these decisions easier. Some players are engaged on a story level, but take mechanics directions from the Storyteller alone. These players are as actors being directed in a film: they know their role, but take cues from the Storyteller on how well they perform their actions. Some players enjoy utilizing mechanics as a way to determine anything their characters do. Storytellers should allow for both of these kinds of players in their games, allowing players to roll when they want, and directing them to use mechanics when necessary.

Either way, when the Storyteller decides that he wishes to use less of the mechanical section of the book than expressly printed, he should let his players know prior to the start of the chronicle. This maintains transparency as well as strengthening the social contract.

The Need for Underdogs

Some of the best stories are about characters at the edge of defeat fighting their way to a hard-won victory. While some people may enjoy a story in which their character is always successful and never fails any challenge presented to him, this is a game set in a terrifying landscape of blood-sucking monsters. The characters are not guaranteed success. In fact, even survival is only an afterthought.

Part of player responsibility in collaborative storytelling is to allow the story to advance, sometimes to the detriment of their characters. Storyteller trust is essential for the underdog story. No one likes for their character to always fail, never succeeding on anything only to watch Storyteller characters or outside forces save the day. Instead, failure should be a preamble to success, making that win so much sweeter for the effort.

Storytellers should encourage players to accept defeat, loss, and character failure as ways to advance not only the core story, but also personal character stories. Some players accept character failure much easier than others, and as a Storyteller, you should not push the issue. Instead, encourage the behavior you want to see from all the players by rewarding the players who do accept character

defeats. Some players will never want their characters to go through hard times or accept defeat. While the Storyteller should encourage the player differently, he should not punish the player for this desire. The only punishment for not accepting failure should simply be the lack of reward. When a player sees other characters gaining benefits from setbacks, he becomes more open to his own character's failures.

Rewarding character failure can be tricky. Sometimes the character story that results from a defeat is reward enough, but some players need more incentive. The following are some examples of rewards you can offer your players for accepting character defeat.

- A -1 decrease in the difficulty for subsequent actions pertaining to the failure.
- A scene dedicated to the character's personal story development following the failure.
- A bonus die to use when rolling to deal with whatever caused the character failure.
- A storyteller character changes his opinion about the character after the defeat.
- A short plot arc revolving around the character to allow her to exact revenge for her defeat.

Notice that not all the rewards are mechanical, though some certainly are. This is not an exhaustive list of what the Storyteller can do to reward his players, nor is the list mutually exclusive. A resulting scene from a character's failure to succeed on an action can revolve around the character and his failure, and the Storyteller can certainly decide to give the player a bonus die to deal with certain elements within the scene as well.

Character failure is a great tool for increasing tension and drama in a story, but it must be used judiciously. When a story would benefit from character loss or defeat, the Storyteller should share this information with the players. The players can then make the decision to accept the defeat or failure for a proposed reward, or attempt to succeed anyway. In either case, the Storyteller should discuss with the players the consequences of their actions and give them clear outcomes of failure. Often, failure is less scary when the players know that while their characters may suffer, the story will be better for it.

The frequency in which these kinds of scenes happen can also be tough to gauge. Scenes in which failure drives the story should not be common and should serve to increase the tension of the game and add drama. If the players are always looking for their characters to fail, then the tension of such failures are lost and the reward of eventual success is less potent. That isn't to say that such things should only happen once or twice a chronicle. No hard and fast rule exists for determining how often to include failure as a plot point. Instead, the Storyteller should be sure to watch player reactions to such scenes and prepare appropriately for success or failure on all of his major plot scenes. That is to say, use the players as a measure for how often they want to see such things.

Be aware that forcing character failure or ensuring the characters cannot succeed at an action can sometimes be a valid way to progress plot, but such devices should be used sparingly, if ever. Removing player agency or making challenges too tough for characters to succeed will only engender bad feelings and cause the players to lose trust in you as a Storyteller.

Pacing

Pacing is an important factor to consider when deciding the how you want to run your chronicle. Sometimes the type of chronicle dictates the pacing, and other times pacing dictates the chronicle. A game of high adventure is likely to be fast-paced, with lots of scenes involving action and discovery with shorter dialogue and revelation scenes interspersed. A game of political intrigue can be fast or medium-paced depending on player decisions, with dialogue scenes dominating the activities and the occasional betrayal or attack easily the cause for fast-paced coups.

The pace of a story is how fast events happen over the course of your chronicle. Generally, pace can be determined by the type of scenes involved. Action scenes (not necessarily combat) progress story quickly, investigation scenes can take a bit of time but usually progress the story, and dialogue and revelations often advance character development, but not necessarily the story (though it certainly can reveal story elements). Each type of scene can happen quickly or be long and drawn-out, and it is up to the Storyteller to try to craft the scenes to fit the pacing. When deciding the type of play style your group wants, the Storyteller and the players must agree on how fast or slow they want their story to progress. The fine minutiae of pacing are in the Storyteller's hands, but the players should certainly have input into the general speed.

The Storyteller must consider the speed and action for each scene, yet the player's actions truly decide the pacing. To make sure a scene will survive the players, you must gauge player involvement. While a heart-wrenching one-on-one scene between a character and his long-lost sire might be engaging and interesting to all the players around the table, several such scenes in a row can cause



unrest. Deciding a chronicle pace before the game begins allows the Storyteller to decide how many such scenes to include and how often to meet player expectations. Then, once the game is underway, the Storyteller can change the pace of scenes to fit players' actions.

Starting and Stopping Scenes

Scenes are the base element for pacing. Deciding when to start or finish a scene can be as engaging and active as the scene itself. Some scenes start and finish with a natural flow, such as a travel scene beginning with the outset of the journey and ending with the arrival at the new location. Some scenes lend themselves well to starting in what would seem to be the middle. For example, a scene could start with the characters stumbling upon a fight in progress between an ally and someone they have never met before. The characters are faced with immediate decisions and are thrown instantly into action.

The start of the scene should set the mood for how the rest of the scene is going to go (even if you plan on surprise or cliff-hanger endings). An investigation scene may begin with the characters witnessing a crime, or it could begin with the news of the crime reaching the characters. In the first scenario, the characters are immediately thrust into action, forcing quick decisions and fast action. In the second scenario, the characters have time to deliberate and make their decisions without much pressure. Both of these scenarios can easily result in the same ending (e.g. the characters find out information about a crime ring), but how the scene develops and where the characters learn their knowledge is vastly different. In the first scenario, the characters are likely to spend the scene hunting down the criminal and extracting information from her. In the second scenario, the characters are likely to do investigations into the crime scene and the victim.

Scene beginnings should always function to inform the players of what may be happening in the scene (even if this is information is misleading) and to directly involve some or all of the characters in the scene. If you start a scene and the players are unsure of how they should be involved or what they should be attempting, the scene will drag on and the players will lose interest.

Ending a scene is a different kind of pacing tool, and depends on many different factors. Again, scenes often have natural endings: the capture of the criminal, the discovery of a plot to murder the Prince, the destruction

of a character's bitter enemy, and so on. Sometimes, scenes end in more unnatural places, such as the beginning of a combat or the beginning of a tension-filled speech. Sometimes these scenes end because of time constraints for gameplay, and sometimes they end to allow side scenes or reactions.

Cliff-hanger endings are perfectly fine, and a Storyteller should not be afraid to use them. Leaving your game session, or the end of a scene, with unresolved business is not bad, and often creates anticipation for the next scene or game. Of course, as with any good thing, these kinds of scene ends should be used in moderation. Deciding to end a scene at a very tense or exciting moment can lead to player disappointment if the players are already anticipating the scene.

Scene endings should allow for some resolution for the scene. This isn't to say that what started the scene has to be completed nice and neat at the end of the scene. Instead, the players should feel there is some logical conclusion to the scene which was started. Sometimes the logical conclusion is simply the resolution of characters' actions. Sometimes that conclusion is a surprise or a special plot twist the players weren't expecting. Surprises or twists lend themselves well to cliff-hanger scene endings, allowing the characters, and their players, time to react to the shock.

Using the investigation scene example from above, the characters may find information about the criminal and need to decide what to do with that information to proceed, causing a logical end to the investigation scene. The characters might instead catch the criminal, only to find that she is a trusted ally of the Prince and claiming to be on the Prince's business. This also leads the characters to the end of the scene, but encourages further discussion. A completely different outcome to the scene could be that as the characters catch up to the criminal, they find a rival group attacking her, and they must decide to assist her so they can pump her for information, or let the rival group take her in, which certainly concludes the investigation scene.

Facilitating the Story

"He who would do great things, shall not attempt them alone." So said Seneca, the great philosopher. As the Storyteller, you design a compelling adventure for your players to partake in, create interesting characters for them to interact with, and describe incredible settings for them to explore. Without the endeavor you place before them, the players make characters who are then directionless.

Of course, even the direst of circumstances will fall to the wayside if the coterie is not willing to work together. As the Storyteller, not only do you reveal the world and trial, but you also manage the players. Both in and out of character, you are the facilitator of the relationships that will make or break the denouement of the story. The stories of **V20 Dark Ages** are character-driven, with their decisions and desires ushering in the outcome. The Storyteller can do many things to ease the coterie together, allowing the characters to cooperate more naturally.

Before Character Creation

Making sure the characters will mesh with the game you have in mind will require you to know what type of game you intend to oversee. Let the players know what type of game you anticipate. Mention the themes and genre of the game . Do you have a fast-paced game of espionage where the characters will travel from Scandinavia to India? Will they be on an adventure at sea, trying to unravel a maritime mystery of disappearing cargo and fellow Cainites? Will it be a slow burn, with Cainites infiltrating a university and trying to discover who has the bizarre religious text their sire is desperate to have in her clutches again? If you require the players to all be from the same town or country, lay that out early on as a starting point for character creation. Provide the stepping stones and allow the characters to leap off from there.

During Character Creation

What types of characters do you think would best complement the story you have planned? Consider the geographical, social, and intellectual demands of the game. If you think certain Traits, Backgrounds, clans, or Roads would work best, set these before the players (and either give them the tools to take on the Backgrounds you require or just let them take the required Backgrounds for free). Characters who are ill-equipped to take on the rigors you have designed for the game will make for frustrated players. Only a party of masochists will continue to play a game where they are out of their league and out of their element. However, characters who can succeed will try.

If one of your players are dead set on playing on something you don't think will work, talk with the player to come up with a solution that works for both of you. Talk about it out loud. Maybe one of the other players will have a solution or suggestion. Getting the group to

figure out how each character fits into the story, as well as their connections with each other, makes the coterie easier to form and makes the players invested in keeping the coterie together.

In addition, you can suggest how the characters know each other. As you lay out possibilities, you convey how the world of Dark Ages **Vampire** is connected. As they reveal who their sires are and their histories, weave them into the ideas you already have, tightening the threads that make up the story. Create details about the world and the story that characters can become attached to and invested in. Leave out hooks that, once set in the characters' flesh, will be hard to shake off.

Storyteller Characters

Just because you aren't a player doesn't mean you won't get to play. The characters in your story are not the sole inhabitants of the Dark Medieval World. On the contrary, they are a select few within a vast population, scores of cultures, religions, and philosophies surrounding them. In your chronicle, the player's characters will be the focus of the story, but they are by no means the only people with desires and agendas. The world isn't full of insignificant peons, laying in wait for your characters to show up and animate them with their mere presence and ready to be thrown away after they've been drained of their usefulness. Using Storyteller characters wisely will support the story you and your players are attempting to play, placing physical and emotional ordeals before them and helping to set the tone for a scene.

As the Storyteller, you will have many characters at your behest to move the session along, supply your players with information, or put obstacles in their way. Building them and managing them wisely will enrich your players' experience at the table. Three-dimensional Storyteller characters raise the stakes as the player characters go up against real enemies, desperately search for allies they can trust, and share intimate moments with new acquaintances.

Sources for Storyteller Characters

Tired villagers quietly nurse drinks around a kitchen table. Merchants shout their exotic wares on teeming city streets. A student from the local madrasa stands outside the school, waiting for someone or something. At first glance, there may seem like too many people to choose from, but taking cues from your characters and your intended story will provide you with a vibrant pool of individuals to draw upon and have interact with your players.

Your Chronicle: In contriving your story, you no doubt envisioned characters to share the stage. In a story centering on the rise and fall of Malkavian oracles and the individual records of their enlightened ravings, it seems only natural that the Malkavians, their patrons, and those who recorded and interpreted their prophecies, would exist. If your characters are seeking to exonerate their sire from charges made against him, someone has accused him. If the coterie is on an ocean voyage delivering a tribute to a foreign Prince, there is a Prince, a captain of the boat, and perhaps someone who booked their passage and made arrangements. Your story started well before the players made their characters. Consider those who may have set the story in motion before the characters take their place at the forefront to carry it to it's exciting ending.

Players' Histories, Contacts, Allies, and Mentors: During the character creation session, players will have come up with back stories for their characters. It is also extremely likely some of your players have taken Contacts, Allies, and/or Mentors as Backgrounds. These are easy

Throw Them in the Deep End

Depending on the story (or if you don't have an exact story in mind), you may be able to literally throw the characters together. Have the players make their characters and start them off in an extremely perilous situation where they will have to work together to survive. The stakes must be high enough and the situation dire enough that a single character cannot just run off and abandon the rest. Through working together under pressure, the characters become connected and at the very least know they all work great together when the going gets rough. After seeing how the characters work together, you can form a story and challenges tailored to how the individuals operate. This type of cold ending works better for people more familiar with the system. Those unfamiliar with how to respond may flounder and become frustrated as they try to figure out how to play as well as how to protect the other characters from serious injury.

picks for characters to bring in later in the game. The relationship to the character has already been established, and chances are the player has said something about the Storyteller character's personality or situation.

When using people the characters are already invested in, be sure to ask for details such as age, personality, occupation or other defining characteristics. This will make them more believable in the course of play; you can also indicate something is "off" if you clearly state something contrary to the Storyteller character's profile. A cool and collected Mentor who suddenly seems on edge and stumbles over his words should signal to the players something is wrong.

Foils/Antagonists: After a few sessions, player characters will probably have their personalities and goals well established. Once they are on their way, it will be easy to create Storyteller characters set to thwart your characters in their endeavor who can interact with your players in a way to reveal things about their nature.

Antagonists may be individuals you came up with before the game started. However, after seeing the coterie's dynamic and how they choose to approach things, you may wish to change their antagonists' tactics. Antagonists aren't necessarily outright villains. They may be simply trying to get the same thing done first, or in a way which would ruin things for your players' characters. They could be trying to stop them outright or stall them. Alternately, these antagonists could be helping the player characters succeed, setting them up for something farther down the road.

Foils are individuals either completely opposite in nature to the character or extremely similar to the characters with one significant difference that reveals something about the player character. A foil for Inez' character, Magda, may be someone just as intelligent as her, but with the social bearing she lacks. They can go head to head in conversations about the world today, esoteric texts, quoting religious leaders and philosophers, but as soon as the subject switches to non-scholastic matters, Magda feels her face grow hot and ducks out of the room. For characters wrestling with their natures and morality, Storyteller characters that serve as distorted reflections of the characters can propel the story and provide interesting interactions. Some characters may find their foils simply annoying or consider them as threats, especially if they are similar to the character. Others may find themselves constantly comparing themselves, wondering if they are who they think they are. Playing off a character's insecurities and flaws helps to invest the character's heart and soul in the interactions she has with others.

More Than Set Dressing

A good Storyteller character does more than stand there, taking up space and waiting for characters to extract information or goods from her. The world is full of interesting people besides your players' characters and the world will seem more alive if there are fascinating people in it. Convincing, believable people your character will want to rescue, confide in, or kill will help the players make decisions. When the characters are stuck (note, this is not the same thing as failing) in a situation, unable to decide what to do or at a dead end, a well-placed and well-played Storyteller character can get the ball rolling again.

When to Use Storyteller Characters

A great many people populate the Dark Medieval World. However, not all of them need to be named Storyteller characters. You don't need to write down the name and age of every single person in the town or list what professional services are available. Some of the people your players will interact with will have minimal contact and effect on your players and the story. Daggers don't grow on trees, so if Inez wishes Magda to have one, she will have to go to a merchant or a smith to purchase one. Having too many Storyteller characters performing insignificant tasks will make them insignificant to your players. If they spend the whole session talking to every person on the street and getting no information, they may brush them off or misjudge the importance of the Storyteller character that can help move the plot along.

Storyteller characters should be important to the story at large. Before you give someone a name and Attributes, ask yourself:

- Are they bringing information to the story? Relaying something to the characters or taking a message somewhere? Setting a mood through dialogue?
- Are they bringing something physical to the story? Are they delivering something or taking something away?
- Who are they connected to? Are they tied to one of the characters? Are they connected to someone outside of the coterie? What is that connection?
- How often do you see this Storyteller character interacting with the players? Is this a recurring character who they will deal with on many levels or someone they will see only occasionally in a single capacity?
- What does this Storyteller character want and how does it affect the story? Are the characters in the

story aware of this Storyteller character's agenda? What would it take for the characters to work with this Storyteller character? What would it take for her to abandon them?

When making Storyteller characters, avoid the temptation to become another player in the group, playing a Storyteller character for too long, or having them overshadow the players/characters. Also avoid giving the Storyteller characters long speeches or having two or more Storyteller characters interacting and talking over the characters. Two Storyteller characters may have to interact, but watching someone have a conversation with himself is not what **V20 Dark Ages** is about. Storyteller characters should engage the players and help move the story along, giving the characters the tools and information they need so they can decide what to do and where to go next.

How to Build your Storyteller Characters

Building Storyteller characters is a balancing act. On the one hand, if the players decide they wish to challenge Gertrude the Unyielding to a fight to the death, you will really wish you had Gertrude's fighting prowess figured out. On the other side, it is disappointing to build Gertrude the Unyielding, anticipating the characters taking her on, only to have them avoid interacting with her altogether. Having a full character sheet for each Storyteller character, even digitally, is time-consuming and unnecessary. But the one person you don't prepare, your players will latch onto and pick up their dice, ready to stand toe-to-toe. What's a Storyteller to do?

Before a game session, try to anticipate who the players may interact with and consider the Storyteller character's role in the story. Is she likely to get into a situation where the characters will challenge her? If the characters have provided any information about the Storyteller character (as discussed before, with their Backgrounds), use that as a starting point. If the individual is a vampire, be sure to assign a clan to them, as Cainite politics and attitudes will affect interactions. Decide which of her Attributes she would have as Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary and several Abilities they most likely have. Record these rudimentary stats somewhere. If you use the Storyteller character more, add more information. Allow the role you need her to have in the story as well as what the players draw from her to flesh out the Storyteller character.

Keep in mind, the Storyteller characters are there to facilitate the story telling and move it where it needs to. If someone needs to know the Coptic word for "dagger" and there is a chance your Storyteller character may know, let him know it. Having a character know or have something (within reason) to keep the story going is preferable to stalling the narrative. This is different from the Storyteller character becoming a proverbial genie, where the players simply talk to him and he provides the right answer constantly. This type of Storyteller character takes the challenge out of playing and while they may be well received at first will lead to disheartened and lazy players. Also remember, Storyteller characters make mistakes as well; if you allow him to succeed to keep the narrative going, his failures can be just as effective at driving the action forward. He also has wants and needs; everything can come at a cost. Sometimes that cost is just a price in interaction.

Do You Come Here Often

When preparing your Storyteller characters, you may decide ahead of time the characters will meet them in a certain location, such as a rarely visited mausoleum or the third dock of the east side port in Ploce. If the characters become sidetracked or decide to take another route, they may never make it to these locations, leaving the interaction out of the story. When deciding how to integrate your Storyteller characters into the story, allocate several locations or situations where the characters may encounter them. If you feel comfortable, you can simply set the criteria,"if the characters do (insert situation here), then (Storyteller character) shows up."

Have The Players Keep Track of Who They Meet

Keeping track of the player action and the Storyteller characters can be overwhelming, especially when the cast is large. To save yourself time and gauge the interest of the group, have one of the players keep track of Storyteller characters and their actions. One person in the group is generally more inclined to taking on this task. Ask the players to recap their sessions at the end and recap at the beginning before you get back into the game. Pay attention to who they remember and why they remember that Storyteller character. What they remember will give you clues about what catches their attention and what information fell by the wayside. Use their recollections to tell you what paths to point them towards next. This will also help you figure out what types of personalities, clues, and interactions catch their interest the most.

Bartender #5

Sometimes we have players interact with people we intend to be one-time roles. For whatever reasons, a player will occasionally ask about the Storyteller character, catching us off guard with a question delving into the person's background. It could be him seeking a connection with someone, testing whoever they come across. He may be paranoid, investigating as much as he can. It could be in the character's nature to ask people's names and glean information from the lives of everyone they encounter. Whatever the reason, Storytellers occasionally find themselves on the spot, having to come up with more information than they anticipated. Here are some tips for handling this situation.

• Keep a list of names on hand for quick reference. This will save you the trouble of having to think of something off of the top of your head. Once it's used, cross it off or make a note that it has been used, lest you give the name Talib to two saffron dealers in a row.

• Give the person some kind of physical characteristic. This makes the character a little more than set dressing and brings flavor to the scene. If it helps, use a list of adjectives like rotund, scarred, scabby, smooth skinned, etc. Just pick one or two so the person isn't a faceless nobody.

• While the Storyteller character has their attention, use it. If the characters ask questions, maybe the Storyteller Character does know something that can help them. Her knowledge could be biased or hearsay, but it can be what the characters needed to hear to get them out the door.

Bringing Storyteller Characters to the Table

Storyteller characters will have many things in common with the players. They will have physical bodies, though some of them may be undead. They will have mannerisms and tics, perhaps accents. They will favor certain types of clothing or smell a certain way. They will have objectives and things they value.

When playing a Storyteller character, introduce them. Let the players know who they are dealing with. If many of your characters have high Alertness scores, let them notice more of the Storyteller character right away. Play to the Abilities of your players' characters. Having your expert on Byzantine art notice an 8th century ring on the priest's finger piques the character's interest. If the ring isn't important, don't mention it. If it is, by all means, do. You don't have to take players aside and have a secret meeting about the wine choice the Storyteller character made or the cut of their pants, but you can say, "Giselle, you notice the crest on the dagger Alfonse wears at his belt, it looks like the crest of the Nemanja family." Later, the characters can share what they individually know, cooperating and pooling their knowledge.

Antagonists and Storyteller Characters

Here are just some of the Storyteller characters of which the characters might run afoul. You'll also find rules for engaging these characters; for example, below you'll find rules for exorcism, and for the miracles of the True Faith some mortals wield.

Mortals

While several Cainites openly disparage mortals, only the most foolish neonates underestimate their capabilities. True, they are weak and short-lived, but mortals are numerous and dwell in sunlight, and some of them wield vast amounts of power. The fact that Cainites are a secretive and powerful minority depends both on nature and necessity, as defined by the constantly shifting equilibrium with the mortal world.

The times when vampires and kine lived side by side are long gone, and almost forgotten even by the Cainites themselves – but the encounters continue and are passed down in lore and legend. Children know better than to go out at night, and any kind of unconventional behavior raises suspicion of the Devil's presence. Such suspicions can be met with extreme prejudice.

Additionally, the seasonal length of daylight regulates mortal life, with all activities starting at dawn and ending at sunset, when people retire in houses that have open flames as their only source of light and heat.



The effective separation of worlds makes it quite hard for Cainites and kine to interact, making servants a fundamental necessity. In some cases, the role of servant can be interpreted in the most traditional sense: many housekeepers and stewards run their master's errands and estates without suspecting her nature, except for their eccentric reclusiveness. Other vampires keep their mortal families close, treating them as a haven at best or herd at worst. Finally, the more brazen and power-hungry Cainites develop close relationships with powerful mortals, using them as puppets to act in mortal society.

As we've noted in the rest of this chapter, making otherwise average characters unique and memorable is key to a strong chronicle. Here are a number of mortal Storyteller characters the players' characters might encounter. They are not all "average" specimens, but should be interesting enough to spark movement in the plot and inspire memorable interactions. Use them directly or take inspiration to bring exciting characters to your stories.

We notice the exceptions, because by definition, they stand out. The characters you feature in your stories should stand out. We should care about them. We should want to see more of them.

It's also worth noting that these characters are in no way numerically identical to the players' characters. Some may be better in some places, worse in others. When designing Storyteller characters, consider the needs of the story. If a character needs to be good at something to fit her concept, make her good at that thing. If a character falls short in most ways, that's fine. The character creation rules don't assume an average person; they reflect an exceptional young vampire.

Uncommon People

These are the everyday folks of the Dark Medieval World. They're "commoners," the working class, the lower rungs of the social ladder. However, they're each individuals, people with goals, identities, and motivations.

Curious Barber

The local barber works for and lives in the monastery, shaving the monks, creating ointments, and performing minor surgeries for nearby villages when the need arises. His literacy leaves something to be desired, but he takes advantage of his situation to read as much as he can of the monks' library. He finds the human body fascinating, but

what he finds more fascinating is the weird exceptions he sometimes sees. Recently, he was asked to remove a wire trap jammed within a man's abdomen. Once he removed the trap, the man healed almost instantly. His wound knit shut, and he left with a snarl. Ever since, the barber has asked around about what would cause a human body to behave in such a way.

Nature: Philosopher, **Demeanor:** Caregiver

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 1, Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Empathy 1, Legerdemain 1, Subterfuge 1, Commerce 2, Crafts 2, Etiquette 1, Melee 1, Survival 1, Academics 1, Enigmas 2, Hearth Wisdom 2, Investigation 2, Law 1, Medicine 3, Occult 1

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Contacts 1, Resources 2

Willpower: 5

Road: Humanity 5

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

Obsessed Craftsperson

It would be an understatement to say the local craftsperson takes pride in her handiwork. Her crafts are a thing of obsession. She's always improving upon her form, looking for rare materials, and otherwise becoming a more perfect creator. She was raised to believe that God created humanity with a great potential, and her piety demands she use that potential to the greatest ends she can. If she notices that the characters are particularly adventurous, she'll insist they use her best pieces in the field, testing and reporting back so she can do better with the next model. Of course, she's nowhere near as good as she wishes. While her works are rather impressive, they still have kinks to work out.

Nature: Perfectionist, **Demeanor:** Idealist

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

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Animal Ken 2, Archery 1, Commerce 3, Crafts 4, Melee 2, Ride 1, Hearth Wisdom 2, Investigation 1, Seneschal 1, Theology 1

Backgrounds: Resources 1

Willpower: 5

Road: Humanity 6

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

Opportunist Hunter

The local hunter sells meats and furs to many of the local merchants. He works long, hard days, year after year after year, and barely scrapes by. How could he thrive, with the king's tyrannical poaching decrees? So sometimes, our hunter poaches. Sometimes, he steals from travelers. After all, if the locals didn't expect a caravan of foreigners from the far eastern kingdoms to pass through, would they be missed?

Now, our ignoble hunter looks for more and more profitable prizes. He hears tell of witches who take the shapes of animals. Someone's bound to pay handsomely for one of them.

Nature: Rogue, **Demeanor:** Mercenary

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

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 1, Brawl 2, Intimidation 2, Leadership 1, Legerdemain 1, Subterfuge 2, Animal Ken 2, Archery 4, Commerce 1, Crafts 1, Melee 1, Ride 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Hearth Wisdom 2, Investigation 2, Law 1, Medicine 1, Occult 1

Backgrounds: Contacts 1, Resources 3

Willpower: 6

Road: Humanity 4

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

Sociable Midwife

She manages all the pregnancies and births in the village. She's seen to the births of everyone under the age of twenty. Everyone knows her and her crack reputation for safe delivery and rapid recovery. This is to say, she's welcome in every home, and takes most of those homes up on their hospitality. She's not a gossip, per se; she's just very interested in the ways people work and live. She hears and collects their stories, all without passing judgment. If a character convinces her he means no harm to her community, she'll tell stories that'll make your heart stop. She's also being courted by a follower of the Road of Lilith, so she's been encouraged to take on an apprentice and successor.

Nature: Pedagogue, **Demeanor:** Guru

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

Abilities: Alertness 1, Awareness 2, Brawl 1, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Leadership 1, Subterfuge 1, Animal Ken 1, Commerce 1, Crafts 2, Etiquette 2, Performance 1, Survival 1, Academics 1, Enigmas 1, Hearth Wisdom 4, Investigation 1, Medicine 2, Occult 1, Politics 1, Seneschal 3, Theology 1

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Fame 2, Influence 2, Resources 1, Retainer 1

Willpower: 6

Road: Humanity 7

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

Litigious Serf

The scholarly serf farms and labors for about 120-150 days out of the year. This leaves plenty of time for serfs to do with what they will, and you know what they say about idle hands. Our scholarly serf studies and keeps up with current events. He reads the rolls for legal cases from the nearest cities. He debates at whatever house holds tavern that night. He exercises his mind, because his body's done exercising after hard work. He's seen a few peasant revolts put down violently, so now, when he sees oppression, he helps his neighbors fight their battles legally. With his cut of the proceeds, he's made quite a bit of money for someone of his station. He's achieved some degree of success and recognition for his contributions. The nobles have even caught wind of his influence and are looking to either employ him or make him disappear. Worse still for him, he's negotiated a couple of land contracts to win stolen properties back from Cainites. Not that he knew who he bested.

Nature: Curmudgeon, **Demeanor:** Dabbler

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

Abilities: Athletics 1, Expression 2, Leadership 1, Legerdemain 1, Animal Ken 2, Commerce 2, Crafts 1, Etiquette 1, Ride 1, Academics 1, Enigmas 1, Hearth Wisdom 1, Investigation 1, Law 3, Politics 2

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Contacts 2, Fame 2, Influence 1, Resources 3

Willpower: 4

Road: Humanity 6

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

Honest Soldier

The honest soldier works as a city guard during times of peace and ships out in times of war. He doesn't fight because he likes to fight. He doesn't fight because he believes in the divine right of his lords. He fights because he can, and he fights because others can't. If he does it, that's one less person in the world that has to. Over his (admittedly short) years, he's seen darkness. He's seen enough that he approaches the world with more than a small amount of fatalism. He'll intervene into even minor injustices that could mean his death, because he just doesn't care if he lives or dies. He doesn't find attraction in women and he has no desire for family life. His attachments to



the world are negligible at best. For those he defends, this is fortunate. However, without intervention, his skills are likely to go to waste, rotting in a gutter if he doesn't find purpose soon.

Nature: Masochist, **Demeanor:** Martyr

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Intimidation 2, Archery 2, Crafts 1, Etiquette 1, Melee 3, Hearth Wisdom 1, Seneschal 1, Theology 1

Backgrounds: Resources 1

Willpower: 7

Road: Humanity 7

Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 1, Courage 4

Traveled Trobairitz

Our Traveled Trobairitz was a noblewoman who had no interest whatsoever in marriage and home life. She had a love for the arts, for music, for things that were considered below her station. She abandoned her identity as a "privileged" young woman to take to the road. She used her family's connections to find her way into various courts along the countryside, where she recited poetry and played songs for the wealthy. As she travels, she hears and retells the tales of the people, building her repertoire and her arsenal of words and instruments. Her penchant for travel doesn't mean she has no interest in love; she simply demands it on her terms. She keeps fans and lovers – often the same people – men, woman, otherwise, poor, rich, and otherwise in many lands across Europe. Now, she's built enough of a following that villages eagerly await her arrival and passionately retell her stories for years after she leaves. To these people, she's a source of both entertainment and news. For some, she's the only adventure they'll ever encounter. Fortunately for them, she has enough adventure to go around.

Nature: Bon Vivant, **Demeanor:** Gallant

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

Abilities: Alertness 1, Athletics 2, Awareness 1, Brawl 1, Empathy 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 1, Leadership 1, Legerdemain 1, Subterfuge 3, Commerce 1, Crafts 1, Etiquette 3, Melee 1, Performance 4, Ride 1, Survival 1, Academics 1, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 2, Seneschal 1

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Fame 4, Resources 2

Willpower: 7

Road: Humanity 7

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 3, Courage 5

Noble Outlaw

We've all heard the stories. There's an outlaw that dances from shelter to shelter, staying for short periods in safe churches, and spending the rest of the time secreted away in the woods. In the eyes of the law, she's equal to a wolf and enjoys no protections. Nobody even knows the charges she was initially given; she couldn't even tell you what she supposedly did to earn her bounties. Now, she makes the law look foolish by skirting their grasp at every opportunity. She'll play pranks and steal in more and more glaring ways. She doesn't even want the money; she'll give it to whomever she sees fit, often the poor, but always in showy, defiant displays. Sometimes, this has brought the strong arm of the law down on recipients, but by that point, she's long gone. Besides, that just makes the authorities look that much more tyrannical and absurd. Now, she leads a small crew of rogues who perpetuate the myths surrounding her crimes. Rumor has it she's having dalliances with a young noblewoman. The lawmen are actively investigating these rumors, looking for the opportunity to strike.

Nature: Jester, **Demeanor:** Rebel

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

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Empathy 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Leadership 3, Legerdemain 3, Subterfuge 2, Archery 4, Commerce 1, Crafts 1, Melee 2, Performance 1, Ride 1, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Hearth Wisdom 1, Investigation 2, Law 1, Politics 2

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 2, Fame 2, Influence 2, Resources 1

Willpower: 8

Road: Humanity 5

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 5

Nobility

The following characters represent some of the courtly nobility characters might encounter. What constitutes nobility changes from region to region, but these characters comprise some of the "upper crust" of their given societies.

Tired Commander

Our Tired Commander is an Arban, a low-ranking commander within the Mongol army. He acts as a delegate leader, ruling over a few dozen armed troops. Currently, his troops keep camp on the outskirts of the city, sometimes staying at various inns throughout town. He's long since proven himself in battle. While he's expected to lead the charge when the time comes, he's hardly eager for a

fight. Right now, he's hoping for a treaty, a truce, or an overwhelming sack so he can either die or settle down. He once possessed a great wanderlust, but that's long since dwindled. Now, he longs for the comforts and luxuries his would-be enemies possess. He'd defect, even take his loyal troops with him, if he thought he could survive the inevitable reprisal from his superiors.

Nature: Mercenary, **Demeanor:** Bravo

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

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership 4, Animal Ken 2, Archery 2, Commerce 1, Etiquette 2, Melee 1, Ride 4, Stealth 1, Survival 3, Enigmas 3, Hearth Wisdom 1, Investigation 1, Politics 2

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Influence 3, Resources 2, Retainers 5

Willpower: 5

Road: Humanity 5

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

Bored Courtier

She's bored. She has too much money and not enough to spend it on. She's entertaining marriage offers from that one count, and the other fool. She goes to her silly riding lessons, and learns to sew and spin and greet guests and stand up straight and fucking yawn. It's all nonsense. It's all absurd. She sees these people as nothing more than wasting time before uneventful deaths or more pointless wars. So when the doors close at night, she looks for other things to whet her appetite. She's destroyed reputations with gossip, which was fun for a while. She picked on and occasionally brutalized that young page boy, which got old very quickly. Nothing holds her attention for long; it takes a great shock to her system to bring any genuine response. But in the courts, she smiles the fake smiles, laughs the fake laughs, and plays the fake games with the best.

Nature: Deviant, **Demeanor:** Conformist

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

Abilities: Empathy 1, Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Leadership 1, Legerdemain 1, Subterfuge 4, Commerce 1, Crafts 2, Etiquette 4, Performance 2, Ride 1, Stealth 1, Academics 2, Enigmas 1, Hearth Wisdom 1, Politics 2, Seneschal 1

Backgrounds: Influence 3, Resources 3

Willpower: 4

Road: Humanity 4

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 3, Courage 4

Anxious Diplomat

This Anxious Diplomat comes from a distant foreign land. He's been tasked with keeping the peace and negotiating treaties between his home empire and his host empire. He's rather accomplished, but as of late, he's acting strange. He doesn't speak of it openly, but his son has been abducted. He suspects the local nobility is holding the boy as a potential bargaining chip. But in the meantime, he's investigating, trying to find leads to his son. His suspicions may or may not be correct, but this tenuous situation has numerous paths to hell. If the child dies, he could start a war. If he pushes his suspicions too far, he could be held or executed in contempt.

Nature: Judge, **Demeanor:** Traditionalist

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

Abilities: Empathy 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Leadership 3, Legerdemain 1, Subterfuge 2, Commerce 1, Etiquette 4, Performance 1, Ride 1, Stealth 1, Academics 3, Enigmas 1, Investigation 2, Law 2, Politics 4, Seneschal 1

Backgrounds: Influence 3, Resources 3

Willpower: 5

Road: Humanity 6

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

Romantic Prince

He's heard too many great stories to let a loveless marriage get in the way of true happiness. He has a large territory, over which he rules effectively, if distantly. He spends much of his time looking for true love. He doesn't know where to find it. He doesn't know how to find it. But he knows that he'll know when he does find it. His wife knows of his disinterest; she finds it convenient, since she has dalliances on the side as well. He'd give everything in his not-insignificant rule for just a hint of the love sung of in the troubadours' stories. Of course, he wears this on his sleeve, and now, a group of opportunists, mortal and Cainite, edge in to seduce away his wealth. This is something his wife will not take sitting down; she's amassing support to supplant him and his seducer if he abandons control of his domain or wealth.



Nature: Celebrant, **Demeanor:** Loner

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

Abilities: Athletics 2, Empathy 2, Expression 1, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 2, Commerce 2, Etiquette 3, Melee 1, Ride 1, Academics 2, Law 2, Politics 2

Backgrounds: Influence 4, Resources 4

Willpower: 3

Road: Humanity 7

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

Thuggish Knight

As a knighted noble sanctioned as a crusader by the Holy Roman Empire, our Thuggish Knight speaks with the voice of the cross. Usually, he speaks with his sword. He's an abusive bully at the best of times and an utter monster at the worst. There's nothing or nobody he believes he cannot take, destroy, or both, with nothing more than a whim. Unfortunately for the world around him, the church smiles, nods, and takes his indulgences when he's caught bloody-handed. He's been very successful in his raids/crusades, so his coffers are more than capable of supporting his antisocial lifestyle. Currently, he holds a manor keep, but does not wish to usurp his lord. Currently, it's convenient to pay lip service to a superior that can take responsibility for the most egregious of his crimes. But as his gall grows, this will not remain the case.

Nature: Monster, **Demeanor:** Bravo

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

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Intimidation 4, Leadership 1, Animal Ken 1, Etiquette 1, Melee 4, Ride 3, Academics 1, Politics 2

Backgrounds: Influence 2, Resources 4, Retainers 3

Willpower: 8

Road: Humanity 3

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Brilliant Merchant

"You'll never succeed in a man's world, so you should just sell the business," they told her over and again. When our Brilliant Merchant inherited her father's shipping network, nobody ever expected her to take it, run with it, and excel. Sure, she's not a very convincing salesperson, but what she doesn't have in closing skills, she makes up for in raw business acumen. Before her father and brothers died

in a boating accident, she was training to become a nun. She spent every possible moment studying in the convent, obsessed with mathematics. She had a gift from God, the nuns would say, as she intuitively understood complex calculations and could read patterns with minimal clues. Now, she takes the admittedly meager income from her father's shipping business and invests it into other merchant enterprises. She's grown sufficiently in capital and connections that she's considering opening a merchant bank to honor her family. Some fancy her gift a form of madness, but they can deny neither her insight nor her results.

Nature: Director, **Demeanor:** Enigma

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

Abilities: Alertness 1, Awareness 2, Expression 1, Leadership 1, Commerce 4, Crafts 1, Etiquette 1, Academics 3, Enigmas 4, Hearth Wisdom 1, Investigation 2, Law 1, Politics 1, Seneschal 2, Theology 1

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Influence 2, Resources 4

Willpower: 6

Road: Humanity 6

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

The Church

Anyone in the Dark Medieval World that tries to deny the Church's influence is a fool at best. However, the Church is a massive organization spread over a very wide area. It consists of millions of people, thousands in official capacity. Those thousands are all independent people who each interpret the Church's policy personally. While they may share a holy scripture and central doctrine, information travels slowly, and every member has different access to supporting information and education. Every member has different leaders and mentors. And in the end, every character has different degrees of faith.

Some – but not all – of the following characters possess the True Faith trait. See p. 392 for more on True Faith and its effects.

Repentant Bishop

Our Repentant Bishop killed a man. This happened before his career in the Church, and he felt justified at the time. After all, the man was with his wife. When he bashed in the man's skull with a chair leg, his wife fled in fear and anger. He wandered from town to town, drinking away his savings and searching for his soul. Every night, he slept less than the night before as the man's pained face and spraying blood haunted him. He feared hell. So our selfish young man did what he felt gave him the best chance at redemption; he joined the church. His narcissism and raw drive pushed him through the ranks rapidly. His fear of hell translated into his sermons; he inspired others to seek penance likewise. Of course, he never once confessed his crime; that would surely land him in prison. Now, as a bishop, it's not as if he doesn't believe. He probably does. But he worships for purely practical reasons.

Nature: Rogue, **Demeanor:** Penitent

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

Abilities: Brawl 1, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 3, Etiquette 1, Melee 1, Academics 1, Theology 3

Backgrounds: Influence 3, Resources 2

Willpower: 6

Road: Humanity 5

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

Forgiving Priest

He cares. He cares, and he cares so much that sometimes it hurts. When he looks you in the eyes, you know that he does not judge; he sees you as another child of God, another perfect creature in imperfect circumstances. So long as you want better, he wants to help you find better. He truly believes in a way few do. He believes in the love and healing power of Christ. He believes in forgiveness, in redemption, and in higher truth. This brings him a warmth like nothing else, and he wants nothing more than to share it. Unfortunately, this warmth and love can sometimes manifest as naiveté, and he can be convinced to take a stand against true monstrosity, if he can be convinced that such a thing exists.

Nature: Visionary, **Demeanor:** Philosopher

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 4, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 1, Awareness 4, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Leadership 2, Etiquette 1, Academics 1, Enigmas 2, Theology 2

Backgrounds: Influence 2, Resources 1

Willpower: 8

Road: Humanity 9

Virtues: Conscience 5, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Other Traits: True Faith 2

Well-Read Nun

She's known to be one of the most scholarly individuals in the region; she's recognized as an authority on so many topics, often she's consulted on things she has no idea about. Still, she's happy to research. She's vaguely faithful, but mostly her experience with the Church reflects the access it affords her to foreign libraries. For the Church, she procures rare bits of knowledge to circulate back into the See's knowledge base. Her biggest strength is also her biggest flaw; she cannot stop digging. If she catches wind of new information, she'll put her neck out in order to add it to the Church's collection. She's received reprimands from on high because she's misrepresented her personal station in order to influence potential purchases (and to be honest, illicit seizures). If she's fed rumors of a particularly juicy tome, she might save interested parties the effort required to procure it.

Nature: Fanatic, **Demeanor:** Guru

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

Abilities: Awareness 2, Expression 2, Leadership 1, Subterfuge 2, Commerce 1, Crafts 1, Etiquette 2, Academics 4, Enigmas 2, Hearth Wisdom 1, Investigation 3, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Politics 1, Seneschal 1, Theology 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Influence 1

Willpower: 3

Road: Humanity 6

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

Familial Monk

One of the characters didn't know she had a brother. Or if she did, she didn't know he grew up to become a monk. She most certainly didn't know that he was buried in terrible debt, and is in need of help.

Of course she didn't know this. Because the Familial Monk is a con artist. He's done his homework. He's learned enough to fake it, to tell the right stories, and he's even made some remarkable connections to sell that story. All he really wants is that character's wealth and power.

He does this every few years. He finds a new home, he finds a likely target, he builds his story, then he plays a game until he gets his way. Every time, he joins the Church under a different name, because the Church is willing to harbor and protect a discovered criminal.

Nature: Conniver, **Demeanor:** Martyr

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

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 1, Brawl 1, Empathy 2, Expression 1, Intimidation 1, Leadership 1, Legerdemain 3, Subterfuge 4, Commerce 1, Etiquette 1, Melee 2, Performance 2, Stealth 3, Survival 1, Hearth Wisdom 1, Investigation 3, Theology 1

Backgrounds: Alternate Identity 4, Contacts 2, Resources 4

Willpower: 7

Road: Humanity 4

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

The Offensive Devout

She's devout, truly devout. Her Faith is a shining beacon that inspires. For some, it inspires passion, love, and grace. For others, namely the Church leadership, it inspires fear, anger, and jealousy. Her faith is one of love, not one of fear and control. This alone draws ire from the monolithic Church. As her local congregation flocked around her inspirational messages, she petitioned Church leadership for the chance to preach with official sanctioning. The Church's current policies prohibit women from any such leadership roles, and the local bishop considered the request an affront to God. She teeters on the brink of excommunication, and rumor has it that the bishop won't stop there. He has been compiling the "evidence" necessary to accuse her of witchcraft. She's aware of the conspiracy against her and speaks calmly of it. Even though it could have her burned, her Faith burns brighter, and she refuses to let them intimidate her. She's dead convinced that God will not allow her an unfair death, and that if he does, it'll be to send the faithful a message.

Nature: Martyr, **Demeanor:** Visionary

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

Abilities: Awareness 4, Empathy 4, Expression 3, Leadership 3, Crafts 2, Etiquette 1, Performance 2, Enigmas 2, Hearth Wisdom 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Seneschal 1, Theology 2

Backgrounds: Influence 2

Willpower: 10

Road: Humanity 10

Virtues: Conscience 5, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

Other Traits: True Faith 3

Vampire Hunters

Sometimes, the will of humanity rises up against the darkness. In a world plagued by the get of Caine, vampire hunters are a logical reaction from a victimized populace.

As with any other group in the Dark Medieval World, individual hunters have their own motivations. Some hunters hunt for altruistic reasons, others do it for selfish reasons, and still others do it simply for the thrill of the hunt.

Hunters come from all walks of life. The Catholic Church has an Inquisition arm which deals specifically with rooting out and burning vampires, but most vampire hunters come alone or from small groups. This is both a blessing and bane. Independent cells can never be completely stopped; every time a vampire feeds, he runs the risk of inspiring a vampire hunter. However, disorganized hunters without numbers on their side often tragically fall to the fangs or the blood slavery of their Cainite enemies.

Vengeful Priest

As far as he's concerned, if you have fangs, you're no different than the monster that murdered his family. As far as he's concerned, you are a monster, not human, and thus the Fifth Commandment does not apply. The Vengeful Priest is a resourceful hunter and his toolbox runs deep. In his mind, his entire parish consists of tools for the hunt. To him, they're not disposable per se; they're willing – if unwitting – soldiers in the fight against the ultimate darkness. No death should go without an opportunity. Every corpse on the altar inspires his troops to fight that much harder. He's had no small success against that darkness, and with each fruitful hunt he learns a bit more about his vampiric nemesis.

Lately, killing has not been enough for him. The last few victims have met gruesome fates as he experimented with their bodies in order to learn the limits and weaknesses of the vampire soul.

Nature: Sadist, **Demeanor:** Visionary

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

Abilities: Alertness 1, Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Brawl 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 2, Melee 2, Performance 3, Stealth 2, Academics 1, Investigation 4, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Theology 3

Backgrounds: Influence 3, Resources 2, Retainers 4

Willpower: 7

Road: Humanity 3

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

Collector Merchant

The Collector Merchant wants more. Selling salt, spices, and silks just isn't enough. The demand only goes so far. During his excursions to Venice, he ran afoul of some vampiric death sorcerers. After a lucky chance scuffle alongside his mercenary guardsmen, he captured one of the necromancers and beat a trove of information out of the monster. Now, he knows too much. He has the locations of havens, he knows of the clans, and he knows of courts all over Europe. At first, this meant little to him. Extortion wasn't a business that interested him. Then, a mysterious benefactor appeared in his life. She offered him a handsome sum for the necromancer. It was more than enough to buy a second ship to start his business empire. She told him she'd pay double for every other sorcerer he abducted. And thus, his hunt began.

Nature: Mercenary, **Demeanor:** Mercenary

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

Abilities: Alertness 1, Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Brawl 1, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2, Legerdemain 2, Subterfuge 2, Commerce 3, Crafts 1, Investigation 2, Law 1, Occult 4, Politics 1

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 2, Resources 5, Retainers 3

Willpower: 6

Road: Humanity 5

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

Conniving Squire

Early in his life, the Conniving Squire was set to be married. He found the most wonderful bride-to-be. He fell in love with her hard. Her family adored him. It could have taken his poor family and dragged them into nobility. In short, it would have solved his every problem and made his life perfect (at least, that was his assumption). The night before his wedding, a monster stole his fiancée and changed her into one of the undead. She swore off the wedding and fled with her new, dark lover.

He swore he'd destroy the monster and all monsters like him. His conviction did not falter when he learned the monster was the count of a nearby domain, a powerful man with nigh-infinite power and wealth.

Through guile, purpose, and lies, he found his way into a position as a squire to a local knight. He knew that with dedication, he could enter the knighthood himself. This would give him the power necessary to stand against his enemy. Quickly, he learned that other vampires existed who would stand in the way of his ascent.

Nature: Fanatic, **Demeanor:** Soldier

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

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Leadership 1, Subterfuge 2, Animal Ken 1, Crafts 1, Etiquette 2, Melee 4, Ride 3, Hearth Wisdom 1, Investigation 1, Politics 1

Backgrounds: Resources 1

Willpower: 9

Road: Humanity 6

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 5

Philosophical Hunter

She only wishes to understand. To her misfortune, she sometimes understands too easily. The ruses of monsters fall flat on her; she sees right through their masquerades. No event caused this. Just one night, she saw a predator. She knew that bar patron was not human. She followed him, and learned his murderous nature. Then, the next night, she found another. Then another. Quickly, her diary held the homes of twenty vampires.

Now, she archives. She archives and she studies. She's recently found hints of secret societies that share her hidden knowledge. She's considering joining them and comparing notes. Her misgivings are mostly narcissist; she's of a mind that they're unlikely to have information she doesn't.

As a hunter, she does not wish to kill. She understands that she might have to, but her goal is to uncover the hidden truths of the world to scratch the itch deep within her soul.

Nature: Philosopher, **Demeanor:** Curmudgeon

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

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 5, Empathy 2, Legerdemain 3, Subterfuge 3, Etiquette 1, Melee 1, Ride 1, Stealth 3, Survival 1, Academics 3, Enigmas 4, Hearth Wisdom 2, Investigation 5, Law 1, Medicine 1, Occult 3, Politics 1, Seneschal 1, Theology 2

Backgrounds: Resources 1

Willpower: 6

Road: Humanity 7

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

True Faith

Four hundred million humans live and breathe, are born and die, and among them, most pay only lip service to a belief in a greater or higher power. This is human nature, to believe in something greater "just in case."

For some rare people, faith goes further. These people come from many walks of life, but especially those who have been exposed to the true manifestations of evil and terror that lurk in every shadow of this era. For these graceful few, faith is not just a word to describe the amount of time you go to church or the amount of money gifted to your local priest. For these people, faith is a raw but potent manifestation of will and positivity, focused through belief in a way specially attuned toward driving back the darkness. There are many ways for faith to manifest, such as healing, compassion, and group efforts to build civilizations or shake the heavens. When this manifestation comes, though, it is diamond-honed to respond to evil. It is, arguably, a natural human evolution in response to the ever-growing number of wicked monsters stalking the night. True Faith is a devout belief in right and beauty and light, and it burns brighter than fire.

True Faith is a beautiful, empowering thing to witness, which is how it spreads. It is a burning, cold, powerful agony to be on the receiving end, like the single-minded burning of sunlight as it bakes the earth and blisters sin. True Faith (as it is often called by those Cainites who have witnessed it and survived) pushes back against darkness with light and very little regard for shades of grey.

In game terms, True Faith is measured as a trait from one to five dots. It's not an Attribute, Ability, or Background. It's a unique trait measured independently of other character traits.

Receiving True Faith

No one is born with True Faith. It must be earned. To earn it, the wielder must first be tested, brought to the brink, and survive somehow. In surviving, they turn their eyes heavenward, look at the sun and the blue sky, and see a larger, grander purpose for themselves and for all things. How their faith manifests does not depend on religion or tradition. Religious fervor or scholarship is not a prerequisite. All that's truly needed is a terrible encounter with evil, a near-death experience by the supernatural, and finding a greater, broader purpose for the second life received.

While it almost entirely manifests itself among human beings, perhaps one in a million of the Damned have manifested True Faith. Generally, they come from the Road of Humanity (particularly the Path of Illumination) or the Road of Heaven. Other Roads may allow for a manifestation of True Faith, but only with Storyteller approval.

No player's character may start a Chronicle with more than one level of Truth Faith. In game terms, True Faith does not cost Merit or experience points; it's a player choice with Storyteller approval.



Increasing in Faith

Increases in True Faith should come only with Storyteller approval as a manifestation of the story being told. There are no systems to abstract what reflects a gain or loss of this sort of faith. Instead, Storytellers should follow the beats of their characters' stories, and adjust this trait after intense times of doubt, huge successes, near death experiences, or destruction of a particularly heinous evil. Of course, to pace with other characters in a chronicle, Storytellers can abstract these ideas further. Perhaps witnessing the birth of a foal at just the right moment in a story could increase True Faith as readily as killing a vampire Prince. In more game-specific terms, an increase in Road or a Virtue could be a good time to assess the character's Faith level.

Losing Faith

Because True Faith is not a manifestation of all aspects of human faith, but rather a specific expression of divine wrath and beauty, the practices and ethics of religion can warp and change while people act as vessels of the belief. Still, some taboos are unforgivable, and should the Faithful stumble into an act that builds the darkness rather than pushing it back, his player should make a Conscience roll at difficulty 9. Failure to should be reflected in a temporary loss of a level of True Faith. Whether or not the level ever returns should depend on character behavior and acts of devotion and sacrifice in the name of their beliefs.

A character that falls below seven dots in his Road loses access to his True Faith. If he rises back to seven dots, he may earn his True Faith anew, but it starts from one dot again.

Systems for True Faith

Faith is an abstract concept and difficult to communicate through rolls and powers. This is only a framework to describe how True Faith manifests in some ways. They are a starting place, not the entirety of True Faith manifestations.

The Faithful get the following special benefits:

- Each level of True Faith gives the Faithful an extra dot of Willpower.
- True Faith is a shield against supernatural powers. Any time a Faithful would be directly affected by a supernatural power, vampire Discipline, ghostly manifestation, or witchcraft, she may spend a Willpower point to resist

the power. Subtract her True Faith from any successes rolled against her. This ability affects any power that would hurt or coerce her. When this roll is used to resist the effects of Daimonion, her rating counts as double.

True Faith Levels

As a character increases in manifesting her beliefs, limitations should lighten. As such, characters with five dots in True Faith should manifest powers not outlined here as their belief may not just push back the darkness, but actually create the light. Perhaps the higher power they believed in at the outset did not exist before, but through devotion and force of will, it may exist now.

- The Faithful is able to repel vampires, the dead, and other creatures that live by or in the shadows of the world with the force of her inner light. She may wield prayers, holy symbols, or simply the intensity of her presence to drive them back and away. Spend a Willpower point and roll her True Faith against a difficulty of the creature's current Willpower points. If no successes are rolled, the creature is not driven away, but it has felt the weight of Faith and cannot move forward against the Faithful with hostility or ill intent. If the roll is fully successful, each success becomes a turn that the creature must run in existential terror of the Faithful, assured of the power of faith. If the Faithful has physical contact with the creature at the time of the roll, any successes rolled become automatic aggravated damage against the monster, making this a potentially deadly force against the forces of darkness.
- •• The Faithful knows that the presence of the unnatural is in diametric opposition to her own harmonious existence. Any time a Faithful is in the vicinity of an unnatural or evil being, the Storyteller should alert the Faithful to a feeling of intense unease. Depending on the number of monsters, or the strength of their evil, the Storyteller may express increasing unease. There is no roll necessary, and in some especially wicked cases, the Storyteller may call out a specific person as a monster, rather than leaving it vague. While this will alert the character to a monster hidden supernaturally, for example with the Obfuscate Discipline, the character is only alerted that the unnatural exists near her; at this level of Faith, it does not immediately reveal the evil's exact presence or identity.
- ••• The Faithful is steadfast in her mind. She is immune to the effects of Chimerstry, Dementation, Dominate, Obfuscate, and any other supernatural power that confounds the mind or tries to change it.
- •••• The Faithful is steadfast in her heart. She is immune to the Blood Oath and ghouling, and she cannot be raised as a ghost or a shuffling dead after death. She is immune to Presence or any other supernatural power that manipulates emotions.
- ••••• In a brilliant manifestation of inner light, the Faithful is a living, breathing beacon of what she believes to be right and good. Hearing her pray or preach, whisper poems, or simply speak kindly fills any unnatural creature with an inner loathing for any and all sin they have committed. In those moments, the creature has no doubt of its loathsome nature. Vampires must roll to resist Rötschreck at a difficulty 9 or be forced to flee for the duration of the scene. If she cannot flee, she will shrink to the corners and do herself physical harm, attempting to end her own inner agony. Other kinds of shadow creatures react similarly. The monster may take the opportunity to redeem himself afterward; raising his Road occurs at half normal cost. If he does not do so within the next story, he automatically loses a dot of his Road and one dot in his highest Virtue as he revels in monstrosity and runs from the light.

Miracles

On occasion (not more than once per story), the Faithful experience miracles. These are moments when she does the impossible without needing to roll. Usually, these miracles manifest only when she is attempting something truly selfless or in great effort against true darkness. Because True Faith does not often focus on healing or compassion, but rather battling darkness, these miracles may come in to fill the gap. Examples include bringing true life to a stillborn child, curing a plague ravaging a village, and the direct intervention of some otherwise unexplainable beings made manifest. To be considered miracles, of course, they need to be unknowable, and on rare occasions, as terrible as they are awesome.

Holy Artifacts

Great acts, miracles, and incredible sacrifice have an effect on not just people, but sometimes things and even places. Relics and Holy Artifacts are born out of the power of faith through close association with moments of inspiration or by being carried in the hands of the truly

Faithful. Holy Artifacts are rare, one of a kind, and cannot be created. They must happen spontaneously.

- A place or object can become a Holy Artifact either as for the result or cause the manifestation of True Faith. A cliff edge where a suffering manfirst realized the grander scope and saw the light may be an Artifact as easily as the sword he later used to slay a hundred demons.
- Holy Artifacts have ratings of True Faith all on their own from 1 to 5. Holding the item or utilizing its space (in the case of a location) can grant someone those dots in True Faith, so long as they are working toward the light and not violating their Conscience and Humanity. Faithful using a Holy Artifact add the Artifact's dots of True Faith to their own. This can theoretically raise a character's effective True Faith above five, to a maximum of ten dots.
- Wielding a Holy Artifact successfully can be a valid reason to purchase True Faith. It is a drastic, life-altering experience.
- A Holy Artifact has certain miracles attached to it, historical or mythological. This influences any miracles that might happen to or around its wielder in the future.

Some examples of Holy Artifacts include:

The Wedding Band of Raquel the Martyr

True Faith •

Raquel is a little-known local saint in a small region of Brittany. Her stories were scattered, and the monsters she fought purposefully destroyed any documents with an accounting of her. This often happens with the Faithful. The story goes that she was married, but a pagan king wanted her, so he demanded she break her vows and marry him. In reality, the "pagan king" was a vampire prince. She resisted him and through the power of her Faith, razed the region's vampire population to dust. She was martyred later, accused of witchcraft. When she was burned, her wedding band, a simple thing made of wood, did not burn, and would not burn. They say she herself did not burn until after she made an impassioned speech and "allowed the flames to take her." To this day, they say wearing the ring makes you immune to fire.

The Pacifist's Ji

True Faith •••

Though rarely recorded or accounted for, some few Buddhists have traveled along the Silk Road and live in Europe so long as there has been a Silk Road to travel.

While his name has been lost, local stories tell about a young man who traveled with merchants and acted as their protector as a priest and a warrior. He preached pacifism and spiritual purity, and carried a ji, or spear, that had never touched human blood. It is said that his spear will spare the living, slipping past them easily, and pierce only the soul's corruption.

The Lost Yoni

True Faith •••••

In the ruins of a well-traveled and affluent Greek statesman's home is a collection of oddities he gathered from around the world. It's little more than a pile of rubble, and what hasn't been stolen has been destroyed, but at least one genuine artifact remains. Built into the marble floor of what had once been a private bedroom, is a stone square sculpture from the time when Alexander conquered parts of India. In its time, a sacred woman used the statue in a temple to fight the evil that afflicts and victimizes pregnant women and mothers. Her ritual space had once been the sight of both births and demonic exorcism. She's been forgotten, as has the stone yoni left over in this forgotten home.

Though, to be honest, rumors exist. Many of the peasant women in the area know stories from their greatest grandmother's time claiming that the strange stone statue makes the whole ruin a safe space. If you are expecting and dark forces hope to take you or your child, giving birth while touching the stone will protect you both for a lifetime.

The Faithful

Faith manifests itself in a number of ways. These are only a few.

Brother Martin

True Faith •

Someday, Martin will be a hellfire Inquisitor with rage enough to destroy what he cannot annihilate with his True Faith. He's not there yet, though. For now, he is simply a bookish man with a deep connection to The Word and a philosophical outlook. He became a monk in reaction and rebellion to his father and brother's warlike tendencies, but war is in his blood.

His abbey, a quiet place with an extensive library, is in contested territory and contains some old Noddist lore thought to be long forgotten by the monks. princes war over it and very soon, that war will result in the destruction of the abbey. Martin will both survive and become a zealot after the atrocities he may witness. His campaign

against the Damned will be as terrible as it will be long and a thousand years later, vampires will whisper about it.

That is, unless someone prevents the massacre at his abbey.

Marisa

True Faith •••

Marisa is a blind orphan abandoned by her family at birth. Only 13, she is already responsible for the deaths of four vampires. Her blindness offers her no special powers, and she's had no formal church training or even religious education. The orphanage where she lives barely notices her, as she is meek and well-behaved. But she knows when monsters are near. She believes, deep inside, that all she "sees" is not darkness, but light, and that some day all people can be bathed in the light as she knows it. The hungry dead come to her and the other children in her orphanage to feed when they are hungry and lazy. And so she reduces them to ash with her soot-covered hands.

The Saint of the Vine

True Faith •••••

It is possible the Saint is a thousand years old, and of the miracles that have happened around her includes one that has left her unaging and effectively immortal. What is sure is that she is human and more or less benevolent to the simple people who live in the farming community near her sacred wood. She predates Christianity, according to the locals, but no efforts have been made to drive her out, excommunicate her, or quiet the village in their adulation of her. It is possible that the remote location means the Church has not come to know of her. It is possible, as is whispered in the village, that the Church knows all about her and have an uncomfortable agreement with her.

They also say she can cure vampirism. They say that she can lay hands on a member of the undead and cure them of Damnation. It's also said that once, decades ago, a secret cabal from the Vatican arrived in the village and carried the coffin of a man of standing and importance in the Church into her wood. A month later, they returned with one more among their numbers and no coffin.

Animals

Even at its most urban, the Dark Medieval World is populated with a wide variety of animal life. Many vampires interact with animals through the Animalism Discipline, through the Blood Oath, or they might transform into an animal through the Protean Discipline. The following traits offer numerous example animals to populate your chronicle. They can act as a baseline to craft your own animals, as players will inevitably pursue or run into things we can't hope to cover here.

Some of the animals listed are not naturally present in Europe during this period. However, the wealthy have imported many animals, and Cainites of privilege have done so to take advantage of their Animalism gifts. Also, some excursions from Asia and Africa have come with native animals.

Animals here only have Physical and Mental Attributes. They do have some Abilities. Animals that have received competent training can maintain and recover Willpower points. If a trait is listed in brackets, it's something a trained example of the animal possesses. The listed blood pool trait reflects the number of blood points a vampire can take from the animal and the maximum number of vitae a ghouled animal can hold.

Animals have listed attacks. This does not necessarily mean they inherently receive additional actions, but they may split their action to make multiple attacks if they have different modes of attack available. This occurs like a normal multiple action (see p. 322).

Ghouled animals are treated as any other ghouls, with the noted difference in blood pool. They can heal damage, and possess a dot of Potence. With training, they can learn more Potence, Celerity, and Fortitude the way other ghouls can, but can never learn other Disciplines.

Alligator

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Stealth 3

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite for seven dice lethal and initiate grapple with a bite; tail slap for six dice bashing

Blood Pool: 5

Note: Alligators and crocodiles have one soak die of armor, usable against bashing or lethal damage.

Bat

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Stealth 2

Willpower: 2, **Health Levels:** OK, -1,-3

Attack: Bite for one die lethal

Blood Pool: 1/4 (1 blood point equals four bats)

Note: Bats can fly at 25 mph/40 kph. Vampires in bat form via the Protean Discipline are larger than these examples.

Bear

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Intimidation 2, Stealth 1

Willpower: 4, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -3, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Claw for seven dice lethal; bite for six dice lethal

Blood Pool: 5

Birds

SMALL BIRD (FINCH, PARROT, ETC.)

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3 [Performance (Mimicry) 3]

Willpower: 1, **Health Levels:** -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Harassment (-1 die on all dice pools to target while being harassed)

Blood Pool: 1/4 (1 blood point equals four small birds)

LARGE BIRD (HAWK, RAVEN, ETC.)

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Intimidation 2 [Brawl 3, Empathy 4, Intimidation 4]

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Claw for two dice lethal; bite for one die lethal (only in desperation)

Blood Pool: 1/2 (1 blood point equals two large birds)

Note: A bird can typically fly at 25 to 50 mph (40 to 80 kph).

Camel

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 4

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2

Attack: Kick for six dice; bite for four dice

Blood Pool: 6

Cats

DOMESTICATED CAT

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics (Climbing) 3, Brawl 2, Intimidation 2, Stealth 4 [Empathy 2, Subterfuge 2]

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite for one die bashing; claw for one die bashing

Blood Pool: 1

LYNX

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics (Climbing) 3, Brawl 3

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite for four dice lethal; claw for three dice lethal

Blood Pool: 4

LEOPARD (JAGUAR, PANTHER, ETC.)

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3 [Intimidation 4, Stealth 3]

Willpower: 4, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite for five dice lethal; claw for four dice lethal

Blood Pool: 5

TIGER (LION, ETC.)

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3 [Intimidation 4, Stealth 3]

Willpower: 5, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite for six dice lethal; claw for five dice lethal

Blood Pool: 5

Dogs

SMALL DOG (LYMER, RUNNING-HOUND)

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3 [Empathy 2, Performance 1, Stealth 3], Brawl 1

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite for two dice bashing

Blood Pool: 1

MEDIUM DOG (GREYHOUND)

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Survival (Tracking) 3 [Empathy 2, Intimidation 1, Stealth 2]

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite for three dice bashing; claw for two dice bashing

Blood Pool: 2

Horses

SMALL HORSE (PONY, FOAL, ETC.)

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 1 [Brawl 2, Empathy 2]

Willpower: 2, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Trample or kick for six dice; bite for three

Blood Pool: 3

LARGE HORSE (STALLION, CLYDESDALE, ETC.)

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 1 [Brawl 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2]

Willpower: 4, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Trample or kick for seven dice bashing; bite for three dice bashing

Blood Pool: 4

Large Primates (Orangutan, Gorilla)

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics (Climbing) 3, Brawl 2 [Empathy 2]

Willpower: 5, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite for five dice bashing; claw for four dice bashing

Blood Pool: 6

Pigs

SMALL PIG (DOMESTIC PIGS)

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite for two dice bashing

Blood Pool: 3

LARGE PIG (BOAR)

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

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2 [Intimidation 2]

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite for four dice bashing; gore for five dice lethal

Blood Pool: 4

Rat

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 1

MOUNTED COMBAT

While a staple of historical fiction and sport, mounted combat isn't part of night-to-night existence for vampires. It becomes complicated for numerous reasons, starting with the high barrier of entry (since horses are terrified of the undead), to the investment required to train (since a human trainer can't prepare a horse for a Cainite rider), and the lack of control most Cainite riders find uncomfortable. However, if mounted combat becomes an issue in your chronicles, the rider may substitute the mount's Attributes for her own in combat actions. Additionally, mounted attacks cause one additional die of damage for each turn building speed, up to a maximum of five dice. Lastly, a mount may make a defensive action per turn (generally a dodge action) for the rider, without costing the rider an action.

However, the rider may not use any Ability dots above her Ride dots while mounted. The Storyteller may call for a Dexterity + Ride roll to maintain hold during particularly stressful events.

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Stealth 3

Willpower: 4, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite for one die bashing

Blood Pool: 1/4 (1 blood point equals 4 rats)

Note: Rats frequently attack in swarms (see the rules below).

Snakes

CONSTRICTOR SNAKE

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3

Willpower: 4, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Constrict for four dice bashing per turn

Blood Pool: 2

POISONOUS SNAKE

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3

Willpower: 4, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite for two dice lethal (see Poisons, p. 350)

Blood Pool: 1

Spider

Attributes: Strength 0, Dexterity 3, Stamina 1, Perception 1, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Abilities: None

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** Dead

Attack: No damage, but bite may be poisonous (see p. 301)

Blood Pool: None

Note: Characters must make a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 7) to notice spiders on them.

Wolf

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Stealth 2

Willpower: 3, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Attack: Bite for four dice lethal; claw for four dice lethal

Blood Pool: 2

Swarms

The animal traits above reflect individual animals. However, animals sometimes attack as large groups, packs, or swarms. These rules simplify such an attack instead of drowning the table in dice and minutiae.

Consult the chart below, which features a number of sample animals to start from, based generally on size. For every turn a character is within the swarm, roll the listed damage dice pool, difficulty 6. Characters can try to dodge at difficulty 8, and can soak normally. Most swarms deal lethal damage, except in the instance of particularly small and non-threatening insects. Animal swarms make such an attack once per turn on the initiative rating listed in the chart.

Characters in a swarm move at half their normal movement unless they've successfully dodged in the turn. If the animals cause three or more health levels of damage (before soak), the character is knocked down and overrun. In those cases, he can only move one to two meters or yards per turn, and the swarm's damage difficulty becomes 4 instead of 6. The character is effectively Knocked Down (see p. 347).

The health listed is the amount of damage necessary to disperse a swarm. Normal weapons cause only one health level of damage per turn, regardless of successes rolled. A swarm does not soak. Large area damage, such as that from fire, causes normal damage. While the health listed disperses the swarm, it takes two additional levels of damage to completely eradicate the animals.

Animal	Damage	Health	Initiative
Small bugs	1	5	2
Large bugs	2	7	3
Flying bugs	2	5	4
Birds, bats	4	9	5
Rats	3	7	3
Large rats	4	9	3
Feral cats	4	6	6
Wild dogs, wolves	6	15	4

Ghouls

More than money and fear, vitae ensures devotion and obedience. Several servants are bound to their masters via the use of Disciplines like Dominate and Presence, but most are tied by a blood oath to their masters (see page 340). When thralls consume the blood of their *domitor* on a regular basis, they become *ghouls*.

A crucial element of Cainite society since the dawn of time, ghouls depend on their domitor's vitae, which ensures their fealty and transforms them into something increasingly close to their master. In some cases, being a ghoul is just an intermediate phase before the Embrace, but more often than not this has proven to be an empty promise.

Some Cainites take entire families or small communities as their ghouls, while some clans, like the Tzimisce, breed their loyal servants through selected lineages.

Rules

As long as a ghoul has vitae in his body, he does not age. If the ghoul cannot get his monthly feeding, he will slowly lose the vitae and the powers that come with it - including catching up with the years. A ghoul without vitae reverts quickly to his real age, and those who have far outlived a mortal life span rapidly turn to dust.

Regardless of the domitor's generation, ghouls can retain a maximum of 10 blood points and spend one per turn. The blood pool cap increases by one every century, while the rate of consumption remains the same.

By using their blood points, a ghoul can heal and increase Physical Attributes as a vampire (see page 340). Additionally, they can regenerate a lost limb by spending a variable amount of blood (one point for small features like fingers or ears, two for medium features like eyes or feet, and three for large features like arms or legs) one Willpower point, and rolling Stamina (with a difficulty or 8). Botching the roll means permanently losing the limb. They heal damage like a mortal, but can spend their blood to heal damage like a Cainite.

A ghoul can soak lethal damage, but they still soak bashing damage like other mortals.

The power in the domitor's blood partly carries over to the ghoul: after a drink, they gain one dot of Potence. Ghouls can also learn other Disciplines; Celerity, Fortitude, and Potence are always available, while other powers depend on what the domitor knows. Learning the first level of a new Discipline costs 20 experience points, while further levels cost 25x current level (reduced to 15x for the domitor's clan Disciplines). Levels above the first are only available to ghouls whose domitor's Generation is lower than the Eighth. Look to the chart below for explanation.

Domitor Generation	Maximum Discipline
8+	1
7	2
6	3
5	4
4	5
3	??

When a ghoul carries at least five blood points from her domitor, she exhibits her domitor's clan weakness. Additionally, she can frenzy, but the difficulty on rolls to resist frenzy decreases by two.

After a month without feeding, the ghoul hungers for more vitae (not necessarily from their domitor). Every time they have a chance to feed, they can resist by succeeding a Self-Control roll at difficulty 7. As the craving worsens, the ghoul manifests a desire for human blood. To resist this craving, the ghoul must succeed in a Willpower roll with a difficulty of 6, or avoid rolling by spending a Willpower point. A botched roll means that the ghoul must immediately consume human flesh or blood.

A ghoul isn't necessarily human; any animal can consume vitae and obtain the qualities outlined above. The main difference is in the maximum blood pool, as this varies on the size of the animal (e.g. human-sized animals can hold 10 blood points, a large dog 6, a sloth 4, a horse 14, and so on). In addition, animal ghouls can only learn Celerity, Fortitude, and Potence.

Demons

For the most part, a demon (or what the common person describes as a demon) is in fact a child of Hell with a hunger for the spiritual essence provided by the human soul. Most of the demons in Europe come from the Fall in Judeo-Christian literature, or at least a situation similar enough to echo the mythical event. By and large, they have little interest in vampires directly, because either they cannot use the essence of the vampire's soul or believe the vampire to simply not have one. That said, some of the most sophisticated demons make use of vampires as tools.

There are many kinds of spirits, but thanks to the Church's influence in Christendom, many of these otherwise earthly spirits are mistaken for demons. Over time, that belief can warp the spirit's nature until they might as well be Hellions by birth.

Mechanically, demons/spirits use four traits:

- Willpower reflects both what Willpower reflects in human characters as well as any Dexterity or Wits-based actions. It acts as a dice pool for defense.
- Rage reflects Strength and Stamina-based actions. It acts as a dice pool for attacks.
- Gnosis, a demon's understanding, reflects all Mental and most Social rolls. It acts as the character's Perception.

- Essence is a demon's spiritual pool. It usually equals the other three traits combined as a base, with a fluctuating pool used to power their Charms. Furthermore, Essence acts as a demon's health levels. Damage done to the demon depletes its Essence pool. Reducing its Essence pool to zero dissipates the spirit, preventing it from returning to the same area until a hundred years passes, its nature is somehow totally remade through dark magic, or it undergoes prolonged torment in an underworld.

Sample Demons

Here are some of the denizens of Hell the characters might encounter in a chronicle.

The Scapegoat

He may or may not have once been a naturally occurring spirit. Now he is a mischievous imp whose primary focus is stealing things and placing them elsewhere. He draws Essence from the resulting frustration as people search for their missing belongings. There were old ways to prevent his behavior, but they're lost now, as his identity has been altered.

The real problem is that because he's a demon, he's being blamed for a severe plague that's affected the cattle and children of the village. The village seeks to destroy him or drive him out while the real cause of the plague (a vicious rat-spirit) is totally ignored.

Willpower: 2

Rage: 2

Gnosis: 2

Essence: 6

Charms: Reap Essence, Teleportation, Immunity to Fire

The Man at the Crossroads

The story goes that, a thousand years ago, he was a mortal magician who tricked a demon when selling his soul. Instead of being enslaved, he usurped the demon's power and became one himself. This story is somewhat true, only a hundred times more tragic.

Currently, he acts as an incredibly cunning crossroads demon who makes deals with people to give them exactly what they want for five years. At the end of those five years, he takes the victim's soul and life in a horrific fashion. He's very reasonable for a demon, but no matter the



reason for the request, he is cold-blooded in his retrieval of what is owed him. No one goes into his deals blindly. However, it is possible that some one could remind him of his former humanity in a bid to worm their way out of a contract. But at what price?

Willpower: 6

Rage: 4

Gnosis: 10

Essence: 20

Charms: Harvest Soul, Wish, Teleportation, Summon Hellhounds, Immunity to Fire

The Horror

It is, perhaps, the purest manifestation of Hell. What it is and its true purpose are as difficult to understand as Hell itself. It is a massive, twenty-foot-tall hulking beast made of rage, lava, and pleasure at the suffering of others. It does not merely kill, but it feeds on suffering and gains its Essence from the screams and agony. Truly, it is the birth of destruction.

Willpower: 6

Rage: 15

Gnosis: 5

Essence: 26

Charms: Immunity to Fire, Reap Essence, Wish, Answer

Charms

Answer: The demon senses when humans are trying to call out to a demon. The human may not actually perform a summoning successfully; they only need the intent. It costs the demon 10 Essence, but it can teleport to the location of the summoning without being bound or otherwise controlled by the summoner. However, the mortal may not realize that the demon is unchained.

Immunity to Fire: The demon is immune to fire. Any supernatural or mundane attempts to burn it automatically fail.

Teleportation: If the demon has less than 1/3 its permanent Essence pool, it may spend an Essence to teleport away to safety as a reflexive action.

Reap Essence: The demon has a specific task it drives humans to do. Any time a human would roll dice or spend Willpower to complete this task, the demon gains Essence equal to the human's remaining Willpower points after the action.

Harvest Soul: On completion of a contract with the demon, a mortal character suffers the effects of this charm. The demon gains as many Essence points as the character has Willpower, Mental Attributes, and experience points. The character is immediately killed. So long as the demon still has her soul, any attempts to raise her, speak to her spirit, or summon her spirit automatically fail. Most demons have methods for storing excess Essence brought by this charm.

Wish: At the cost of twenty Essence, a demon can manifest one specific wish for a character, so long as the wish can be reflected in a Background or Merit at 5 points (or fewer) added immediately to the character. If the demon has a contract from the mortal, it only costs 10 Essence.

Summon Hellhound: The demon spends 5 Essence and summon one Hellhound for each point of Rage the demon possesses. Hellhounds use the dog stats from p. 397 with a bonus to their Strength and Stamina based on their master's Rage; their Attributes rise to the demon's Rage dots, if not already higher. Their bites and claws do aggravated damage.

Possession: For five Essence, the demon can possess a mortal or vampire. To do so, the mortal must fail a Willpower roll using the demon's Gnosis as a difficulty. Once inside, the demon gains one Essence every time he forces the body to act in a way contrary to the host's Nature. The demon can stay until it decides to leave or is exorcised, though the demon can choose to allow its host to take the body over temporarily for the cost of a point of Essence.

Exorcism

True Faith (see p. 392) is the easiest way to drive out evil, but most people are not capable of manifesting True Faith. However, many religions and hedge magic traditions have methods and rites to exorcise spirits, ghosts or demons that anyone can learn.

If the character knows an appropriate ritual (the discovery of which should be its own scene or story), she may attempt an Exorcism. The ritual acts as a sort of spiritual combat, with the ritualist rolling Intelligence + Occult as an attack pool against the demon's Essence. Multiple ritualists may work together, using their individual turns to attack the demon's Essence and drive it away. Of course, there is nothing inherent in this ritual that stops the demon from using all its powers and Charms to attack the ritualists. Binding and protecting against a demon is a different ritual from exorcism.

Ghosts

What lies beyond death? The ultimate fate of the souls of men is unknown to even the most venerable Cappadocian scholars. One thing is known for certain: a select few souls are too tightly bound to this world to move on. Ghosts haunt the Dark Medieval World.

Most of the time, ghosts are incorporeal and invisible to normal eyes. The living cannot see ghosts unless they make an effort to be visible. With the use of certain Disciplines, however, ghosts can be seen clearly. The appearance of ghosts is varied as that of Cainites. Some look and act like normal humans, drained of life and color, with the marks of their death upon them. Others are nightmarish, twisted creatures that could only be vaguely said to resemble a human.

More commonly, a ghost's presence is inferred rather than seen directly: a chill in the air, the distant sound of a man weeping uncontrollably, a message, written in blood, that you can see out of the corner of your eye, but it disappears when you try to read it, or an unseen force that knocks over a torch, engulfing your haven in flames. Older ghosts have more powerful magics and can achieve more, such as possessing a human's body or manifesting physically. Some ghosts even torment the living or extort worship from terrified human cults. There are even rumors that the souls of the angry dead rise from the grave and walk the earth, hell-bent on vengeance.

It is difficult for most ghosts to directly affect a vampire, but this does not mean that they can't be dangerous opponents – or powerful allies. It is rumored that a ghost's disconnection from the material world gives some of them the ability to tell the future. If the Cappadocians have uncovered anything useful from their gifts of prophecy, they aren't telling anyone. Ghosts draw their strength from their Passions – the emotional ties that keep them connected to this world and prevent them from moving on. Treat these as blood points for the purposes of activating their supernatural abilities. They may manifest to influence the physical world for a turn with a point of Passion. However, their powers (represented by Disciplines) can be used across the Shroud into the physical world without manifesting first.

Deathsight and Lifesight

The dead are keenly attuned to the hand of fate. They see the hand of death on everything. A ghost can see the cracks in the foundation of a newly-built building; to a ghost's eyes, the head of a convict might dangle from his broken neck days before his execution, and a plague victim might appear as a black-welted corpse while she is still healthy. This ability is referred to as Deathsight. The exactitude of the results will vary depending on how many successes are scored on the ritual roll.

Ghosts are also creatures of passion and intellect, and they possess keener senses for these things than even most Cainites do. They can perceive souls as if using Auspex. This ability is referred to as Lifesight.

Masked Trickster

An older ghost who is the self-styled protector of a remote village in the countryside. He has scared off the Church and the Turks alike, allowing the villagers to practice the Old Ways just as they did when he was alive. In return, he asks that the villagers pay him a small amount of worship. He will not take kindly to anyone who harms his villagers or subverts his cult.

He takes the form of a gaunt, ashen man. He is naked, save for his mask: the skull of an aurochs crowned in sacrificial garlands. The numbers after the slash indicate his skill level when fully manifested.

Attributes: Strength 0/3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Empathy 3, Hearth Wisdom 2, Intimidation 3, Investigation 2, Leadership 2, Medicine 1, Melee 2, Occult 3, Subterfuge 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Equivalent Disciplines: Chimerstry 4, Dementation 4, Obtenebration 3, Thamaturgy 3 (Creatio Ignis 3, Potestas Motus 3)

Humanity: 4, **Willpower:** 8, **Passion Pool:** 10



I remember the first time the world ended.

It was when the Conqueror came. The streets ran with blood and the women wailed in the streets. The nobles rent their garments and fled to the countryside in terror. The young and old lamented and cowered as if the horns of the Normans were the trumpets of Judgement itself. They sacked the cities. They pillaged and raped and burned the crops wherever they went, and then the Conqueror came to this very city and declared himself king on bloody Christmas Day.

And you know what? Life went on. The king is dead. Long live the king. Same shit, different day.

You get the point.

Yes, I know that the Old Ones have seen the signs. A baleful star has arisen in the East. The moon devours the sun, and the dead walk the earth. Three kidneys in the pigeon. A single magpie sings in the eaves at sunset. All those old wives' tales. Of course, only a goddamned fool ignores an omen, and I'm not saying that there's nothing to all of these things. But listen – maybe the end of the world isn't such a terrible thing. Some worlds have it coming.

Are the omens correct? Well, forget what they told you about Caine and God and the Traditions and all that Gehenna bullshit, just for a moment. Just take a moment and look around you.

What do you see?

Constantinople is in ashes, sacked by low-born money and high-stakes investments. Kiev is gone. The Lasombra are devouring themselves in Iberia. God knows when we're getting another Pope. A group of bloody mortals drank the soul of an Antediluvian. A coven of witches so young that their mouths stank with the stale milk of their mothers ate the soul of a monster older than history! What do you think of that? More importantly, will Tzimisce's hectoring and bluster will save them from the same?

You don't know. All right, something closer to home, then: do you think the Ventrue Elders have even heard of the Magna Carta Libertatum? If they did, would they even understand it? The kine are demanding bread from their Princes, childe, and they will have it or their Princes will burn.

Do you think that the "low clans" will be content to stay where they are? Are you content to stay where you are? Will you be content to die for the vendettas of your Elders? Will you die for petty feuds that were old when Rome was young, happy to know that you've fulfilled the duties befitting your station? Will you feed or starve at the pleasure of your Prince? Will you stand by and allow a monster to rape and pillage as he pleases because he calls himself "Prince" when you know in your heart that there is another way?

No, childe. The fire that burned Constantinople to ashes still burns, and it will consume the old world. Perhaps it even burns in you. The question is this: what will you do with it? Will you illuminate the world, or will you burn it all to the ground and pronounce yourself Prince of the ash heap?

Listen, you're young enough that you've still got your head on your shoulders. You still see the world almost like a mortal does. You watch the seasons change. You know the cost of a loaf of bread. Your children are still alive. You know – and you care, God bless you – which way the wind blows.

The elders think that divine right and tradition will save them. They invoke their own twisted mythologies and self-serving nonsense and treat them as though God himself handed it down to them on a stone tablet. They cower in fear at the very prophecies that their forefathers forged to keep their childer in line! Well, that's all fine and good, I suppose. Let them have their tradition and their divine right. It didn't save our beloved King John Lackland from shitting himself to death in Newark Castle, did it?

The world is changing, poppet. The elders think that what has always been must always be, but I know – and you know – that is not true. Not anymore. I don't know what will become of the world, or what you imagine that the world will become, but I do know exactly what will happen to those unfortunates who cannot see which way the wind blows.

And maybe some worlds deserve Armageddon.

Chapter Nine: The Dark Medieval World

I do believe that the world will continue to grow as we continue to explore. Our world is a gift from God, and as such, it is infinite. If she gifts a seed, it becomes a plant. Fostered, it can become a garden. It can consume the countryside. Our maps are but seeds.

-Unknown Letter from the Library of Elpis the Cappadocian

Dark Medieval Italy

By the middle of the 13th century, Italy is a geographical location and nothing more. Kinship comes from cities, which bloom under the pressure of constant immigration from the surrounding countryside, creating a new and complex layered society where both kine and Cainite thrive. As the towns become the centers of commerce, artisans, and traders group into guilds to protect their business from papal and imperial taxing, forming close-knit self-support networks which can be formidable foes – or excellent opportunities for the shrewdest of Cainites. Mimicking the human political structure and taking advantage of its independence, many ancillae have claimed their role as *primus inter pares* in their city's area, in open defiance of the larger power structures.

The City-States

Taking advantage of the power struggle between the Pope and the Emperor, some of the largest cities have obtained their independence or act *de facto* as city-states in their own right, with their own laws, tribunals, and currency. One of the most popular solutions to deal with the litigious families and guilds is to appoint an external *podestà*, a temporary ruler kept separate from the populace to guarantee their impartiality. As they stand at the apex of their might, some communes are starting to crack under the pressure of internal conflict, but the collapse brought by the Black Death is still to come. With famine and fear will also come the need for absolute rulers, transforming the *podestà* into *signori* and destroying the republican nature of the communes.

The Papal States

Depending on who you ask, the Papal States are a province of the Empire or the absolute manifestation of the

THE MENDICANT ORDERS

In the turmoil of religious movements fighting the widespread corruption and political power wielded by the monasteries, some ideals managed to steer clear from heresy accusations and obtained papal recognition – granted as a way to strengthen direct control from Rome. In different cities and contexts, two young, wealthy, and educated men, renounce their privileges to serve as itinerant preachers: Francis of Assisi and Dominic of Guzman. The Pope authorized both to found their orders, to preach the Gospel, and to fight heresy.

While some Franciscan and Dominican monks travel between cities, several have settled in urban friaries, well funded by the towns' councils and guilds. Their presence is at the core of several universities – and the kernel of the Inquisition. These highly educated men, expert in theology and familiar with the environment and political intricacies of the cities, are the strongest rising threat to the comfortably urban Cainites who have for so long felt safe to have forgotten caution. Soon they will remember the frightful power of determined humans motivated by True Faith.

RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS AND HERESIES

Once pious hermitages where penitents and ascetics could retire to celebrate the glory of God, the monasteries are now centers of education, craftsmanship, and trade. The vast power and riches amassed by the monks are flaunted in the face of the peasants, widening the gap between the Church and its flock. All across Europe, social unrest and religious heresy walk hand in hand.

Some movements to bring the Church back to the core Catholic beliefs, like the mendicant orders of Franciscans and Dominicans, have garnered papal favor. Some go beyond the call for a more pious society and enact radical change, modeling an alternative so powerful and dangerous to the *status quo* that the threat cannot go unchallenged.

The Cathars, followers of a doctrine rooted in gnostic beliefs from Anatolia and Bulgaria, reject all matters of the flesh and pursue spiritual perfection. Abhorring meat, murder, reproduction, war, marriage, and disregarding gender as meaningless (and therefore considering women equally capable of preaching as men) the Cathars quickly found themselves public enemy number one in the eyes of Pope Innocent III, who launched the Albigensian crusade in 1209.

Even if the crusade ended after 20 years, the blood of Cathars still flows all over southern France and northern Italy. Just a year from now, in 1243, will begin the siege of Montsegur, which will end in 1244 with the mass burning of two hundred Perfects. The Waldensians, clumped with the Cathars despite contrasting beliefs, are hiding in the valleys of the Italian side of the Alps, with the Inquisition working hard to identify underground heretics.

Several Cainites have enthusiastically embraced Catharism and now hide in their midst. Most of them are followers of the Road of Heaven, with a strong Cappadocian and Ravnos presence, and — some outlandish rumors say — a few Salubri healers on the run.

spiritual power of the Pope in territorial form. The conflict between the Emperor and the Pope has been raging on for centuries, and the two sides are starting to identify as Ghibellines and Guelfs, respectively. The struggle continues all over the northern and central areas of the Italian peninsula, and excommunication is a constant threat. The Emperor, Frederick II, fuels the gridlock by holding the papacy hostage, sending his agents all over central Italy to instigate anti-papal sentiments and support rebellious communes – as long as they will subject to his authority.

Florence and Tuscany

The Republic of Florence experienced a magnificent growth over the past century. Once a minor town in Tuscany overshadowed by the powerful maritime Republic of Pisa, Florence has risen to the fore thanks to the booming commercial success of its wool industry. Its corporations have become the model for similar institutions all over Italy, as the members of the various *Arti* control their own trade in order to guarantee specific standards and control their market as cartels. The power struggle between the Arts and the clash between Guelfs and Ghibellines are



fueling each other and turning the city into a powderkeg. The next decades will bring constant changes in power structures, leaving room for the creation of a new financial market for the up-and-coming banking and trading families.

While the Guelfs rule the Republic of Lucca, the Ghibelline Republics of Siena and Pisa prepare for war against Florence. Siena sits on the heavily trafficked Via Francigena, becoming the foremost commercial rival to Florence. Meanwhile, Pisa, through its Northern African territories, is a crucial entry point for the advanced Arabic sciences in Europe: its foremost mathematician, Leonardo Fibonacci, grew up in the sophisticated culture of the Almohad Caliphate and brought their number system back to Pisa, but not without some protest and accusation of employing devilish techniques.

Tuscany's rapid growth has kept it off the radar of most older Cainites. Its internal clashes and contradictions have attracted a panoply of ancillae eager to prove their worth to their sires and make a name for their clan, or simply for themselves. While the port of Pisa is home to Lasombra, Assamites, and even a few Followers of Set, Florence and Siena have a rising Cappadocian presence, through their young and recent Italian bloodline.

Milan

Comfortably surrounded by fertile land and populated by a sophisticated middle class, Milan is a great and prosperous city. Its textile trade makes its wealthy merchants show off their luxurious clothes, much to the dismay of traveling and resident preachers pushing for legislative enforcement of limits to clothing styles. At the same time, the recent introduction of buttons has led to an explosion of creative mixing and matching, with the most advanced trendsetters showing off a different pair of buttoned-on sleeves every day.

On the other hand, the secular order of the Humiliati is gaining traction. Its members hail from merchant families, abandoning all luxury and wealth to live piously in self-supporting communities. The status of the Humiliati is a thorny issue; their widespread presence makes them a significant pillar of the community, while their tenets brush very close to heretical thought.

Politically, Milan has traditionally sided with the Pope, and is constantly rebuking assaults for imperial domination. Its close ties with Genoa have brought the commune to appoint Luca Grimaldi, a Genoese troubadour, as *podestà*.

The Milanese fashionista avant-garde attracts young Toreador to the scene, while some Ventrue still remain from Longobard times. Right now, the Ventrue are dealing with their own internal struggle on both sides of the conflict between Guelfs and Ghibellines. But Milan isn't a safe place for Cainites; the Inquisition is fast on the rise and ruthless on heretics and Cainites alike.

Bologna

Sitting at the ever-shifting boundary of the Empire and the Papal states, Bologna is the largest center of textile production and the fifth-largest city by population in Europe. For years the Emperor and the Pope fought for its control, but the *Bolognesi* achieved substantial independence over a century ago after the death of the powerful countess Matilde di Canossa. Its center boasts dozens of towers built by its merchant families, rising to the sky in a constant competition for the boldest architectural feat, while a network of artificial canals serve the productive districts.

The contested political climate attracted scholars of the law from all over the continent, forming a University that has been a major power in town for the last 150 years. There is a constant influx of *clerici vagantes*, monks without affiliation, who live at the edge of society in open defiance of religious structures and social customs. The Nosferatu in particular enjoy their company, as the *clerici* bring news and rumors relatively unfettered by propaganda.

Venice

While the rest of Italy is torn along the ever-shifting allegiance lines to the Emperor or the Pope, the Republic of Venice has kept a carefully neutral stance — a proven tactic that has led to unmatched success. The Italian communes call upon the Venetians to provide *podestà* that govern above the internal city struggles, and with the maritime republics of Pisa and Genoa locked in a constant state of conflict over the Thyrrienian Sea, Venice dominates the Adriatic and with it, the door to the East. Everything passes through Venice: silk, spice, pilgrims, merchants, and crusaders.

Between the sack of Constantinople and the ubiquitous lodging facilities, the Crusades have been a lucrative business to the Venetians.

The Republic celebrates its connection to the sea every year. The Doge – the elder ruler elected by the city's council – sails out of the port to throw a wedding ring in the waters, declaring the wedding of Venice to the sea. The Doge's ship, the bucentaur, is the most ornate galley produced in the *Arsenale*, the industrial shipyard of the Republic. This sprawling shipyard, unparalleled in Europe, attracts hundreds of skilled laborers and the finest engineering minds, and boasts the ability to produce a ship a day — for the right price.

While the natural features of Venice aren't friendly to most Cainites, the opportunities are too good to ignore, and the city sees a constant flux of Cainites of all Clans and stations. As an excellent port of entry and neutral ground, Assamite, Lasombra, and Ventrue leaders choose Venice to debate their very rare and brief truces. The recent Venetian deal with the Mongols opened the doors to vampires from the wealthy eastern lands, while the Cappadocians ensure safe travels to their Erciyes stronghold, mostly through their young bloodline of the Giovani.

Rome

Rome is, quite literally, a city in ruins. The majestic city that once ruled the Mediterranean bears the memory of its glorious past as a scar. The decaying buildings and infrastructures that once supported over a million inhabitants bear the ubiquitous traces of invasions, sacks, and popular riots. The Romans now number barely over 30,000, less than half of the Venetians, Milanese, or the Bolognese, and the presence of the Pope makes the political stability of the newborn commune an impossible dream.

The death of pope Gregory IX in 1241 and the brief papacy of Celestine IV (who died, apparently, of wear and old age after just two weeks) have left the Church with-

Frederick's Experiments

According to Frederick's enemies, his love for medicine and science goes beyond any regard for human life. If the voices are true, he has locked men to die in a crate to see if the soul would escape through the keyhole, fed two man the same meal and had them undertake different activities only to disembowel them afterward in hopes of clarifying the process of digestion, and isolated newborn children to discover whether they would naturally start speaking the original language – be it Hebrew, or Greek, Latin, or Arabic, or the language of their parents.

While unlikely to have happened in reality, there's definitely fictional room for Cainites in this story. The research-minded approach could have represented the works of a Tremere, while the workings on death scream Cappadocian. It's your call, either as a player or a Storyteller.

out a head. The cardinals will remain locked in conclave for the entire year of 1242 and well into the summer of 1243, desperate to solve the problem of how to deal with the Emperor.

During Rome's long downward spiral, most Cainites have left for other cities considered safer and more promising. Nonetheless, there is still a sizable community of Nosferatu and Malkavians, including some elders who still remember the glories of the Roman Republic. With its abandoned buildings and vast networks of underground tunnels, Rome offers protection to many Cainites looking for a place to lay low. On the other hand, many ancillae drunk with power have seen their dream of becoming Princes of Rome vanish in the shadows of a sudden Final Death. As a result, nobody controls the city, but someone certainly that protects this *status quo*.

Kingdom of Sicily

Until recent years, southern Italy had been the domain of the Normans, who had taken the land from the former Arabic and Byzantine dominance. By means of conquest and political marriage, the Kingdom of Sicily is now part of the Holy Roman Empire, fueling the Emperor's dream of controlling the entire peninsula and reconnecting it to the central European territories. The Papal State and the free Cities are in the way, which brought Frederick II to wage war all over Italy on several fronts.

Now that his son Conrad is King of Germany, Frederick is free to devote all of his attention to Italy. From his castle in Andria, the polymath Emperor has reformed the concept of state by creating a constitution that forbade the creation of communes, cut the power of barons and bishops, outlawed the possession of unauthorized weapons, and instituted a tribunal system based on logic and laws instead of ordeals and battles. To enforce his control over the land, Frederick command a Saracen army, and his closest bodyguards are all Muslim. His respect of Muslim culture, his excellent relationship with the Ayyubid Sultan of Egypt, and his fluent Arabic have made him the target of a wide range of accusations, from atheism to being the Antichrist himself.

To poets and scientists, Frederick's court is the place to be. Sicilian poetry becomes a cultural staple, while the medical school of Salerno (founded, as the legend goes, by a Christian, a Jew, and a Muslim doctor) is recognized as the only school of medicine of the Empire. The university produces countless medical treaties, but the most popular are still the treaties on women's health and cosmetics, detailing practices derived from Arabic medicine and authored by Trotula, one of the many female professors of the school.

The Cainite society in southern Italy is the most stable in the peninsula. The Ventrue have almost abandoned all hopes to regain the territory from the grasp of Montano, who acts on behalf of his sire, the Lasombra Antediluvian. The elder elite, deeply nested in the sophisticated Palermitan Muslim community, is a haven for all research-minded Cainites of the Mediterranean, harboring runaway Assamite scholars and a sizeable number of Cappadocians.

The Other Europe

To most, "Europe" means familiar kingdoms with familiar names, such as France, Spain, Germany, and Normandy. Some might extend their definition to include Greece, Constantinople, even Hungary. Places like Transylvania and Lithuania exist only on the periphery of western European vision, more imagination than real, wild and terrifying to their "civilized" sensibilities. The

"barbarous" princedoms of Rus are something else entirely, known perhaps, but certainly not part of Europe. The Mongol citadel of Sarai is indisputably one of the most powerful and influential cities in the world, and just a few days journey up the Volga River lies Volga Bulgaria, almost unknown in the west despite once having rivaled Constantinople in wealth and glory.

Here lies a rich tapestry of nations and cultures, some rising and falling in but a single evening almost entirely outside the War of Princes, but not without their own dramas to experience. Volatile and unstable, what is here today may be gone tomorrow, but the people live on, independent of borders, or even kings. Ancient roots reveal unlikely origins; Dacians, Cumans, Pechengues, Magyars, Vlachs, Romanians, Rus, Germans, Italians, Celts, and countless others called these lands home long before the advent of Christianity, and their old ways still hold strong. As the Teutonic Knights crusade northward and the Mongols recede again into the east, this Other Europe, so often ignored, is where the future is to be written.

Hungary

Hungary exists as a borderland between east and west. Indeed, Hungary itself is a kingdom divided; in the portion west of the Danube known as Transdanubia, Hungary is a proper European nation. The land is arable, settled, even civilized; many travelers sing the praises of the three-faced city, Buda-Pest, and the king of Hungary, Bela IV, reigns from the city of Esztergom. Eastward beyond the Danube lies the darkly beautiful realm of Transylvania, which has time and time again resisted colonization efforts.

In 1241, Hungary was ill-prepared as the Mongol horde spilled from the Latorytsia River valley and swept westward into Europe. The broad fertile plains surrounding the Danube became a corridor through which the relentless horsemen need only pass to gain access to all of Europe. Between them and the rest of the world was a meager, motley resistance: farmers and their families, Cuman refugees who had already failed once to repel the horde, and a handful of knights and cavalry mustered from the fractious Hungarian nobles or lent to them by neighboring allies. In the spring of that year, the Hungarian



army clashed for the first time with the Mongols on the banks of the Hernád River. The Hungarians were swiftly cut down, many of them drowned in the river as they attempted to flee. From that point forward, the Hungarians cowered behind the walls of their cities and forts while the Mongols ravaged their countryside.

As fate would have it, the west was spared, though it could scarcely be called mercy. In 1242, even as the Mongols pushed into Croatia in pursuit of King Bela and pressed upon the borders of Austria, word reached them of Great Khan Ogedei's passing. There was no other choice; Batu Khan gathered up his men and returned east to Karakorum. As he went, he destroyed everything within his considerable reach. When the threat finally passed, half of all the Hungarians lay dead, and their kingdom was little more than a denuded wasteland. It was not the Mongol way to leave a conquered enemy with the tools or resources to follow or resist.

So entwined are the mortals of Hungary and its Ventrue Cainites that their fates cannot easily be separated. King Bela is, after all, a mortal descendant of the Arpad line. When Bela receives warnings of the Mongol approach, the prideful arrogance of the Council of Ashes causes them to go unheeded. Their attention remains on the War of Omens between the Tremere and the Tzimisce. When Bela flees to Croatia ahead of Mongol assassins, his Ventrue cousins protect him as he moves from city to city just ahead of the Khan's men.

The Tremere, uneasy allies of the Ventrue in the War of Omens, find themselves in an unenviable position. They have no choice but to involve themselves in the conflict with the Mongols; failure to do so would jeopardize their alliance. However, their involvement leaves them exposed to the Tzimisce, who are more than happy to watch the carnage from their mountaintops. The decision costs the Trembling Ones greatly.

The Tzimisce, like their kin in Transylvania, fare better. They do suffer losses in the form of mortal vassals and lowland strongholds, but while both are indignities, neither is crippling. They re-center their strength in inaccessible lairs far above the fray, but their attention never wavers from their traditional foes.

The fortunes of other Cainites vary. The Lasombra, at odds with the Ventrue in Austria, withdraw from Hungary entirely. Gangrel and Nosferatu take to higher ground to wait out the storm, allying themselves with Tzimisce landlords.

The Mongols also have vampiric kin of their own. Unlike European Cainites, the Anda remain bound to their mortal families, waging war in the night as their brethren do by day.

The arrival of the Mongols was an apocalyptic event of Biblical proportion for man and vampire alike. While the War of Princes raged on elsewhere, vampires caught within the Mongol yoke found their attention occupied by something much more pressing: survival. Only now, with the retreat of the Mongols eastward, can the Hungarian Cainites look out over the ruins of their kingdom and contemplate a next move, but their numbers are depleted and the future is far from certain.

Transylvania

While Hungary is the political epicenter of Eastern Europe, Transylvania is its heart. Transylvania maybe the Land Beyond the Forest in both literal translation of the name and reputation, but it has earned a different moniker from every people who ever lived upon its slopes and eked out an existence there. To the Romanians who make up the vast bulk of its population, it's *Ardeal*. Among the German occupiers, whose seven fortified cities represent a futile attempt to settle its frontier, it is the *Siebenbürgen*. And while Transylvania is itself a Hungarian modification of an old Latin name, *Ultrasylvania*, they have another name for it as well: *Erdély*. The eldest of thee Tzimisce voivodes reject all of these appellations, preferring instead the old names of their youth: *Dacia*.

Transylvania is a difficult land; its ragged mountains can freeze or choke or fling a climber from their very faces, its icy rivers will sweep the unprepared traveler away in but a blink, and its treacherous forests will close in upon the wayward wanderer, never to release them again. In spite of all this, Transylvania has always been a contested land, enchanting all who gaze upon it. Only the Tzimisce have held it for long, though many have dwelt amidst its dark beauty for a time. The secret to its strange allure is unknown to all but a few; the demon Kupala, who lies buried somewhere within its borders, whispers in the ears of those who crave power, tempting them to ever greater ambitions while blinding them to the tragedy of their inevitable fall. And so it has always been.

For years the Tzimisce have been fighting, and losing, a battle with the upstarts of House Tremere and the pretenders from Clan Ventrue. The War of Omens, as it has been called, is waged at night, along the no-man's-land between Hungary and Carpathia, upon the slopes of the mountains themselves, and in the courts of kings throughout Eastern Europe. Their fleshcrafters wield the might of the vozhd and their koldun command the land itself, and yet the Tzimisce power continues to contract. Hungarian Ventrue control the Szeklers, who in turn found the Council of Ashes to lord over the Siebenbürgen, and the greatest of Tremere chantries, Ceoris, stands unassailed amidst the Carpathians.

And this is why, when Batu Khan arrives at the head of his horde, the koldun do not raise the Latorytsia River to drown them, nor do they collapse the mountain passes to crush them. The Mongols do not encounter the vozhd, the chiropterans, or the Tzimisce's revenant armies. As the horsemen storm onto the plains beyond to clash with the Hungarians and their Ventrue masters, the Mongols are at the peak of their strength.

The voivodes remain safely above the fray, ensconced in their mountain strongholds. But while the Mongols occupy the Ventrue and Tremere on the ground, the War of Omens rages on in the skies as great flocks of gargoyles and chiropteran marauders wheel and dance about the windswept peaks. The Voivode of voivodes, Vladimir Rustovitch, leads an assault against Ceoris itself, and though he ultimately fails, his enemies are shaken. When the Mongols finally turn back east, the Tzimisce reassert themselves in Transylvania, even establishing new footholds throughout the Voivodate. A great revenant boyar called Basarab emerges and founds Wallachia, the first true Romanian suzerainty and eventual seat of power for a voivode named Dracula. The War of Omens is not won – Ceoris yet stands and the Ventrue mill about borders of Tzimisce power – but for a time, they are as the Fiends of old.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria is a pleasant and fertile land lying between Hungary to the north and the Byzantine Empire to the south. For most of the medieval period, it remained a vassal of Byzantium, but in 1185, brothers Peter and Ivan Asen led a revolt culminating in Bulgaria's independence in 1201. The conflict bore deep consequences for the Tzimisce, as the clan turned violently upon itself when Byzantine loyalists were broken by their separatist kin supporting the Asen.

Successive military victories against the Latin Empire and the Despotate of Epirus secure Bulgaria's reputation, but Mongol attacks in 1242 destroy its dream of empire. Power becomes decentralized among the local nobles, some of whom declare themselves kings. Many of these "kings" are puppets of various Cainite powers such as Brujah and Ventrue factions, the latter seeking to establish new places of power after the devastation of their Hungarian holdings. Tzimisce strength has waned in the wake of earlier losses, allowing in these outside forces, though all still fear the reclusive Black Sea koldun.

Serbia

Serbia is a young nation, elevated to the status of kingdom in 1217, when Grand Duke Stefan Nemanja swore allegiance to the Holy Roman Church. In 1242, under the rule of Stefan's sons, it struggles to survive, largely dependent upon Hungary, Bulgaria, and Byzantium to maintain its independence.

Bosnia

The Kingdom of Bosnia has staved off Hungary's advances for several decades now. The Hungarians leverage the Bosnian Church's heretical status for political advantage, but Bosnia remains independent of its territorial neighbor. Given Hungary's present situation, Bosnia's independence seems guaranteed for the foreseeable future.

Bohemia

Bohemia is a tiny nation wedged between the Holy Roman Empire and Hungary, but its size belies an immense amount of power. Although its greatest days lay ahead, the shrewd political maneuverings of its dynastic family, the Premyslids, have established Bohemia as one of the wealthiest and most influential nations in Europe. The current King of Bohemia, Wenceslaus I, encourages German immigration to cement an alliance and destabilize the native nobility who might pretend to his throne. Moravia remains one of Bohemia's ancestral holdings, and in battle, the Premyslids win territory and tribute from its neighbors, particularly Austria, Hungary, and Poland. By the end of the century, Wenceslaus II will rule an empire from the shores of the Baltic in the north to the Danube in the south, though Premyslid ambition makes him many enemies, chief amongst them the Hapsburgs of Austria.

In Bohemia, the Ventrue hold absolute sway. It's their not-so-subtle manipulations that bring German settlers to the kingdom, many of them old ghoul families that bolster their clan's power. As Tremere chantries fall in Hungary, they accept these refugees as well, turning their magics against Tzimisce foes in Austria. Freed from the Tzimisce worry, the Ventrue are able to again focus their attention on Lasombra rivals in Germany. Truly, the fate of the Holy Roman Empire, and perhaps the final outcome of the War of the Princes, hangs upon the maneuverings of Bohemian Ventrue, and they have yet to make a misstep.

Poland

Girded from Hungary in the south by the Tatras Mountains, the former Kingdom of Poland is at odds with itself. Splintered by fractious nobility, its rulers dwell upon the glory of bygone days, praying for their return. They paid dearly for their indolence in 1240, when Mongol raiding parties ravaged their countryside and eventually defeated their armies at the Battle of Legnica.

The Cainites of Poland are a reflection of their mortal herds. No central authority exists, though Tzimisce, Ventrue, Tremere, and Lasombra might claim differently. Power extends just exactly as far as any one vampire can make good on a claim or a threat.

Lithuania

Although recognized as a Grand Duchy with a Catholic king for the better share of the last century, Lithuania is at best a collection of people from different tribes and different ethnicities, with constantly shifting borders that range from the Baltic Sea to Kievan Rus, depending upon the day, or perhaps the speaker.

In 1242, this wild land of forests and marshes is the strongest pagan holdout in all of Europe. Its people cling to sets of beliefs as diverse as themselves, and all attempts to Christianize them have utterly failed. Even their king, Mindovg, who flirted with Christianity for a time, is brought back into the fold by a pagan "Pope" called Krivé. As far as the Catholic Church is concerned, Lithuania is a stain upon the European map that must be washed away, most likely with blood. To that end, Christian kings launch the Northern Crusade against this land and all others that harbor paganism within their borders, and the Teutonic Knights respond most fervently to the Church's call.

Of all the lands of Europe, Cainites have the least sway in Lithuania. The wildness of the land itself tempers what power they do have. Vampires that exist here must abide by an ancient accord that grants werewolves, fae, witches, and others equal status. The pagan "Pope", Krivé, maintains this pact, and her emissaries — drawn from all the people of Lithuania, mortal and immortal alike — enforce her will throughout the land. Even after her neighbors to the north succumb to the word of Christ — and the swords of His faithful — Lithuania persists.

And yet, one other here may surpass even Krivé. Somewhere along Lithuania's shifting frontier, some say, lies the resting place of Baba Yaga.

Livonia

North of Lithuania lies Terra Mariana, otherwise known as Livonia, the ecclesiastical state that spans the medieval nations of Latvia and Estonia. The authority of Holy Roman Empire props up this state, but in 1242, despite nominal Christian oversight, the native population is still broken down along ancient tribal lines. They've been slow to convert to Christianity, and are at times overtly hostile to its teachings. Latvians and Estonians are only half-taught Christianity as children, and the rite of baptism is repugnant to them. Still, these lands have always been vital; with abundant game, fur, and natural amber from its beaches, as well as it strategically favorable position relative to all four cardinal points, it's little wonder its pagan population would be targeted for conquest.

In 1201, Germanic colonists founded Riga and made it the staging ground for both the Teutonic Knights and the Livonian Brothers of the Sword. By 1242, the Livonian Brothers are no more, having been defeated at the Battle of Saule in 1236. Goaded on by such victories, the native Livonians move to assert their independence and it will take Christian valiants sixty years to finally bring them to heel.

Prussia

Prussia, like so many of its neighbors, has been the subject of constant harassment and warfare. The vast majority of that, until the 13th century, came from their neighbors in Poland. A Polish lord, Konrad I of Masovia, called for a Northern Crusade against the Prussian pagans, and formed his own military order to do so: The Brothers of Dobrzyn. This small Brotherhood met with only limited success in defending Christians in Prussia from pagan assailants. Many chose to join the Teutonic Knights, while the remaining Brothers (which never numbered more than 35, even at their height) moved to the fortress of Drohiczyn to bolster its defenses. In 1240, the Brotherhood disappears entirely from mortal record. Konrad I leads the Teutonic Knights against the Prussians, eventually helping to establish the Ordenstaat, which would become the staging ground for the Order's crusade against the north. But in 1242, Konrad I and his Christian knights are occupied with the First Prussian Uprising, which will deplete their numbers and force them into their infamous red-bricked castles for prolonged sieges over the next several years.

Carpathian Rus

Beneath the wild eastern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains dwell the ruler-less, mostly overlooked Rus migrants, holding firm to their old beliefs and eking out a living in isolation. Occasionally the Hungarians seek to gain a foothold here, more for the strategic value of its mountain passes than any interest in the land or its people, but this proves difficult when contesting the cliffside eyries of Transylvania's true rulers. In 1240, the Mongols surged up out of the east and for a time, no one owned this place.

The Principalities of Rus

The word "prince" means something different in Rus than elsewhere in Europe, for it means both king and baron all at once. Here, every city with enough wealth to support one seems to have a prince, princeling, a knez, or a voivode (of the mortal variety). Their power extends exactly as far as their reach and no more. Even the Grand Prince, most powerful of all princes, sees his influence limited in those lands beyond where he has family, though family is often worse when it comes to intrigue, of which there is no shortage. In essence, each principality — of which Vladimir, Suzdal, Kiev, Novgorod, Rostov, and Chernigov are but a few — is its own state, loosely connected at best through ties of blood and geography, but with little in terms of liaison. This disunity sealed their fate in 1237, when Batu Khan's Golden Horde appeared again upon the horizon.

The Russian princes fought valiantly against the invaders, but could not provide even feeble resistance. In February of 1238, the city of Vladimir, capital of Suzdal, is sacked. The royal family, minus Yury and assorted princelings who had taken an army towards the Volga to mount a resistance, are burned to death along with hundreds of others in the Cathedral of Assumption. Later that spring, the Mongols face the Russian army at Sit, where Grand Prince Yury is decapitated, perhaps by his own men. Though the Mongols continued westward, sacking minor towns as they went, only one major battle followed in the northerly campaign: the taking of Kozel'sk, in the principality of Chernigov. Mysteriously, though it lay upon their path and aligned with Mongol interests, the city of Novgorod was spared, never facing the depredations of the Golden Horde.

Throughout the summer of 1238, the Mongols campaigned against the southern and eastern frontiers of Rus, bringing into the line the many steppe tribes that dwelt there. From there, they moved westward again, into the Carpathians and Europe proper. In 1239, they fully turned their attention to the south and southwest, first subduing Chernigov, and then marching on Kiev. In the latter half of 1240, a Mongol army led by Batu himself and featuring no fewer than nine khans (two of whom would later be named Great Khans) encircled the city of Kiev. Siege guns brought down the walls and for more than a day, the city's defenders — led by a mortal voivode called Dmitr – valiantly but futilely fought on its rubble against the invaders. Citizens took refuge in the Church of the Tithe, but its walls collapsed beneath their weight and the last defense of Kiev was broken. Beyond once-golden Kiev, little resistance was offered, and by the spring of 1241, the Mongols were well-engaged in the theater of Eastern Europe.

Prior to 1242, the Mongols are conquerors rather than administrators, and in their wake, they leave the principalities to their own devices, with only nominal oversight. With Mongol attentions upon Hungary, the Princes of Rus begin to rebuild and re-establish themselves as much as they can, for the war destroyed decades worth of resources and craftsmen. Yaroslav ascends to Grand Prince in Vladimir, while his brother Svyatoslav assumes Princedom of Suzdal, and his grandson Boris rules in Rostov. He appoints another grandson, Aleksandr, defender of the western frontier, where he clashes with Lithuanian raiders at the fractured Principality of Polotsk, destroys Swedish invaders upon the Nevan River, and ultimately casts back the Teutonic Knights at Pskov. Meanwhile, Yaroslav's most hated enemy, Mikhail Vsevolodvich, appoints himself Grand Prince of Kiev. The declaration is more a personal affront to Yaroslav than a political one, as Kiev is little more than rubble and salted earth.

This is muddied by the eastward return of the Mongols in 1242. His claim to the title of Great Khan denied, and with no mind to return to Hungary, Batu instead looks to conquered Rus and its surrounding lands as his Khanate. He founds the city of Sarai to be his seat of power and turns attention to governance. Even so, he has little interest in managing the day-to-day affairs of the petty Russian princedoms, generously allowing them to behave much as they always have so long as they swear vassalage to him. He demands frequent, often annual, visits from these princes, accompanied by gaudy displays of loyalty and gifts of wealth. And as tensions between Batu and Great Khan Güyük mount, the Russian princes find themselves trapped by their overlords' intrigues. In the court of Karakorum in 1245, Grand Prince Yaroslav is assassinated by Khanate poisoners so that Güyük can install his own man, Andrey, upon the throne of Vladimir and deprive his cousin Batu a Russian pet.

The coming of the Mongols was as great a disruption to undead life and politics as it was for their mortal herds. Old, proud Cainites who dwelt in cities like Bolgar, Vladimir and Kiev for decades were loath to relocate when word first came of the approaching horde. After all, there had been invaders before, and how exactly were these uncouth men on ponies going to get beyond the city walls anyway? To their great yet short-lived embarrassment, those walls and their sanctuaries came crashing down around their heads, exposing them all to the brilliant blue skies above.

Those who did take heed fared little better. Crossing the wide steppes or fleeing to neighboring cities where

rivals ruled provided little in the way of protection, particularly when pursued by the strange vampiric horsemen that shadowed the Mongol horde. Many of Rus's oldest, most prominent vampire princes perished in this way. Only Novgorod's Cainites remained untouched, conveniently (some say too conveniently) spared from the Mongol onslaught.

Young "princes" now rise up to play their own version of the War of the Princes, mirroring the internecine games of the mortal princelings with whom they so recently shared breath. Few survive long enough to be remembered in text, as vampire-on-vampire violence escalates to apocryphal magnitudes. The few surviving elders do as they always have done: wait patiently for the anarchists to burn themselves out, helping them along their road to self-destruction whenever they can. In this latter endeavor they act with caution, for they have seen far too many of their generations lost to this most recent surge of diablerie.

One player in this war is older than the rest, and is neither opportunist nor upstart. Rus is still home to Baba Yaga, mother of Nosferatu, and while she may sleep now, her daughters do not.

Georgia

The Golden Age of Georgia began with the fall of Constantinople in 1204. At that moment, it became the most powerful Christian nation in all of the Mediterranean and Queen Tamar, who some called the Great but the Ventrue knew as Sister, moved swiftly to secure her assets. Among these was the Empire of Trebizond, which would become the new terminus of the Silk Road. In the first half of the 13th century, Georgia was one of the great kingdoms of the world, a place of culture, learning and almost unbelievable wealth where knights still fought with honor and a maiden's handkerchief could stop a war.

By 1242, however, a web of cracks has revealed itself. Despite fierce resistance in the two previous decades, the Mongols represent a foe they cannot hope to defeat. In 1243, Queen Rusudan will sign a peace treaty with the Mongols, officially ceding the vassalage to the Khanate already in practice. While some have accepted their fate, others strain against it to restore Georgian independence. Deep within Georgia stirs a revolution — lent fuel by Brujah puppeteers — that will eventually blossom to become the Kingdom of Imereti, a splinter nation within the very borders of Georgia itself. It will survive into the 19th century despite near-constant conflict and bloodshed, a stage for the intrigues and atrocities of mortal and vampire alike.

The Steppe People

Amid the Great Steppe, along which the Mongol horde rides on their path of conquest, dwell many native tribes of horsemen. Chief among these are the Cumans and Kipchak.

The Cumans were the westernmost of the native steppe folk, sometimes connected with the more eastern-dwelling Kipchak. Both were blonde-haired, blue-eyed nomads, mostly renowned for animal husbandry and warfare. Clashing periodically with their neighbors, their way of life evaporated with the arrival of Batu Khan in 1237. The Kipchak, who had few places to flee, were absorbed into the Khanate, as were many of the Cumans. But some among the Cumans escaped westward, led by their Khan, Koten. They fled ahead of the Mongol horde, eventually arriving in the relative safety of Hungary, Bulgaria, and the surrounding lands. There they were invited to settle in exchange for their martial services, even founding a state that shared their name: Cumania. Some of these new Europeans lent their skill to the crusaders in the north, where they were greatly feared. Others were cruelly hunted and murdered by fearful Hungarian zeman, believing them to be forward scouts for the advancing Golden Horde.

The Mongols

It was Subatai, greatest of Genghis Khan's generals, who first made plans to conquer the west. Having scouted Rus for the first Great Khan — and even made allies of Venetian merchant princes along the Sea of Azov — it became his obsession to bring it under the yoke. With the passing of Genghis and ascension of Ogedei, Subatai's wisdom became apparent. After all, the first Great Khan had many sons and not enough kingdoms to go around. But in the west, there was land aplenty for all.

The great steppe that sweeps across the continent was their path. Ideally suited for the ponies upon which they rode, it was as if Tengri had created it just for them, for just this purpose. In sufficient numbers, there would be none who could oppose them – not the Bulgars of Volga Bulgaria, nor the Kipchaks nor the Cumans, and certainly not the fractious Russians.

Though their horsemanship and archery were unrivaled, the great secret of the Mongol's success was their shrewdness. They were decidedly unromantic about the act of war. If a conquered foe possessed a great physician, they brought her into the fold; it did not matter that she worshipped some other god. If an enemy had an enemy,

that person could be their friend. And if a desert was said to be uncrossable, they found a way to cross it.

This lack of superstition allowed for the "shadow horde," a nighttime mirror of the Mongol army made up of Anda and their ghouls, who watched over their mortal kin in the darkness and waged war against those enemies who were more than mortal. For every battle fought in the daylight and recorded by scholars, another took place under cover of darkness that is spoken of only by ghosts. And though history may not remember, were it not for these sons and daughters of Etügen, the Mongols may never have crossed the Volga, let alone the Danube.

By 1241, they had passed through the Carpathians and into the Kingdom of Hungary. Standing before them were the ripe, soft lands of Europe. Only the untimely death of Ogedei Khan in December of 1241 spared the western kingdoms the fate of their other conquests. When word of the Great Khan's passing reached Batu Khan's ear, he knew he would never again return to these lands, and thus put to death every captive in his custody and destroyed every work of man within his reach before returning with his army to Karakorum. There he attended a grand kuriltai where, much to his displeasure, his cousin Güyük was named the next Great Khan.

Western Europe would never again feel the thunder of their hooves, but Rus, Georgia, Persia, and other eastern nations would chafe under the Mongol yoke for decades to come. The city of Sarai, built at the mouth of the Volga River by Batu Khan to stand in rivalry to Karakorum, became one of the greatest cities of the age. As bloody as their conquest was, the Mongol presence lent stability. Nations that had never before heard of one another were suddenly united and connected by the very road the Mongols rode to war upon. Trade that was once the sole dominion of the Islamic powers now ran from Karakorum to Sarai to Trebizond, and from there into the west. This "new" Silk Road was shepherded by the daughters of Genghis Khan himself, and under their careful ministrations, the wealth, learning, and culture of the world were laid bare for those willing to walk the path. It is along this Silk Road that Marco Polo traveled. It may also have been the passage along which the Black Plague entered Europe.





Appendix A: Merits and Flaws

Everything on the character sheet speaks about the abilities and personality of your character. Is he or she strong-willed? Athletic? Learned? Good in a fight? What does he or she believe? Who are his or her friends? Merits and Flaws allow you to add yet another layer of depth to your character by providing mechanical benefits and drawbacks to certain narrative circumstances. These are optional materials, so your Storyteller has the final say on whether or not to allow them. Storytellers and players are encouraged to discuss the use of Merits and Flaws prior to beginning a campaign. It is also recommended that the Storyteller choose a limit on the number of Merits and Flaws that can be taken. Some suggestions include: no more than 5, 7, or 10 total points of Merits and Flaws, all Merits must be balanced out with equal points of Flaws, or a particular set of assigned freebie points to be spent solely on Merits and Flaws.

Keeping an open line of communication between players and Storyteller about the expectations for story impact is paramount. Players should be clear about how they would prefer their Merits or Flaws to appear in the story. Storytellers should also share their interpretations of the Merits and Flaws the player chose (provided the player does not want to be surprised). With that information in hand, both player and Storyteller should come to an agreement on how those Merits and Flaws come into play. Doing so prevents hard feelings and disappointment and makes for a harmonious table.

Gaining and Losing Merits and Flaws

Through training or narrative circumstance, Merits and Flaws can be earned and lost. Permitting this is entirely up to the Storyteller's discretion. A character may develop a relationship that he thinks is worthy of True Love, while another character's Dark Fate may come to pass. Before allowing this, the Storyteller should consider whether or not it makes narrative sense for the Merit or Flaw to be earned, lost, or changed. If she wishes to charge for the loss/gain of a Merit or Flaw, treat the experience cost as if the character were purchasing a Background. Outside of rare circumstances, Flaws should not afford additional points after play begins.

Reskinning

What is written in this chapter is not gospel. Feel free to customize the flavor associated with a specific mechanical benefit (or drawback) to your liking. As an example, it is perfectly acceptable to use the Sturdy Merit to represent your character's unusually large size instead of her training regimen – provided that you clear any changes with the Storyteller first.

Physical Merits and Flaws

Physical Merits and Flaws affect your character's corporeal self or physical actions, such as combat or athletic feats. Physical Merits may reflect a character's



innate abilities or the result of years of mortal training, while physical Flaws may be the result of genetics or unfortunate accidents.

Physical Merits

Ambidextrous (1 point): Whether by training or a gift of birth, you are equally adept with both hands. You must still split actions as normal, but you do not incur any additional penalties for taking actions with your non-dominant hand.

Deceptive Eating (1 point): By some fortune, you are able to consume and enjoy mortal cuisine, thereby adding another layer to your guise of mortality. When applicable, the Storyteller may rule a lower difficulty or reduced penalties to rolls to convince others that you are human. You cannot digest or derive nourishment from normal food, however, and eventually must find a time and a place to heave it back up.

Blush of Health (2 points): The Embrace that claimed you did not entirely leach away the tells of your former life. Your skin is cool to the touch rather than cold, retaining a healthy fullness as if blood skill coursed through your veins. You easily pass as a mortal against all but the most thorough examination and the Storyteller may choose to lower the difficulty or reduce penalties to rolls to convince others of your mortality. Cappadocians and Nosferatu may not take this Merit.

Without a Trace (2 points): When you stray from the paths of civilization and wander into the wilderness, leaves, grass, and moss grow back where you pass and the earth itself moves to fill your footprints. You leave no noticeable traces of your passing, not even a scent. Normal attempts to track you (such as with Survival or ordinary dogs) automatically fail. The difficulty of attempts to track you by supernatural means, such as with Auspex, increases by two.

Efficient Digestion (3 points): Your internal vampiric systems work faster and more effectively than most, granting you more a greater yield from feeding. Gain an additional blood point for every two you consume.

Sturdy (4 points): Training, hardships, or natural ability have inured your body to pain and damage. While you are not necessarily a hulking brute, anyone who has seen you in action knows that you can take more dam-

age than the average individual. You gain an additional Bruised health level and the Storyteller may award you with any appropriate bonuses when your innate toughness comes into play.

Physical Flaws

Odd Gait (1 point): Moving swiftly does not come easily for you; perhaps walking is painful or perhaps you are simply never in a hurry. Whatever the reason, you move at half your normal movement speed. Storyteller characters may also come to recognize you by your uncommon walk.

Ragged Bite (2 points): Unlike your Cainite peers, you lack the ability to neatly seal up the wound caused by feeding. Instead, you leave torn, bleeding marks which have a chance of becoming infected. Your target must make a Stamina roll (difficulty the number of damage caused + 5) to resist infection. The impact of such a notable wound in conjunction with a diseased target is left to the discretion of the Storyteller. At the very least, this poses complications in hiding your identity as anything other than a monster.

Unclean (2 or 3 points): Whether a lingering trait from your mortal life or an unfortunate side effect of your Embrace, your skin is marred in such a way that most casual observers assume you are a leper (or at least carrying some kind of plague). You may be barred entry to major cities, thrown out of most establishments, or subject to misguided attempts at healing or mercy. At 3 points, you carry leprosy (or some other contagious and visible disease). Nosferatu who take this Flaw receive only 1 point for it and must take its full effects (3 points).

Addiction (3 points): One of your vices from life has carried over into your unlife. Now, whenever you feed, you must also satiate your addiction. This could be anything from preying on drunkards, those who have become dependent on pain-killing opiates, or even the deeply spiritual who use hallucinogens to commune with the divine. The addiction not need be limited to substance abuse, extending to thrill-seeking or sexual encounters. Blood not tainted with your vice only offers half the normal sustenance.

Monstrous (3 points): When you were Embraced, the Beast within tore its way out, permanently manifesting itself in your physical features. You are a terrible, twisted creature, the stuff of nightmares in unliving flesh. Ordinary mortals flee in terror at your approach and even Cainites recoil in disgust. Your Appearance is permanently 0 and cannot be raised. If your character is of Clan Nosferatu, you may not take this Flaw.

Permanent Wound (3 points): By some misfortune, a wound sustained in your mortal life refuses to heal, forever open and weeping. When you wake at night, you always begin at the Wounded health level. No source of healing can cure this damage permanently, but you may spend blood points each night to heal it.

Slow Healing (3 points): While other Cainites recover swiftly from their injuries, you are not so fortunate. Your unliving flesh is slow to mend and reluctant to heal, costing two blood points to heal a normal level of damage and five days (in addition to the normal expenditures) to heal a level of aggravated damage.

Child (4 points): Most vampires begin their unlife in adulthood, but your sire, whether by necessity, cruelty, or peculiarity, Embraced you when you were a child. No matter how many years have passed, your body remains prepubescent. Your Strength and Stamina may not be higher than 2 and the difficulty of rolls to lead or command mortal adults increases by two.

Impaired Sense (4 points): Whether by birth or an unfortunate circumstance later in life, one of your senses has been diminished. Perhaps you are hard of hearing or blind, or perhaps one of your other senses has lost its functionality. Rolls involving your impaired sense are made at a difficulty increased by 3. This may also increase the difficulty of other rolls or impose other appropriate penalties. At Storyteller discretion, this Flaw may be taken more than once, but additional senses are each 1-point Flaws.

Mute (4 points): You cannot (or choose not to) speak. Typically, you communicate through body language and gestures, which imposes a +3 difficulty for any rolls that require you to communicate with unfamiliar people. Taking the Literacy Merit or dedicating a Multi-Lingual language to sign language can lessen this issue.

Flesh of the Corpse (5 points): Although you recover from your wounds (mechanically healing any health levels lost), your flesh and bone retain the memory of the injury. Skin stays torn, bruises remain dark, and broken bones still bend at odd angles. You are incapable of passing as anything but inhuman, and the Storyteller may assign increased difficulty to Social rolls as appropriate. Some Cainites with this Flaw continue to age and decay, eventually becoming nothing more than skeletons with rough, organ-like chunks hanging off their bones.

Mental Merits and Flaws

Mental Merits and Flaws pertain to your character's cognitive abilities, perceptions, beliefs, and academic skill. Like physical Merits, mental Merits may be the result

of training or natural ability, while mental Flaws usually represent a roadblock due to your character's behavior.

Mental Merits

Celestial Attunement (1 point): You innately know what time of day it is and are able to accurately guess the hour of sunrise and sunset within a few minutes. With a moment's concentration, you may also estimate the position of the stars, even without the aid of a star chart.

Common Sense (1 point): You've got a good head on your shoulders and a natural aversion to foolish risk. In tense situations, you may ask the Storyteller for hints about the most reasonable course of action. The Storyteller may also grant you a warning against poorly considered actions.

Literacy (1 point): You are a learned scholar, able to both read and write. The Merit assumes that you can read and write with fluency in your native tongue, as well as Latin and any languages you may have gained through the Multi-Lingual Merit. In some chronicles, literacy can be assumed. In these cases, Illiteracy becomes a 1-point Flaw.

Eidetic Memory (2 points): With but a moment's reflection, you can recall anything you've observed or experienced in clear detail. In a stressful or dangerous situation, this recollection may require a Perception + Alertness roll.

Light Sleeper (2 points): When you rest, you retain a level of alertness above and beyond the norm. You wake at any unwanted disturbance in your environment, thereby making it very hard to surprise you while you sleep. You automatically succeed at any rolls to detect mundane attempts at surprise attacks while you sleep.

Multi-Lingual (2 points): Through patience, study, and/or immersion, you are able to speak another language or languages with native fluency. This represents a full command over the language. For each dot of Intelligence your character possesses, you may know one other language. You may also use this Merit to reflect secret codes, cants, jargon, or sign language as well. Additional languages increase the cost of this Merit by one point per language.

Mental Flaws

Deep Sleeper (1 point): Slumber takes you wholly, plunging you completely into the depthless realm of dreams. Increase the difficulty of rolls to wake during the day by two.

Nightmares (1 point): When you sleep, nightmares invade your dreams. Terrible images assault your mind, leaving you anxious and breathless upon waking. When you wake, make a Willpower roll. If you fail, the horror of your dreams haunts you, decreasing your dice pools for all actions by one until you next sleep.

Prey Exclusion (1 point): For whatever reason you choose, you refuse to feed upon a certain type of person. If, by some unfortunate circumstance, you prey upon such a person, you frenzy immediately and must make a Degeneration check. Ventrue may only take this Flaw for a subset of their particular feeding stock. For example, a Ventrue might feed from "virgin men," but will not feed from Jewish virgin men.

Amnesia (2 points): Something has erased a portion of your memory. You remember little to nothing about your past. How far back this memory loss goes should be agreed upon between you and the Storyteller. You should also work together to determine what your character may have forgotten (unless you prefer to be surprised, of course). Storytellers should feel free to use this empty space in the character's memory to provide interesting complications for the campaign.

Vengeful (2 points): Revenge drives you. Its hot, constant presence motivates your every move. Work out with the Storyteller what wrongdoing has pushed you into such a state. Whenever you encounter the source of your ire, you are compelled to pursue it, but you may spend a Willpower point to ignore this urge.

Flesh Eater (2 points): You cling to the misguided belief that you must also consume the blood-rich flesh of your victim (such as the heart or liver). This has obvious impact on the size of your herd as well as the mortal population eventually linking mysterious, gruesome deaths to you. To keep down blood consumed without a murderous amount of flesh, you must succeed in a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) or vomit up the blood.

Ethical Prohibition (2 or 4 points): The necessity of feeding is at odds with your moral compass. You cannot reconcile what you have become with what you believe in. At 2 points, you refuse to feed on humans, instead preying upon the blood of animals. At 4 points, you cannot come to terms with yourself at all and refuse to feed except when utterly necessary.

Social Merits and Flaws

Social Merits and Flaws always involve your character's interactions with others, most often mortals. These

are also almost always circumstantial, hinging on things your character has done or people your character knows, which alter the way others think of him or her.

Social Merits

The Company of Saints and Heroes (1 point): Life (and possibly unlife) experiences have brought you close to august religious figures, political entities, and legendary heroes. They do truly know you and think well of you, but you are not necessarily close. Use the Allies background to represent a tighter relationship. This Merit allows you to name-drop your famous connection and reduce the difficulty to applicable Social rolls by one.

Prestigious Sire (1 point): The vampire who Embraced you is no ordinary Cainite. Your sire holds incredible clout among your clan (and possibly others), and this social fortune has been bestowed upon you as well. Others generally treat you with more respect when they learn who sired you. When acting in your sire's name or on your sire's behalf, decrease the difficulty of Social rolls with other Cainites by one. Note, however, that others may also expect more from you, simply for being the childe of greatness.

Debt of Gratitude (1 or 3 points): Though he may grudgingly admit it, an elder is in your debt. At 1 point, the elder owes you a favor. Work together with the Storyteller to determine what type of favor is owed and what you did to earn such a thing. At 3 points, the indebted elder owes you his unlife. Such an incident is extraordinarily unusual, so the elder likely despises being beholden to you. Work with the Storyteller to detail how (and why) this happened.

Lingua Franca (1 point): You are able to speak a mixed language made of common tongues that most people you encounter will understand. You may not be able to hold philosophical discussions, but you can navigate your way through conversations in most places and will be able to communicate sufficiently in dire situations.

Patron (1 to 5 points): You are fortunate enough to have a personage of some wealth and power who is willing to sponsor your endeavors. Presumably, your Patron is fond of you and is willing to offer you material goods to further whatever agreed upon goal you may have, so long as you do not abuse their favor. The scale of this Merit pertains both to the power of your Patron and how close they are to you. A 1-point Patron could be a distant but powerful vampire or an enthusiastic, wealthy mortal who has infrequent funds. A 3-point Patron might be a mortal prince or queen, or a vampire of some standing more willing to regularly fund or champion you, while a 5-point Patron is almost certainly supernatural and has vast resources at their disposal. This is not something for nothing, however, and every so often (with increasing frequency directly proportional to the points invested in this Merit) your Patron will ask something of you. It is generally unwise to say no.

Social Flaws

Dark Secret (1 point): Something from your past haunts you. If found out, it could destroy your reputation with your clan and coterie. When the truth rears its ugly head, you must quash it or suffer the consequences of your secret getting out. You live every day knowing that at some point, word will get out and you will be unable to stop it.

Infamous Sire (1 point): Some Cainites are fortunate enough to be Embraced by great members of their clan, sharing in their prestige and fortune. You are not one of those vampires. Your sire is a person of ill repute: disrespectful, irresponsible, rebellious, and/or callow. You are, therefore, guilty by association. He or she may also try to foist his or her failings onto you when convenient.

Mistaken Identity (1 point): Someone among your clan or mortal community looks just like you. This same person is also a criminal, oath breaker, known cheat, or other ne'er-do-well. He or she is just elusive enough to often leave you with the blame for his or her wrongdoings. Your doppelganger is normally little more than a minor inconvenience, frequently leaving you to explain to authorities where you have been and who you really are.

Outsider (1 point): This is not your native land; this is not your mother tongue. You are not from around here. Everything is strange and different, from the customs to the food. You struggle with the area's native language (though you can get by with a purchase of the Lingua Franca Merit) and the difficulty to applicable Social rolls increases by one.

Sire's Resentment (1 point): Whether by your own failings or your sire's fickle cruelty, he or she despises you. You can expect no favors from your sire, and he or she may be maneuvering to have you eliminated, politically or literally. The extent to which your sire hates you is between you and the Storyteller, but bear in mind that this is a 1-point Flaw, which does not have much relative weight. The Enemy Flaw represents more actively vitriolic relationships.

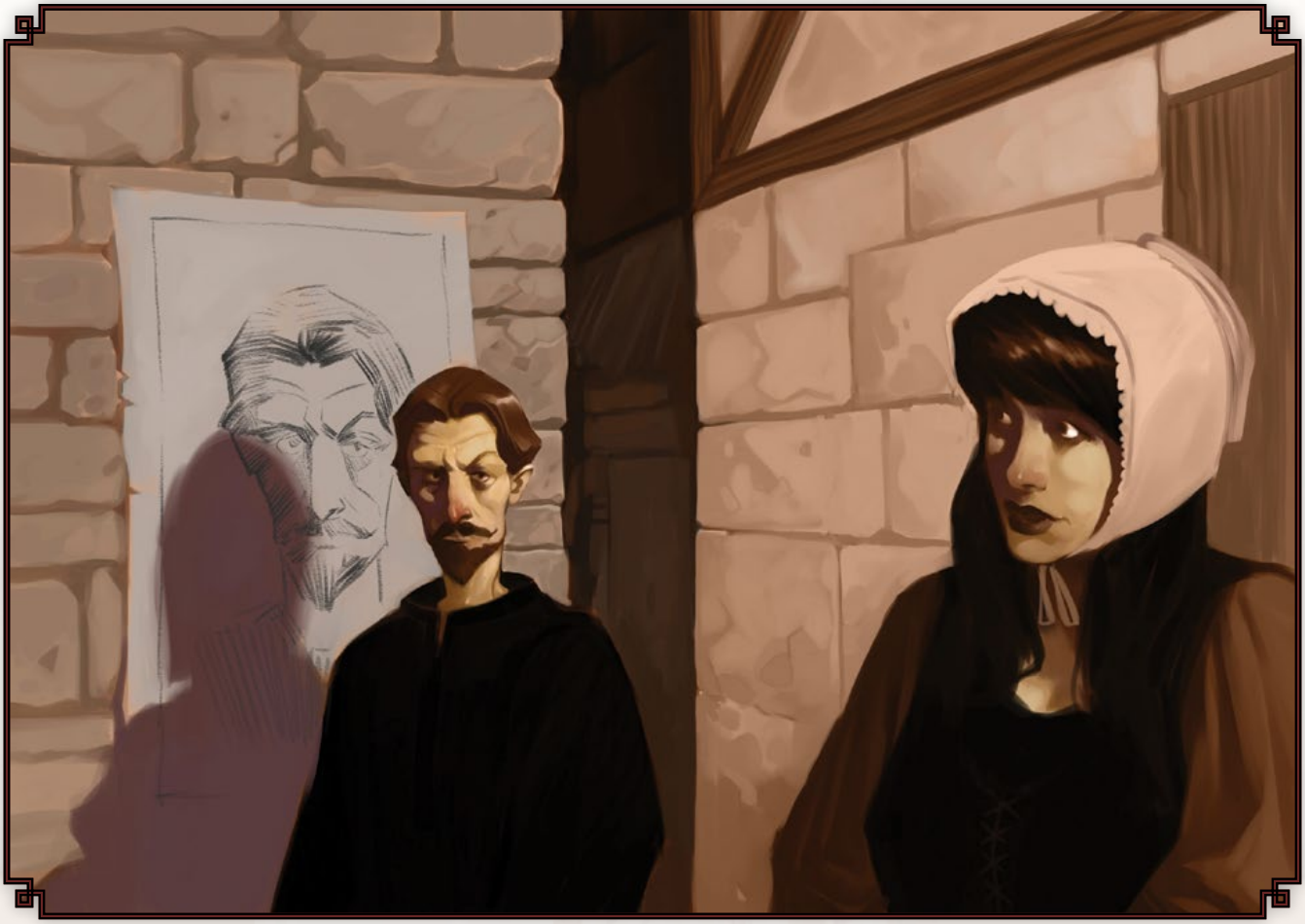
Smell of the Grave (1 point): The cloying scent of fresh, wet earth and decay clings to you. Your skin smells of chrism (or any other oil used in a burial rite) and your breath of funerary incense. While this bothers your Cainite peers little, it unsettles mortals, thereby

increasing the difficulty to Social rolls with mortals by one. This stacks with the Cappadocian weakness, making members of that clan even less adept at Social rolls. The upside is that, at Storyteller discretion, this Flaw may decrease the difficulty of Social rolls where being unsettling might work in one's favor (such as Intimidation attempts) by one.

Vulgar (1 point): You are famously uncouth, abrasive, and unpleasant. Tact is a foreign concept to you, and no matter of gentle prodding or harsher discussions can seem to teach you how to navigate a social situation. Mechanically, increase the difficulty to rolls involving social grace, manners, or delicate social proceedings by one. You may also roleplay yourself into a bind by accidentally offending the wrong people.

Enemy (1 to 5 points): In your travels, you have earned the enmity of a person or organization. The severity and scope of this hatred is reflected by the rating of the Flaw. At 1 point, your enemy is an aggrieved peer or the irritation of an organization. You may be undercut, inconvenienced, or framed for petty crimes, but nothing so severe as attempts on your unlife. At 3 points, your enemy is your superior, or the anger of an important group. They make regular efforts to thwart your plans, threaten your allies, and undermine your standing with your clan and Road. At this level, your enemy may consider granting you the Final Death. Work this out with your Storyteller. At 5 points, your enemy is an elder or an entire organization, such as the ruling family of your nation or the Catholic Church. Your death is not out of the question. None of your associates are safe. Everywhere you go, you can expect your enemy to be waiting. What have you done to make someone so powerful so angry?

Rivalry (1 to 5 points): Someone hates you so much that they cannot bear to leave you alone. The scale of this Flaw is similar to that of the Enemy Flaw (see above), but your Rival is not interested in seeing you dead. Rather, a Rival desires only to make your unlife as troublesome and hellish as possible. At lower point value, the Rival may also be a friend who arrives at precisely the worst moment to steal your thunder or make you embarrassed. At higher levels, your Rival loses sleep planning how to make your life miserable.



Territorial (2 points): You have staked out a claim to a certain area of land and a certain group of mortals and defend it to the point of irrationality. If you catch another vampire hunting on your turf, check for frenzy immediately. Even if you do not frenzy, the thought alone is enough to make you violent. Note that without the necessary backgrounds, your "territory" means nothing to anyone other than you.

Apostate (2 points): There is no sin in changing Roads. However, the manner in which you changed Roads was spectacular and offensive. You decried your former Road in public and spoke out against the faults within their tenets. Predictably, this has earned you the ire of those on your former Road, but it has also made the members of your new Road suspicious. You must work twice as hard to earn the respect of your peers. Be wary, also, for those who might seek revenge.

Hunted (4 points): A witch hunter has targeted you. She may be overestimating you, but she is prepared to eliminate you completely. You find your safe havens uncovered, your social networks compromised, and your allies endangered. Whether or not you affronted this witch hunter personally is between you and the Storyteller. The Storyteller should bear in mind that this is a 4-point Flaw and not hold back.

Marked for Death (4 points): The Court of Blood has found fault with you and placed a price upon your head. You are earmarked for death, and one by one your peers will come to bring it to you. While you may be more than capable of taking your equals in a fight, you know not when or where they will strike. The festering paranoia claws at the edges of your thoughts; in addition to attackers of varying capabilities appearing at random, at Storyteller's discretion you may also lose one die to Mental rolls due to distraction.

Oathbreaker (4 points): Once you swore fealty to a lord, promised your loyalty to an organization, or made a binding business contract with a powerful person (or anything similar). You have since broken that promise. Your motives may have been pure, but you are now branded as an oath-breaker. It is near-impossible to earn the trust of others, which, at Storyteller discretion, can increase the difficulty of Social rolls to convince someone of your trustworthiness by as much as 3. Even the close members of your coterie have reservations about you.

Outspoken Heretic (4 points): You hold a belief considered to be heretical by a major religious power, such as the Catholic Church. Unlike others who practice their heresies in secret, you are open about your beliefs. You must constantly face false accusations, harassment from others who fancy themselves true believers, and the denial of hospitality from steadfastly faithful stranger, or those who fear the religious authority. At the Storyteller's discretion, this can impose a difficulty increase of up to 3 to applicable Social rolls.

Nameless (5 points): You do not exist. Certainly, you still walk the earth and your friends and kin can still see and touch you, but all records of your existence have been destroyed. Not even your vampiric progeny can lay claim to your name. As far as anyone can prove, you never were. If you take this Flaw, you may not take any Social Merits that grant benefits based on reputation. At Storyteller's discretion, you may also be barred from taking Backgrounds that require a social presence. Who or what have you made so angry that they have erased your existence from the face of this earth?

Supernatural Merits and Flaws

Supernatural Merits and Flaws involve boons and banes above and beyond anything within your character's control. You may be blessed with good fortune or be able to catch glimpses of the future, or you might be cursed or condemned to an even darker fate than your own damnation.

Supernatural Merits

Darksight (2 point): Your character sees in the darkness the way others see in light. Even in the complete absence of light, she sees perfectly. She suffers no penalties for darkness. Additionally, she catches glimpses of the otherworldly. She sees ghosts as if they were material, but only while in the dark. More than a candle's light negates this ability.

Inoffensive to Animals (1 point): Not all of the curses of unlife have fallen upon you. Your presence does not disturb natural animals; instead, they treat you as they would any ordinary mortal. This will not stop a mother bear from defending her den, but will negate the inconvenience of having to explain why the farmer's dog is so afraid of you. Creatures with a connection to the occult (such as crows, owls, or black cats) may still react to your presence, but not in a bad way.

Lucky (1 to 5 points): Fortune smiles upon you. The variable point costs reflect just how much you have been blessed by luck. At 1 point, the trifles of everyday life rarely seem to affect you. At 3 points, you are a gambling den's nightmare. At 5 points, you live a truly charmed life, misfortune seemingly passing you by at every turn. For each point invested in this Merit, you gain one reroll per day. You may reroll any roll except a roll to resist falling from your Road, but you must take the second result.

Clan Apostate (2 points): Having undergone the Baali Rite of Apostasy, you now belong to a brood. Re-

place any one in-clan Discipline with Daimoinon but also gain the Baali clan weakness in addition to your default clan weakness. You still pass for a member of your former clan with relative ease, and anyone you Embrace will also belong to your original clan. You do not lose levels in the Discipline you chose in exchange for Daimoinon, but further levels in that Discipline are purchased at out-of-clan cost.

Medium (2 points): Ghosts, spirits, and shades speak to you. You may have had this talent in your mortal life, or it may be a new ability granted by your Embrace. By spending a moment in meditation, you may ask the spirits who visit you for their aid. They are ready and willing to help you in whatever way they can (most often by providing information), but they always ask a favor in return. The severity of this favor should be in line with the task given to the spirits.

Oracular Ability (3 points): Signs, omens, and portents reveal themselves to you, attuned to the occult as you are. You might be trained in a specific school of divination, or the workings of fate may reveal themselves to you unbidden. When an omen manifests itself, whether through applied practice or a casual encounter, you immediately recognize it for what it is. The Storyteller will give the vague impressions the sign leaves upon you, which you may interpret on the fly as you wish. Studying the omen further to gain more relevant information requires time to think and a Perception or Intelligence + Enigmas roll.

Spirit Mentor (3 points): A ghost has chosen to guide and protect you. This ghost could be the soul of a departed loved one, a former teacher, or close friend or something more sinister, such as a spirit you have bound through dark rituals. The mentor offers you tutelage and support in the same way a mortal or Cainite mentor might, though perhaps less restricted by the conventions of society and the inconveniences of (un)living flesh. Your spirit mentor may also need to be called upon by a specific rite or an incantation. With a suitable explanation and Storyteller permission, this Merit may also be used to represent the mentorship or another kind of supernatural creature.

Unbondable (3 points): The stilled blood within you refuses to be compelled. You cannot be bound via the Blood Oath. This does not render you immune to any other source of mental influence, however. If your character is of Clan Tremere, you may not take this Merit.

True Love (4 points): Transcendent love binds you to another and vice versa. You have the kind of relationship found only in legends and bardsong. There is nothing you would not do for each other. This depthless, unconditional love grants you tremendous might, making you able to overcome impossible obstacles. Once per story, you may automatically succeed on any one roll, no matter how many successes it would require, so long as it is done on your beloved's behalf. If your lover is a Storyteller character, he or she may do the same as if he or she possessed this Merit. If your lover is another player character, he or she must also take this Merit. True Love is not one-sided.

Nine Lives (6 points): By some wicked fortune, you are extremely difficult to permanently kill. When a roll would result in your death, immediately reroll it. If the roll succeeds, you walk away from the lethal incident alive, but down one life. You may reroll such near-fatal rolls up to nine times. When your second chances are expended, you will face Final Death like anyone else.

Supernatural Flaws

Cast No Reflection (1 point): Like a monster out of a ghost story, your visage does not appear in a mirror, standing water, a sword's blade, or any other reflective surface. Casual observers need only make a Perception + Alertness roll at default difficulty to notice this oddity, which can lead to any number of interesting complications when dealing with mortals.

Initiate of the Road (1 point): Your life on the road to enlightenment has just begun. Though you fully grasp the tenets and precepts of your chosen Road, you have not yet put them to the test. This may be because you were recently Embraced or because you previously abandoned a former Road (in which case you may also consider taking the Apostate Flaw on page 425). With this comes a +1 difficulty in resisting frenzy and Rötschreck, and you lack an aura tied to your Road. However, you have an easier time changing Roads, if you wish to do so.

Repulsed by Garlic (1 point): True to folktales, the scent of garlic is a ward against you. You cannot abide by the odor, requiring a Willpower test when it is present. Failure results in you fleeing the scene, which can make dinner parties quite awkward. The difficulty of this Willpower roll may be increased, depending on the intensity of the scent.

Touch of Frost (1 point): A nimbus of cold surrounds you. At the slightest touch, plants wither and die. If you stand near still water for too long, it begins to freeze. This makes you very easy to find, increasing the difficulty of rolls to stay hidden or concealed by one.

Cursed (1 to 5 points): Someone has placed a curse upon you. Work with the Storyteller to determine the nature of your curse, why you are cursed, and how it manifests. The following examples demonstrate the scale of your misfortune:

1 point - if you betray the trust of another, they will always find out; 2 points - words fail you when you try to urgently describe something you've seen or heard; 3 points - in your hands, tools warp and break; 4 points - everyone you love will eventually mistrust and despise you; 5 points - all your successes and grand schemes are doomed to fold and crumble. Curses can be lifted by reconciling with whoever (or whatever) levied the curse in the first place.

Demon-Hounded (1 to 5 points): A demon has taken a shine to you. It comes at odd and inconvenient hours and offers you bribes of wealth and power. Some days, it asks for favors; on others, it offers them. What black schemes does hell have in mind for you that one of its servants would bother you so? What fell powers have you toyed with that you should not? At 1 point, the demon is little more than an imp, asking for minor favors or stealing small objects. At 3 points, the demon is your physical or magical equal, or is a smaller threat that is willing to also drag your close friends into this affair. At 5 points, the demon is significantly powerful, able to threaten your coterie, or a lesser demon willing to torment your friends, family, and acquaintances.

Unlucky (1 to 5 points): You are spectacularly unfortunate. Disaster follows in your wake. You are magnetically attracted to misfortune. At 1 point, it rains whenever you forget your coat. At 3 points, it's rare for you to recover from any failure gracefully. At 5 points, nearly everything you attempt ends catastrophically. A number of times per day equal to the point you have in this Flaw, the Storyteller may force you to reroll a successful roll and take the second result. Lucky and Unlucky are not mutually exclusive, but for simplicity's sake, the same roll cannot be modified by both at once. That is, if a Lucky reroll is used, the Storyteller cannot force you to reroll the reroll.

Thirteenth Generation (2 points): By some strange twist of the supernatural, you were Embraced by a member of the Twelfth Generation. Your sire may not have even expected this to come to pass, and it certainly worries the powers-that-be, for you are something that should surely not exist. The difficulty of any rolls to activate your Disciplines is increased by one. At Storyteller discretion, you may also face other increased difficulties when you brush up against those who are frightened or suspicious of what you are. Strongly consider taking the Cannot Embrace or the Weak Blood Flaws as well.

Cannot Embrace (2 points): Through some curse, weakness, or defect in your vampirism, you are unable to create progeny. You may not be aware of this until it is too late and a victim lays bleeding out in your arms.

Eerie Presence (2 points): A pervasive miasma of unease surrounds you. You exude a sense of wrongness that is palpable to mortals. This aura of fear increases the difficulty of Social rolls involving interaction with mortals by two, with the exception of Intimidation rolls.

Repulsive to Animals (2 points): When you are near, natural animals startle and panic. Unlike the normal disturbance caused by the presence of Cainites, animals near you either bolt in terror or become aggressive and violent, depending on their temperament. This makes riding a horse (or any other riding beast) nearly impossible, as you are unable to calm any creature down with a normal Animal Ken roll. You must use the abilities of the Animalism Discipline or feed the animal some of your blood, which transforms it into a ghoul.

Permanent Third Eye (2 or 4 points; Salubri and Tremere only): While others descended from the blood of Saulot are able to conceal their third eye, yours remains permanently open on your forehead. For 2 points, it is mechanically treated as any normal third eye, though narratively may draw strange looks and unwanted attention. For 4 points, the eye is permanently open and may only be closed for a scene on a successful Willpower roll.

Animate Shadow (3 points): Your shadow is not merely an absence of light in the shape of your person; it is a living, malicious entity with a will of its own. It lashes out at friends and enemies alike, tearing at the scenery and snarling at passers-by. In addition to being a frightening problem, you lose two dice from all Social rolls with Lasombra who know of your issue.

Cloaked in Shadow (3 points): Shadows cling to you constantly. These are not the ordinary shadows cast simply by existing; the darkness around you is thick and heavy, making it impossible for you to pass as anything other than something supernatural. In addition to this complication, the difficulty for Social rolls with other vampires (especially the Lasombra) increases by one.

Haunted (3 points): A vengeful ghost haunts you, for any variety of reasons: perhaps you took the ghost's life, perhaps it is the shade of a departed enemy with unfinished business, or perhaps it is a misfortune of your Embrace. When it is able to strike out at you, it is your physical and magical equal. However, most of the time it chooses to make your life miserable by frightening your friends, moving your furniture, and making loud noises while you are trying to rest. How often your haunt makes its displeasure known is up to the whims of the Storyteller. The Storyteller may wish to forbid characters with the Necromancy Discipline from taking this Flaw, as they have an easy means of dealing with the drawbacks.

Can't Cross Running Water (4 points): Some supernatural prohibition encoded within you prevents you from crossing any moving body of water more than two

feet deep. To do so, you must pass a Courage test (which the Storyteller may increase the difficulty, if appropriate). If you fail, you stand transfixed, unable to cross, while a botch sends you into Rötschreck. Mustering the fortitude to cross still pains you, and you take one health level of unsoakable bashing damage. If you swim or wade into the water, the damage is aggravated instead.

Grip of the Damned (4 points): When you drink from a mortal, they do not slip quietly into submission, instead retaining full, fearful consciousness. Many scream and thrash, doing everything to stop you from feasting on their blood. Mechanically, you must grapple with a target when you wish to feed on him. Additionally, it may prove difficult to conceal your actions from other mortals when you are wrestling with a howling victim. At the Storyteller's discretion, this may be taxing to particularly chaste members of certain Roads.

Dark Fate (5 points): Your damnation extends far beyond your unlife. Fate has prepared a great doom for you, the likes of which will be whispered in tales long after it has come to pass. Work with your Storyteller to craft your doom (or let her unpleasantly surprise you, if you prefer), bearing in mind that it should be legendarily terrible. You cannot avoid your fate. The only way to be rid of this Flaw is to let your doom come to pass.

Harbinger of the Abyss (5 points): You have become the void: the endless black of night, an empty pool of darkness. Where you pass, shadows leap to join you and flames gutter and perish. When you are in the presence of mundane fire, you must make a reflexive Obtenebration roll against the soak difficulty of any nearby flame. A success extinguishes the fire instantly, casting the area into darkness. This Flaw also includes the effects of Touch of Frost (page 426) and Eerie Presence (page 427) and is therefore mutually exclusive with them. However, the clinging darkness around you provides one benefit (besides being an unusual way to extinguish unwanted fires): reduce the difficulty of all Intimidation rolls by two, to a minimum of 4. You must have at least one dot of Obtenebration to purchase this Flaw.

Light-Sensitive (5 points): While all Cainites fear the daylight, you are especially vulnerable. Beneath the hateful gaze of the sun, your unliving flesh chars and crumbles at an alarming rate, and even the gentle light of the moon causes you pain. You take double the normal amount of damage when exposed to sunlight and lethal damage from moonlight. Characters who are Followers of Set and Lasombra may take this Flaw to further intensify their clan's particular weakness to sunlight, doubling the augmented damage instead.

SCALE

Merits and Flaws work on a scale of one to five. One-point Merits apply irregularly or provide only a small bonus (often a decrease in difficulty by 1 in particular instances). One-point Flaws cause a problem every so often (the Storyteller should never let a player get away with something for nothing), an increase in difficulty by 1 to specific circumstances, or narrative issues that affect only the character. Three-point Merits apply regularly, have a notable mechanical impact (such as decreased difficulty up to 3) or benefit the character and his or her immediate allies. Three-point Flaws are an expected source of trouble, have a lasting mechanical drawback, or affect the entire coterie. At five points, Merits are game-changing, allowing characters to wholly bend or ignore specific rules, or grant a benefit that affects everyone involved with the character. On the other hand, five-point Flaws are true disasters, either barring a character from benefitting from a certain mechanic or inflicting a terrible penalty. Flaws of this level may also affect entire communities associated with the character or be unavoidable until they come to pass. Storytellers should consider the impact of five-point Merits or Flaws before permitting them. Also, consider reducing the level of a Flaw if it can offer a circumstantial advantage as part of its drawback.

Weak Blood (5 points): Something has diminished your supernatural vigor and lessened your abilities as a vampire. Where others effortlessly command the gifts of Lilith, you struggle. No Discipline you have knowledge of may be higher than 4. It costs you twice the normal amount of blood points to control any vampiric abilities. You must feed a person six drinks of your feeble blood before they can become your thrall, and you do not possess the potency to create a ghoul or sire a childe. This effect also covers the drawbacks of the Cannot Embrace Flaw (page 427), therefore the two are mutually exclusive.

Weak Aura (2 point Merit or Flaw): The aura of your Road clings weakly to you, manifesting only when you perform acts of faith or when your fervor is at its most intense. This is a Merit if your Road rating is 4 or less, and a Flaw if it's 5 or more. Follow the chart below for the mechanical effects on the application of your aura.

Road Rating	Aura Modifier
10-9	+1 difficulty
8-3	no modifier
2-1	-1 difficulty

Potent Aura (3 point Merit of Flaw): Your aura is mighty, giving people a powerful impression of you. Your presence ripples through a room, giving you away instantly. This is a mixed blessing, as you must grow into your burgeoning power, finding it difficult to control at first. This is a Merit if your Road is 5+ and Flaw if it's 4 or less. Follow the chart below for the mechanical effects on the application of your aura.

Road Rating	Aura Modifier
10	-3 difficulty
9-8	-2 difficulty
7-6	-1 difficulty
5	no modifier
4-3	+1 difficulty
2	+2 difficulty
1	+3 difficulty





Appendix B: Apocrypha of the Clans

Assamites: A Clan of Judges

The Assamites' organization and structure are unique among Cainite society. The three sects work together towards a common goal, each balancing the other to prevent an imbalance of power. Ordinarily, clan structure dictates duties within the clan, but the different sects of the Assamite clan are so specialized as to have developed their own unique Disciplines and weaknesses. While the viziers are the most commonly seen Assamites within Cainite society, the sorcerers and the warriors are just as abundant, though their roles take them in different directions.

Assamite sorcerers claim to be the oldest practitioners of vampiric blood magic. Most sorcerers spend a great deal of time in Alamut, connecting the viziers and warriors and keeping the clan in constant communication. Some sorcerers travel with viziers, making homes in new cities in hopes to learn new arcane secrets and further their own research. This also ensures most viziers have a direct connection back to Alamut. Many sorcerers spend time researching a way for the clan to exist without the blood of mortals. So far, the greatest magical achievement is sustaining the blood of Alamut, a magically preserved concoction of blood from every Assamite ever created. Others concern themselves with enchanting weapons for their warrior brethren or casting divinations to aid in investigations.

Members of the warrior sect are nomads, seeking other Cainites in order to judge their worthiness. Most travel between cities at the direction of their vizier and sorcerer brethren, meting out justice to those deemed unworthy. This is not to say that the warriors are somehow lesser than the other two sects, only ever following directions. The warriors set the code on what is considered unworthy and decide priorities when it comes to acting on decisions. They also police the entire clan, ensuring that Assamites who fall to corruption are weeded out before any other Cainite. Most warriors consider their sect to be the most powerful, and indeed their word seems to carry more weight than the others in matters of dispute.

Sorcerer Disciplines: Assamite Sorcery (Thaumaturgy), Auspex, Celerity

Sorcerer Weakness: Sorcerers have a difficult time hiding their arcane nature. All mystical attempts to determine magic use on or around the character are made at a -2 difficulty and are considered two levels higher for the purposes of opposed powers and rolls.

Warrior Disciplines: Celerity, Obfuscate, Quietus (Cruscitus)

Warrior Weakness: Warriors are marked with their tradition of diablerie. Warrior Assamites always confirm as positive for diablerie whenever scrutinized with super-

natural powers, even if the character has never tasted the blood of another Cainite.

Road of Blood

According to the teachings of Haqim, the Assamite clan is charged to judge other Cainites and punish the unworthy. Of all the tenets Haqim passed down to his childer, this is the strictest. Each member recognizes that Caine's blood is a gift, not a right, and not everyone deserves to have it. The Road of Blood formed around this rule, setting out a set of rigid guidelines to adhere to in order to find clarity in purpose and ensure correct judgments.

Most Assamites following the Road of Blood belong to the nomadic warrior sect, taking up the mantle of judges and executioners for the rest of the clan. A few non-Assamites join the ranks of the Sentinels, but most view them with a wary eye, assuming they only seek the power of diablerie. Despite the proclivity for diablerie that comes with being an adherent of the Road of Blood, much of the Road's doings go unnoticed by Cainite society. Sentinels are careful in their actions, taking pains to ensure each judgment is correct and deserved before acting. Careless decisions and wrongful deaths degrade the integrity and sacred duty of the orders handed down by Haqim. Judgments often work on extended timescales, following the idea that a vampire's lifetime is too long for hasty decisions. Those who abuse the charge for diablerie or attract unwanted attention are dealt with immediately. Sentinels spend as much time policing their own ranks as they do on the rest of Cainite society, ensuring that every single member retains a constant vigil against corruption and failure.

Sobriquet: Sentinels

Ethics of the Blood:

- The blood of Caine is a gift that must be earned.
- Purity, honor, and discipline are the hallmarks of a warrior.
- Do not act with haste — every action requires careful consideration.
- Allowing the Beast to take control is a sign of weakness and unfitness to retain Caine's blood.

Organization: Sentinels often work alone and keep to themselves. They tend to set up areas to cover and rarely encounter one another. Most of their organization follows a mentor/student relationship as new members are trained in the Road. Otherwise, following the Road is very solitary. Each adherent travels to areas dictated by their clan, judging and dealing with the unworthy as necessary.

Aura: Resolve. A follower of the Road of Blood takes his task seriously and is dedicated to following through. The aura modifier affects Willpower rolls.

Virtues: Conviction and Self-Control

Sins Against the Blood

Rating	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Acting impulsively in any situation	Discipline is strength.
9	Allowing actions to be dictated by emotion	Passion is the first stirring of the Beast.
8	Succumbing to frenzy	Our will must be unshakable.
7	Failing to diablerize an unworthy vampire	Return the blood of the unworthy to Haqim.
6	Acting cowardly or dishonorably	Our actions reflect on our father, Haqim.
5	Allowing the unworthy to go unpunished	We are the judges of the unliving.
4	Showing weakness before the unworthy	We represent Haqim in all things.
3	Failing to honor an oath	Our honor is what sets us apart.
2	Submitting to the will of an unworthy prince or elder	Nothing in this world may sway us from our sacred purpose.
1	Becoming oath-bound to another Cainite	We serve Haqim and no other.

Brujah: Letters from Carthage

Dearest Zamra,

As requested, here is the first transcription from the cache of documents in the ancient pits where you claimed Malchus hid them. Forgive any lingering stench of rotten blood; the entire scriptorium reeked of the stuff after our task was complete. The rest will come as it is completed, but I imagined you would want to see these first. These finds are remarkable at the very least, especially if they recount true events.

Faithfully,

Brother Cornelius

So stricken was the philosopher with the comely, brilliant Troile that he lost himself in daydreams, forgetting to feed until nearly sunrise. But Troile would not be moved. Troile stood at the lord's side as a living statue, speaking only when spoken to, and when words poured forth from Troile's lips, they were clean and simple and pure as the melody of a virgin shepherd's pipe.

The master could not help but notice the philosopher's passion, calling him forth to explain why the philosopher cared so deeply for Troile. Troile was lowly flesh and blood, after all, and not so elevated as the master and philosopher were. The philosopher railed at the master, calling him blind for not seeing the eloquence and loyalty with which Troile stood by the master's side. The master scowled and dismissed the philosopher from his sight, scoffing at how the philosopher marveled at a servant who was simply well-behaved. "Clearly," the master said, "the philosopher cannot fathom how obedience should be the expectation, not the exception."

What the master did not see was the single tear that fell down Troile's cheek during the philosopher's impassioned oratory. When the philosopher returned to his quarters for the day, Troile was there, and silently knelt at the philosopher's feet. The philosopher extended his hands to help Troile stand. "No more," the philosopher said, and his words carried true weight, not the weight of the blood. "You will never kneel to me." Troile stood, and the philosopher Embraced Troile as an equal.

And so it was that Troile came to us, and the rift between the master and the philosopher and their offspring continues to this very night.

This is the least embellished version of this story I've encountered, illumination notwithstanding. My sire first recounted it in the early days of the siege, and told the story with such conviction that most who heard it believed it, at least for a time. I never asked if there was any truth to it. It didn't really matter.

Zamra

Dearest Zamra,

The page we received this on crumbled to dust when the scribe moved it after his task was complete. While the fate of the document is strangely fitting, considering the context, its loss is a great blow to us. We can only offer this illumination, the finest we have to offer, and our most sincere apologies. Aside from the copy in our archives, this is the only copy of the last words of Himilcar the Pale, the last prince of Carthage.

Faithfully,

Brother Cornelius

The hordes of the so-called Kings and the Lunatics batter at our gates, but they cannot hope to break in. This city is ours! If they breach the gates, we will crush them in the streets and alleyways. We will bring the city down about their ears and drive them out! They will have to slaughter every last one of us and salt the earth to purge us from it, and even then, we can return. And we will return! Carthage will last when Rome returns to nothing but a pile of river mud, and we will shake these would-be conquerors off like a dog shakes fleas.

Never give up! Never surrender!

Illumination notwithstanding, these are merely more pretty words at best. If accounts from our elders are correct, a flaming arrow pierced Himilcar's chest straight through the heart after he gave this speech. He crumbled to ash on the spot, and the citizens of Carthage did have to fight the Roman forces in the streets. My sire left his court because Himilcar the Pale was a coward. He also called himself a monarch, not a prince. Do keep that in mind, in the interests of academic accuracy.

Zamra

Zamra,

On my sire's orders, I snuck these out of the scriptorium before the monks could copy them. I'm quite sure your sire would be quite relieved to know his reputation will go untarnished.

You're welcome.

Safirah, childe of Tanitbaal-Sahar

To the one who calls himself Tanitbaal-Sahar,

I have been told that you are responsible for the prayers and sacrifices for the safety of the city. You claim these sacrifices are in our best interests, and yet the innocent blood of children stains your hands. Explain yourself. This is your only chance. Otherwise, I bring your miserable carcass before my monarch.

Malchus
Fist of Himilcar the Pale

Honored Malchus,

It warms my heart that you care so much about the city's wellbeing. The prayers I use to call upon mystical protections for Carthage carry steep costs. Know that I do not enjoy what I do, but I love this city as much as you, and will do anything within my power to protect it.

I invite you to follow the messenger who brings you this and join me, so that you may see for yourself what price your safety commands.

Tanitbaal-Sahar

To the wretch who claims to rule as Himilcar the Pale,

As requested, I have investigated the claims put forward against Tanitbaal-Sahar and his coterie. The claims are true, but I refuse to levy your punishment. Know now that what he does is for the good of Carthage. He does not hesitate when the most effective course of action before him leads where mortals fear to tread. He combats the curse of the ancient queen Alissar against Aeneas, which demands the blood of innocents and the screams of pain that come when it is drawn. Rome and Carthage will always be bitter enemies, and supporting the efforts of Tanitbaal-Sahar does more to protect my beloved city than you or your council ever could. The gods do not listen to us; by refusing to listen to them, my soul finds peace, and my Beast troubles me far less.

Call the Blood Hunt on me if it will make you sleep better. At least my new commander does not shy away from the deeds that must be done. Consider this my resignation from your court.

Malchus

Fist of Tanitbaal-Sahar

Safirah,

May both you and your sire spend millennia in torpor encased in fresh dung from diseased camels. Never contact me again.

Zamra

Cappadocians: The Cult of Lamia

From Ahmad al-Nasrani, Laura of Saint Saba

The Prince sits upon his throne, and thinks himself a god. Very well; let him be content this way. Gallus in sterquilinio suo plurimum potest. We know better. We are ash and dust. We are not gods.

Not yet.

The Kine are content with simulacra of God. They take crumbs of His flesh and sips of His blood. But we are not content with the feast of crumbs. The blood of Christ cannot consecrate us and the blood of men gives us but the barest sustenance for our bodies. True, we are immortal, but only in our bodies: we may live eternally but we fade with age, growing into torpid shades of their former selves. Surely you've met enough of our elders to realize this.

No, we cannot thrive on the blood of men alone, nor can the false prophet of Amaranth save us. To be as gods, we must achieve the ultimate communion with Him. We cannot be satisfied with the false communion of man. We must achieve true gnosis by feeding on Him directly, drinking of his soul and mind.

It is in the spirit of this that I present these humble rituals for transmuting wine into blood. While it seems not to possess any celestial properties and is not the sanguis Dei, it is my hope that this small contribution will be of use to the physical and spiritual advancement of our kind.

From Eudocia Melachrina, Constantinople

It is always a pleasure to hear from you, Ahmad. Your candor is refreshing — and inadvisable — as always.

Regarding simulacra of God: I am afraid that "mere simulacra" are what we must content ourselves with. We are imperfect creatures who live in an imperfect world; we cannot hope to ascend the throne to godhood in a single leap. We can, however, interact with those terrestrial daimones that the ignorant call "ghosts" — for the ghosts are creatures of passion and intellect who are free of the mortal body and its hungers and temptations. I realize that you shun the world of the Dead and its inhabitants, calling them unclean and deceitful, but one must make a distinction between the two types of ghosts: wraiths and spectres. Wraiths are nobler spirits akin to terrestrial daimones; while they are not purely virtuous, they are capable of thought and reason and of pursuing loftier goals. The spectres, however, are terrible lucifugi who exist only to lead us to temptation and self-destruction.

A similar distinction must be made for necromancers who seek their answers in the Underworld, Ahmad. You may openly despise the Venetians, but they are only a small part of our endeavors. When we have mastered the world of the daimon, we can move our gaze upward toward the throne of the angels, but for now, we must content ourselves with the world — and the clan — that we live in.

The Cult of Lamia

As the Catholic Church deems women's participation in the religious sphere as heretical during the Renaissance, so does the role of Lilith in Cainite lore diminish after the fall of the Cappadocians. The Lamia are all but written out of Cainite history, recast as the mindless servants of the Cappadocians. They become a caste of bodyguards, a true insult to any Lilin believer.

The Cult of Lamia venerates knowledge and mastery gained through direct experience. Many of their ritual practices (they hold sabbats at midsummer, midwinter, and the equinoxes) revolve around the mythology of Lilith and frequently involve sex, violence and sacrifice. Lamia herself is a reclusive figure. She always appears as a celebrant at the midsummer sabbat, and is rumored to be Cappadocius' occasional lover.

Lamia: The Ways of Lilith

You want me to tell you the ways of Lamia?

What an absurd question. It would be better for you to ask me what pain feels like, or what the taste of sweetness is, or how to make your heart beat.

I cannot tell you her ways. But you have come far, and suffered much, and I will give you something — a bit of guidance on your journey. May it serve you as well as it has served me.

LAMIA: THE REASON WHY

Given the rapacious Embrace of Lamia, the philosophy of Lilinism, and the disconnection between the Lamia and the rest of the Cappadocians, why are they not acting when they seem to foresee the threats that the Giovani pose?

A possible explanation is this: the Dark Mother is wise, and like many of the most ancient members of the Clan of Death, Lamia possesses a gift for prophecy. She has foreseen the War of Princes, and she wants to take her cult out of the sight of the foolish sons of Caine. She tires of their petty power-plays, though Lamia herself might enjoy taking revenge upon Lazarus in a twisted sort of way.

In light of this, they make a deal with the Giovani: the Cappadocians lose their most powerful warriors at the moment that they need them the most. Perhaps some Lamia stay loyal to the Cappadocians; perhaps most of them do. But many of them go to ground, never to be seen until the Final Nights. The Giovani claim that they're all dead, and no one need know that anything is different.

- The Lilin kneel before no master. Respect the law only insofar as it suits your purposes.
- Learn the ways of Lilith. Master her magics; seek out her children and learn their ways.
- Master your body. Learn its weaknesses and its will. Starve yourself, gorge yourself. Find what lies beyond pleasure and pain. Find the Mother who lives darkly within your body.
- Guide others who seek Her. You cannot teach them, but you can guide them.
- Do not engage in wanton cruelty. You are not a monster, though the ignorant may call you that. Seek not mortal power or influence as a means unto itself; the sons of Seth are not Hers. Do not fear the darkness, but seek out the dark corners of the world where Her children lurk.



Gangrel: The Last Age of Adventure

You ask any Gangrel worth her salt, and she'll tell you the same: the time of adventure and mystery is coming to an end. Floods of science and population growth are pushing people out farther and farther from the centers of their cities and villages. More and more people are taking up more and more space. They bring their axes and torches into the woods, leaving fewer and fewer shadows for mysteries to hide behind. They chart more of the sea, and leave less room for monsters and the unknown. Human beings define and name, leaving no place for things that cannot be named. To the Gangrel, who have always hunted not just man, but greater prey still, this means one of two things.

We must protect those still-wild places from man so that what is left does not die or lash out to kill humanity first.

Or.

We must hunt harder and more recklessly than ever before. This is the end of an era, and we are the wolves of devastation, cleansing and destroying whatever is meant to be destroyed to make room for the next great challenge.

Finding the Great Prey

I caught wind of the thing from an old witch I sometimes feed from who lives in a shack outside of town. She knows a thing or three about what goes on in the city; people bring rumors to her and her hunches are always good. I'd make her mine, but she's too old and arthritic to survive in the wild. While enjoying my company, she told me that some woodman had missed the caravan into the city, and pelts of deer were few and far between in the last few weeks, despite being the season for it. She told me that some of the hunters in the hamlet nearby had gone missing. After we were Finished, while she washed her hair of the blood and dirt, she told me that one of the few pelts that came in was strange. She offered to show it to me, and I readily accepted.

It was a deer pelt, the sort I'd seen in the thousands, but the color was off and the smell was difficult to describe. The thing had a greenish hue, like it had grown over with moss or lichen, but no, it was just light fur and leathered skin. I had to spend some time breathing in the musk to get anywhere, and finally took it to a clanmate of mine with an incredibly sharp nose. He told me it smelled of birth Fluid, brimstone, and the air after lightning has split it.

This was not nothing.

First, I attempted to determine if this was lupine-related. If you know the rough area of occurrences, you can usually determine if lupines are involved. They're territorial and make sure that their territories are marked clear enough that even the dimwitted in my clan can tell and avoid them. I knew the deer hunting area here well enough; the local human king is very particular about poaching. There was no pack there, nor was it possible another Outlaw or more distant kin had taken up residence in the area and started making mischief. I would know.

No. This appeared to be a legitimate hunt. One of the Last Great Hunts. On some level, I had been blessed.

Watching

It took three months, but I think I have a handle on the beast. It took some doing. As usual, I stayed with people who would talk to me. Witnesses and victims are often willing to tell their story to anyone who will believe them. These stories are often conflicting, confused, and biased, but necessary for the glimmers of truth. Afterward, I spent some time with a local Cassandra who knows the folk lore of the area intimately. Her knowledge is invaluable, but she always extracts a price. When I came to a week later, I made note of what I could remember of the conversation. Most of it was useful. This time, I didn't need to hunt down a Nosferatu or kill a Tremere to take my next steps. That was ideal.

It was time to take to the woods. I stalked the thing for traces, and finding a trail of

dead woodsmen that told me I was in the right area. Sometimes, as I slept, I'd hear the thing, tromping rough and wild overhead. It moved like a boar, here and there, crashing through the underbrush like it was injured. But it was too tall to be a boar. The tracks suggested a deer three times the size of a normal buck, and heavier.

The Prize

It was the last of its kind, so far as I can tell. There will be no others after it. The smell should have tipped me off. But it was mad and dangerous and there was nothing and no one to heal what was wrong. Maybe nothing was wrong; maybe the thing was born to destroy and be destroyed.

We are like that, all of us.

I'll scatter the remains and pray to God that nothing is born in so much pain as the thing I put down in the woods today. Sometimes these things come back worse than before.

Still, its pelt is valuable. The fluid it pulsed instead of blood was a sort of thing that could keep a careful Outlaw going for a month or more. My sire, if I can reach him, has a way to preserve the pelt, as he did with the special claws form the bird-thing we hunted ten years ago. He told me that someday, he would teach me the secrets of making these trophies, if I ever found a Great Hunt on my own. This may be the time. I am grateful for my prey. I am grateful for the Hunt, no matter how much it pains me to see one more legend vanish from the world.

Giovani: The Up and Coming

Included herein are some of the rising stars in the family.

Amina la Giovane da Palermo

Growing up in a rich Balarm family at the height of the Fatimid Caliphate gave a brilliant young woman like Amina all the opportunities she deserved. Her tutors doted on her boundless ability to retain new languages and concepts, her proficiency in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, and her penchant for botany and herbalism. At eighteen years of age, she was one of the most successful students at the medical school of Salerno, where she went on to become a lecturer. That's how she met her sire, people say, but nobody knows for sure.

Amina has been moving around southern Italy quite a lot in the past couple of centuries, both to avoid suspicion, and because her services are highly valued by the barons when their wives suffer from pernicious ailments. She has also kept a tight grip on the sizeable family estate and its mulberry crops — one of the few sources of silk in Europe. Her craftsmen reel only the finest cocoons and produce her trademark cloth for bandages and drapes. In her fields and workshops, a handful of women follow Amina's instructions to grow medical herbs used to produce concoctions, which are highly prized in the upper echelons of society throughout the peninsula.

El Zovane Yesugei

When Yesugei arrived to Venice he was just a skinny, insatiably curious ten-year old-boy who looked up to his older brothers and was eager to see what new wondrous city they would be in next. As he would soon find out, he'd be stuck in Venice for the next twenty years.

Yesugei was a minor part of the agreement between the Venetians and the Mongol army, led by Jebe and Subutai, who consented to destroy the Venetians' rivals in exchange for intelligence on European politics. Yesugei was taken in from a wealthy Mongol merchant family and raised to become one of the finest Venetian traders, well ensconced in notable circles and an expert of the nuances of the struggles in the Mediterranean. For the past decade or so, he has met with his brothers every six months to deliver information that is too precious to leave to messengers. As of late, he has only agreed to see them after the sunset, in a private wing of the family's palace.

His consent to his recent Embrace was the result of cold logic — his sire laid out all the facts before him, as he understood Yesugei would choose the most profitable route. Yesugei has proven worthy of such trust by dedicating himself thoroughly to advancing the station of the Young Ones. When the Mongol Empire collapses in a few decades, he will devote all of his remarkable skills to the one cause he has left.

Giovani Through the Ages

The 1242 Giovani are quite different from what they will be in the Modern Nights. Right now, they're an allegiance of like-minded folk from various paths of life who usually hold a sizeable amount of power at the local scale. In the Modern Nights as written, they are a full-fledged independent clan, extending their control on vast areas through a convoluted internal structure and their unmatched necromantic powers — and their Disciplines have changed.

If and how this future comes to pass in your game is up to you: there are a thousand different ways things can go from here. It's easy to imagine that soon the various members of the bloodline find themselves at cross-purposes, especially when Augustus' plan to overtake Cappadocius comes to the fore. Perhaps an opposing faction will gain the upper hand and the relationship with the Cappadocians might take a different road. Maybe the destruction of an Antediluvian isn't a walk in the park, and the perpetrators will require the help of other Cainites (or even clans) who will attach appropriately exorbitant price tags to their favors.

If your group wants to play a long-term chronicle, spanning from the Dark Ages to the Modern Nights, the Giovani are an excellent place to start. Use their newcomer status and vast ambitions to throw a wrench in the mechanisms of Cainite society, and play to see what will happen next.

Yannis Lu Grico

As any old woman in Salento can tell you, if you wish to know if your son will return from battle or if he's lying dead on foreign land, you must travel to Calimera and find Yannis. His daughter will find you and lead you to him, and he will only speak to you at night, from behind a veil. He will ask you terrible details and secrets, and after three nights, you will find a stone on your doorstep — white for life, black for death.

Rumors about Yannis made their way to the ears of Frederick II, who doesn't care much about the risk of excommunication and such other papal fits when he needs all the information he can get. As it turns out, Yannis is the real deal. He has provided Frederick with intelligence he could not acquire by any other means. All he asks for is a femur from one of Frederick's countless enemies once in a while, and a jar with their blood. This working arrangement has proven itself quite agreeable for both parties so far, but Frederick's going to die soon, and any protection Frederick provides Yannis will die with him.

Pietro, or Petrus Iovialis Pisanus

A couple of centuries ago, Pietro went under a different name that only Augustus and the first of the Young Ones remember. What really matters is his current name, a carefully constructed historical falsification to build his family's social capital by claiming a continuous ancestry all the way to the Roman Empire and the cult of Jupiter. Many of his fellow Pisan merchants believe his claims, but the younger Cainites that dwell in his city do so more wholeheartedly.

For decades, Pietro has invested all of his vast wealth in advancing the power of the Republic of Pisa. He knows perfectly well what is going on in Mediterranean politics — which is why he is very displeased with the recent moves made by the Venetians, who hide behind words of friendship but are suspiciously overlooking the Genoese threat. The fact that his brothers took his mercantile strategies and turned their backs on him won't go ignored. The time for reckoning will soon come.

Lasombra: The Road of the Abyss

To Bishop Domingo Caro,

Holy father, I have encountered something in my travels that has disturbed me greatly. As you are a holy and pious man, I could think of no better person to turn to for guidance.

As you know, some months ago I decided to undertake the Camino de Santiago to see the great Cathedral. I have been troubled with doubt and dark thoughts of late, and I thought it would be instructive to see something of the world. It has been a challenging journey, but an invigorating one, and I yet hope that God may send a sign to help me through these troubling times.

A few nights past, I happened to encounter a traveler on the road. This, in itself, was an unusual occurrence — my travels have been largely solitary. The traveler called himself Diego and introduced himself as one of our clan. He was also on his way to see the Great Cathedral. We quickly fell to talking, as chance-met traveling companions will, of matters of God and faith. Eventually I spoke of my struggles, of my darkness of spirit, which prompted a frightening change in my companion.

For two nights he spoke to me about the sacred dark and how he felt it our sacred duty to help the dark cast out the light. At first I thought him a simple Satanist, but...

...forgive me, Holy Father. I grow afraid even now, thinking of it.

He showed me what lies in darkness, Holy Father. Terrible evil lies outside creation which we unleash when we use the power of our blood. He summoned forth spirits of hunger and shadow that touched my mind and nearly broke my spirit. He spoke the name that lies at the heart of all darkness, Ahriman, and showed me how to look into the heart of darkness itself. At the conclusion of those two nights, he invited me to join him and his brethren, Abyss Mystics he called them.

Horrified, I refused, and he wept — his tears an evil blackness that stained his face the color of his soul. And though the moon shone full in the sky above, his tears reflected no light, and his eyes were like windows straight into hell. I am ashamed to admit that I fled, Holy Father, unable to contain my terror any longer, and have not seen him since.

Holy Father, what is this cancer upon our clan? And why have they not been rooted out? How can Christ smile on us when such evil is permitted to exist?

Yours in Christ,

Ysabel de Palma

Ysabel de Palma
Cathedral de Santiago de Compostela

Daughter,

Because I love you well, I send you this letter with a messenger whom I trust above all others. He has not seen what I pen here and I abjure you not to share it with him on pain of his death. Rather, burn this message as soon as you read it.

That the Abyss Mystics are blasphemers and heretics is undeniable. God sees all and will punish the wicked in the life that is to come. However, Lasombra, our founder and progenitor, sees all and punishes those who harm or interfere with the Abyss Mystics.

God loves the righteous, but He loathes foolishness. For your own safety, forget Diego and everything he showed you and focus your thoughts on God.

We shall never speak of this again.

Many of our clan cling to the morals they had in life, pleading with the gods they knew to save them from this life of darkness. Fools, and weak, the lot of them. The Mark of Caine is not a curse to be redeemed. It is a gift, a boon. It is power and strength and life from death. The Prophet, Moses, Christ — all prophets of a message of weakness. Only through embracing our inner darkness and throwing off the shackles of this false morality can we unlock our potential and become truly strong.

We of Lasombra's lineage are princes of the night. Obtenebration is proof that we are the chosen of Shaitan, whom Christians call Lucifer — the Morning Star. Our mastery of shadow, our power over darkness, what better proof is there that we are chosen by darkness to serve the darkness? As the light rejects us, so should we reject the light. Allah, by whatever name you call Him, has cast us off. So must we cast Him off and devote ourselves to our true master. We are the children of Shaitan. We exist to serve his will by extending darkness into the world and extinguishing the light wherever we can.

We are the Angellis Ater, the Black Angels, and the children of the light will learn to fear us before we destroy them.

By my hand and seal,
Ashiqa bint Jifri

The Road of the Abyss

Score	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Showing fear of the dark	Darkness has much to teach us about the Abyss.
9	Failing to observe a manifestation of darkness	Only through observation can one increase knowledge.
8	Expressing reverence for creation	Creation is a blight, a taint of the purity of the Abyss.
7	Refusing to feed when hungry	Hunger is a manifestation of the void.
6	Refusing to kill when it is the most expedient path	Everything returns to the Abyss in time.
5	Giving in to frenzy	In order to master the darkness, you must first master yourself.
4	Refusing to share knowledge with another Abyss mystic	Full understanding of the Abyss cannot be attained without the insight of others.
3	Letting morality hinder study of the Abyss	Morals are a light-born weakness. We are creatures of darkness.
2	Needlessly avoiding the darkness	We are creatures of darkness. To reject it is to reject yourself.
1	Showing aversion to the Abyss	You cannot master that which you fear.

Playing the Road: Followers of the Abyss use Conviction and Self-Control Virtues. Their Aura affects any attempt to chase the darkness, and to pursue forbidden truths.



Malkavians: The Mysterious Spiral

Dearest Agnes,

I pen this in regret and sorrow. If this letter reaches you, it is because I shall not return from my journeys. We knew my voyage would be a perilous but essential one. I wish to share with you the secret I've discovered.

The Hindu people ascribe great significance to a chain of numbers. An Italian boy from Bugia is writing a book featuring these numbers; you may hear of it soon. They each increase by adding the last two in the sequence. These numbers, when presented visually, form a spiral.

As that number unravels, we see the end of times. The true secret is in finding how far the sequence continues. I've seen these numbers in my dreams. I've seen the answers to the first few. Where they continue, that's our clan's calling.

1 - All starts with one, with Caine.

1 - Our founding order, the Ordo whose name of which we do not speak, opened our eyes to prophecy.

2 - The other two sanctified orders, our Ordo Aenigmatis, and the Ordo Ecstasis, will deliver the honed prophecies that predict the end.

3 - The Second Generation boasts three. Their three most perfect lineages will bear three great leaders who shall shed the Cainite flesh and become mortal again.

5 - There comes a point where five have no home. The image is hazy. I apologize.

8 - Eight will form an alliance that brings about Gehenna. It will appear seven, because two hide within one's flesh and blood.

13 - The Thirteenth Generation shall be the catalyst for the end.

21 - Twenty-one mortals shall speak through a special written word for which delivery is instantaneous. These mortals shall bring about a reckoning.

34 - As the end approaches, we shall see thirty-four nights without a moon across the world.

Know these signs, Agnes. Contemplate on them. Look further. Look to 55, to 89, 144, 233, 377, 610, 987, and beyond. I have a suspicion that 1597 tells us the year of The Lord in which we see the end.

It is too late for me. I've met my end. But I have faith in you.

Sincerely,

Your Loving Sire

The Ordo Aenigmatis

The Order of Enigmas believes in the power of symbols and enigmas. For those of a religious bent, they believe the word of God is encoded in all things, ready to be read by the right set of eyes. Others ascribe mathematical significance to the universe, believing that understanding the underlying numbers provide an understanding that can help them control and hone the madness of Malkav.

The Ordo Aenigmatis Mystery

An Enigmatic recognizes:

1. Symbols exist everywhere.
2. Not all symbols are relevant.
3. All symbols are important.
4. Every Enigmatic bears part of the load.
5. One cannot decipher all symbols.
6. Some symbols are too dangerous to decipher.
7. No symbols are too dangerous to decipher.

The Rites of Enigmas and Ecstasy

Followers of the two main Malkavian Orders of Mystery can benefit from special rituals. Such characters must follow the creeds, the Mysteries, of their order. Most establish Mentors in their chosen order. Ordo Aenigmatis members use the Rite of Enigmas, and Ordo Ecstasis members use the Rite of Ecstasy.

The Rite of Enigmas requires the Malkavian to deal with her madness temporarily by immersing herself in riddles and mysteries. With one hour of intense study, a point of Willpower, and a Perception + Enigmas roll (difficulty 8), the Malkavian may ignore her main Derangement for the night and add three dice to Enigmas rolls. However, all her Auspex and Dementation difficulties increase by 1 for the night as her insight fades with her madness. For this reason, many Enigmatics will use this rite on opposing nights, divining with Dementation and Auspex, then interpreting the messages the following night.

The Rite of Ecstasy takes an opposing approach. The Malkavian delves into powerful, ecstatic experiences in order to draw out her prophetic abilities. With an hour of pain, sexual activity, or sensory overload, a point of Willpower, and a Willpower roll, all Auspex and Dementation difficulties decrease by 1 for the night. On the other hand, she cannot spend Willpower to ignore her Derangements at all during this time.

Rumors abound about the third Rite, the Rite of Malfeasance. However, this rite is considered abhorrent to even the most liberal Ecstatics and Enigmatics. Members eschew anyone thought to practice the rite.

The Ordo Ecstasis

The Order of Ecstatics believe the Beast can be goaded, punished, and stoked into providing deeper understanding of the primordial elements of the universe. Through passion, hedonism, and physical torture, they drive their insight to remarkable levels, even for Malkavians.

The Ordo Ecstasis Mystery

An Ecstatic recognizes:

1. All Things are One.
2. The body is a prison.
3. Prisons keep us from knowing All Things.
4. We can distract the prison guards by shaking the bars.
5. We can escape.
6. We must always return.
7. Sometimes, we never return.

Ravnos: The Clan of Paradox

While all the other clans consider them untrustworthy, the Ravnos can always find solidarity amongst their own ranks. Even if they do not always trust each other, no Ravnos treats another Ravnos inhospitably upon pain of retribution.

The Ravnos follow a complex caste system based on blood lineage and duty within the clan. Regardless of the locale of the *jati*, the groups follow an unspoken law for interactions and dealings with other Ravnos. Those Ravnos from India separate their *jati* into warrior, priest, and merchant castes, giving each a duty and a function within the *jati*.

For the most part, Ravnos of different castes do not mingle, a lone Ravnos meeting up with a different caste will find little succor. Despite this, all Ravnos can expect at least one night of hospitality from a host *jati* regardless of caste or bloodline differences. This stems from solidarity against the outside world. If everyone treats all the Ravnos badly, then they cannot treat each other poorly as well. A smaller part of this tradition comes from older Ravnos attempting to mitigate some of the changes that living in the European areas have wrought on the younger Ravnos.

Though many European Ravnos lay no claim to Indian roots, they still group themselves using a hybrid of the caste system, with their *jati* based more on blood relation than the job they perform. These *jati* are often larger groups and hold to the tradition of solidarity even stronger than their Indian cousins.

Sins Against Paradox

Rating	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Failing to accept death	Your svadharma is only temporary, you must eventually return to the samsara.
9	Embracing outside the *jati*	Only Embrace those that will follow the Road of Paradox.
8	Destroying another Asura	Your fellows on this Road have a svadharma, do not stop them.
7	Killing a mortal for sustenance	Death prevents a person from fulfilling their svadharma in this part of the cycle.
6	Failing to kill vampires on another Road	Only by accepting the true path to moksha can a vampire atone. Otherwise, they are useless.
5	Allowing personal affairs to interfere in your svadharma	You must follow your sacred duty at all times.
4	Failure to aid another's svadharma	This is your only purpose before returning to the cycle.
3	Killing a mortal for any reason other than survival	Preventing others from achieving their svadharma is anathema.
2	Becoming blood bound	You cannot destroy your regnant, which could prevent you from following your svadharma.
1	Embracing needlessly out of personal desire	You must allow others to continue their cycle, not remove them from it.

Road of Paradox

Some Ravnos follow an arduous path referred to as the Road of Paradox. Adherents of this Road believe that vampires have fallen out of the cycle of reincarnation called samsara. For the Asura, they can never fulfill their svadharma, or personal and religious duty. As a result, they can never achieve moksha, the ultimate truth, freeing them from samsara. While most Ravnos would argue that the Embrace is moksha, followers of the Road of Paradox are convinced that vampires are cursed to a state frozen outside of the great cycle, and are incapable of returning until death. The only way to make right their cursed state is to follow a new svadharma set before them: to help others find and follow their own svadharma. This leads to the paradox of their nature, remaining outside the cycle in a strange attempt to one day rejoin it.

Following the Road of Paradox requires strict adherence to the rules, and the Asura tend to be particularly dedicated and brutal. Everyone has a svadharma, and it is the place of the Asura to help others find their purpose. Preventing someone from fulfilling their purpose or finding their svadharma is a terrible tragedy, and the Asura work to stop any who would do such a thing. Because of the curse that casts them out of samsara, vampires exist in a strange limbo state. Without a svadharma or even karma to direct their lives, vampires have no use or purpose, and the Asura feel they should be returned to the cycle immediately. The Asura strive to find a purpose for themselves, but if they fail to do so, willingly die to rejoin samsara. Of course, they take it upon themselves to assist other vampires in finding such purpose. If another Cainite refuses to see the true road to moksha, the Asura have no qualms with returning him to samsara so that he can find a svadharma within the cycle.

Sobriquet: Asura

Ethics of Paradox:

- Follow the svadharma set before you. Do not let anyone take you from the one true path.
- Do not Embrace unless absolutely necessary, and then only from the *jati*.
- Assist others to determine and follow their svadharma.
- Destroy those who refuse to follow their svadharma; return them to samsara.

Organization: The Asura have very little organization. Most who follow the Road find it hard to be around other vampires, even those of the faith. Individuals travel quite a bit, always looking for their next student in the cycle. When the Asura meet, they exchange pleasantries, often spending an evening sharing stories of success and failure as they work toward their own svadharma.

Aura: Confidence. The Asura are certain that they are always where they should be, doing what they are meant to do. Their confidence washes over others, inspiring them to great things.

Virtues: Conviction and Self-Control

Salubri: The Clan of Three Ways

In nights to come, the Shepherds see blades in the night. The coming pogroms are tacitly endorsed by clans judging themselves above Salubri arrogance. In Acre in 1291 in the long moonlit shadows cast by shattered siege engines, the Healers say that vengeance is not Saulot's way. Warriors disagree, wasting their strength in the nights that follow — fighting the Northern Crusades or private wars against Setites and Baali. Others attack the Tremere anyway and meet Final Death doing it. The few European Watchers do nothing to aid their fellows, and the others are insulated by the Silk Road and their alliance with the Anda. With the majority of their caste east of the Xi River, they are confident that millennia of practice evading the Wan Kuei will hide them from usurper wizards (and they will be right). The Wu Zao call their Healers Scholars and their Warriors Thieves; the fragment of the clan survives into modern nights led by a revealed Watcher Caste, checking the power of the dharmic dead. The only other vestiges are a few Healers in the Inconnu and a corrupt Warrior Caste resurrected within the Sabbat. Ironically, this is but a mere shadow of what might have been.

Modern Nights: Arriba la Tres Ojos

"We are Uncursed by Caine, the only ones worthy to wield his Sword." - Adonai, Black Hand Seraph

The caste schism wounds the clan, but Salubri are gifted healers if nothing else. If the Watchers could be convinced to lend their talents to the clan's difficulties, bringing the two fractured bloodlines together into a clan once more, they have a chance. Were the clan to undergo reunification, the Healers would not be alone when the Usurpers find them in city after city. By proving their right to exist, they earn the attitude of superiority they evinced during the Long Night. Blood would still be shed in sacrifice, but the tragedy's tone will be one of defiance, not acquiescence.



HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST RIGHTEOUSNESS

Path Rating	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Failing to punish corruption and sin	Evil prospers in the unchallenged heart.
9	Acting out of avarice or lust	Honor must be stronger than steel.
8	Bearing false witness	Your sword is that of truth.
7	Feeding from the innocent without permission	As the Healers are bound, so shall we be.
6	Failing to defend or aid a person in need	A dead heart finds life in service to others.
5	Failing to defend or aid a Healer in need	The red right hand defends the left.
4	Letting a worthy challenge go unanswered	Be as the lion, not as the lamb.
3	Failing to challenge a vampire with a low Road	Their souls endanger Cainite and kine.
2	Neglecting an opportunity to exact vengeance	Let retribution be your pride and purview.
1	Aiding demons, Baali, Setites, or other evils	Offer the wicked no succor but salt and fire.

A reunified Clan Salubri will even be able to survive Acre's fall in 1291. In the normal course of events, this is the end of the clan's power, but the Tremere War means all things are possible. Warriors stalk voivode demesnes, putting aside ancient enmities and Kupala's taint to fight a common foe.

The worst ravages of the Inquisition never come to pass. Salubri perform their storied role as arbiters of Caine, lawgivers working in tandem with Assamite judgment. Vampiric excesses never inspire the mortals to bring torches to havens. The Anarch Revolt still occurs, but the end of neonate frustration comes not at the behest of the Tal'Mahe'Ra, but the whispers of the Healers. With the Usurpers hiding under Hardestadt's cloak, the Salubri swear they will have nothing to do with the idea of Camarilla, joining their noble brethren to form the Sabbat.

Salubri love Noddist lore, and share the freedom and pain of a forsaken progenitor. Freed from Saulot's edicts and vision, they fully redefine themselves as monsters, and the clan's striving towards symbiosis bends irrevocably towards efficient parasitism. Joining forces with the Lost Tribe, the Warriors dominate the Black Hand, serving as the sect's martial backbone and ruling supreme in ways of war. Clan Malkavian, seeing Hardestadt's dream left behind, flocks to the inverted ankh's banner.

Yet the Salubri still focus on humanity, on keeping ties with kine and maintaining Road and Path. Ultimately, this focus leads to a far calmer, more philosophical Sabbat. The Sword of Caine still craves war against the Antediluvians, preparing for Gehenna while gathering Noddist lore, but mass Embraces are nonexistent and the latent infernalism that periodically reinfects the sect is cleansed with fire. Salubri work ever to ensure the dominance of the Sabbat over the Camarilla by manipulating kine and managing rivalries between Lasombra, Tzimisce, and *antitribu*. The combination of Healer priest and Warrior ductus becomes a common sight in modern nights. By the turn of the millennium, the Camarilla is relegated to a few European cities and the American South. Across the globe, the three free clans await the Red Star, licking their fangs.

The Code of Samiel

The Warrior Caste was formed by a childe of Saulot, Samiel, who foresaw the rise of the Baali and willed his blood to change to combat the threat. The Warrior line is still bound by the essential nature of the Salubri, doubly so by the teachings Samiel left behind.

Samiel's Road was his alone to walk, but his sayings were collected over the decades and centuries. As he struggled to do battle with the Baali, he vowed he would do whatever he could to combat them. Even with the bloodline scourged and their cults shattered, Samiel pursued demons and infernal sorcerers, outwitting them where he could and physically dominating them where he could not. Samiel bound his fate with that of Hell, emerging triumphant again and again. His fate ended at Chorazin, when Nergal ripped the elder's heart out and consumed it. By the time of his diablerie, Samiel's writings and sayings had taken root in the Warrior ethos, and they found further growth in militant Crusader Christianity.

When Constantine saw the *chi rho* at Milvian Bridge, the Warriors in his night army painted the same sign on their foreheads. While Healers adopted Christianity's zealous obsession with meekness and the downtrodden, Warriors preferred the ethos espoused by Pope Urban.

Hundreds of years after Constantine conquered in Christ's name, Samiel's Path has seen a complete transformation. The modern Code can be considered a hybrid Path of the Christian Road of Heaven and the original ideals espoused by Samiel. Crusader Salubri often walk their progenitor's path. Despite the Christian influence on the Path, the *al-Amin*, Salubri of the Mamluks, have been known to translate the tenets of Samiel into their own religious beliefs. How not, if they both share the blood of dead Saulot, and his murderers still walk the night?

Ethics of Vindication

- It is the duty of the Warrior to bleed so that others might not.
- Evil is a font of corruption. Healers can salve the wound, but it must first be cleansed by fire.
- Aid must be offered to those in pain, and protection to those scourged by evil.

Virtues: Conscience and Self-Control

Aura: The Aura of Samiel's chosen helps with any attempt to put oneself in harm's way for another.

Setites: The Road of Set

Each day, the god Ra travels through the sky, bringing life and warmth to the world. Each night, after the sun sinks below the horizon, Ra travels through the underworld accompanied by his son Set on his solar barque. During this journey, Apep, the serpent of Chaos, attempts to devour Ra. Set fights Apep off every night without fail.

In the days when the world was still quite young, Set grew proud and began to boast of his prowess in battle. He mocked the other gods for their weakness, saying that it is it wasn't for him, Ra would be devoured by Apep and the world would become a realm of death and darkness. Angered by his brother's hubris, Osiris wanted to embarrass his brother by helping the chaos serpent get the better of Set. So Osiris tricked his brother into drinking a potion that would dull his wits. Then, Osiris hid himself on the solar barque before it was time for its nightly journey through the underworld.

The sun descended from the sky, and Ra set off with Set and the hidden Osiris. Apep attacked, as always, but this time, Set's response was slow and clumsy. Triumphant, Osiris burst from hiding, eager to vanquish the evil Apep. But Apep was a canny foe and quickly rendered Osiris unconscious with one blow of his mighty tail. Then, before Set could react, Apep lunged forward and buried his great fangs deep in Set's chest.

Confused by Osiris' trickery, Set could not prevail through cunning. So he held Apep fast to his breast, squeezing the serpent with every bit of his considerable strength, which drove Apep's fangs even deeper. Set did not cry out in pain as he squeezed tighter and tighter, even as Apep's venom entered his flesh.

At last, on the verge of suffocation, Apep thrashed mightily and escaped back into the river of the underworld, not to return until the next night. But Set had been infected by the chaos of the underworld. In his efforts to strangle Apep, he had driven the serpent's fangs, which were the length of a man's hand, into his own heart, which is where the serpent's venom took root.

Ra wept, for he knew that his son had been changed forever. One of the living, yet marked by the realm of the dead, Set would be cursed to live forever between both realms, never again to know the touch of the sun's light upon his face. Worse, once the protector of all that lived, Set now needed the lifeblood of men, Ra's most cherished creations, to sustain him.

It was there and then that Set swore vengeance upon his brother, vowing that he would repay Osiris in pain for everything that had been taken from him.

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST SET

Dots	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Pursuing personal indulgence over the interests of the Path	Dissolution is the pastime of the weak.
9	Refusing to aid another follower of the Path	We must work together if we are to eliminate our enemies.
8	Failing to acquire leverage against enemies of the Road	The unrighteous shall be destroyed and the weak converted.
7	Refusing to spread the worship of Set	Those who bear the blood of Set bear a sacred duty to spread his word.
6	Failing to observe Setite rituals	Only through our devotion do we earn Set's favor.
5	Failing to sow chaos among the enemies of the Road	Let the ungodly be cast down.
4	Failing to do whatever is needed to convert the pious of other faiths	Where they lead, others will follow.
3	Obstructing another Setite's efforts	We all work toward a common purpose.
2	Refusing to aid in Set's resurrection	It is our sacred duty to restore our lord's place in the world.
1	Worshipping any god but Set	Set is our progenitor and protector. There is no true god but Set.

HIERARCHY OF SINS AGAINST APEP

Dots	Minimum Wrongdoing	Rationale
10	Failing to indulge in pleasurable acts	Chaos is the gift of Apep, our source of strength.
9	Delaying carnal gratification	Denial of one's desires is a denial of one's true self.
8	Refusing an opportunity to corrupt a mortal	Order prevents us from being who we truly are.
7	Refusing an opportunity to corrupt a vampire	We are the children of Apep. His gift must not be rejected.
6	Refusing an opportunity to corrupt a holy figure	Weakness must be cast aside.
5	Failing to undermine the prevailing mortal environment	Stagnation promotes weakness.
4	Failing to undermine Cainite structures of power	Times of strife help us discover our true strength.
3	Placing another's wishes above your own	Civilization is a lie.
2	Punishing an individual for indecent behavior	Freedom is strength.
1	Actively enforcing the rule of law	Order and chaos are natural opposites.

Setite Roads

The Followers of Set see themselves as a congregation of Set's faithful as much as they are a clan. The majority of Setites commit themselves fully to that faith, embracing the Road of Set in their devotion to restoring their god.

Playing the Road: Adherents hold to Conviction and Self-Control. Their Aura benefits attempts to proselytize for their god.

A small group within the clan, however, follows a heretical minor Path known as the Path of Apep. Setites on the Path of Apep believe that the chaos serpent's mark is a gift, not a curse, and that chaos should be embraced in everything they do. This view is anathema to Setites on the Road of Set, as Set himself hates chaos and its manifestations.

Playing the Road: Followers of Apep use Conviction and Instinct. Their Aura affects any attempts to pursue instant, sinful gratification.

Setite Warriors and Witches

At this point in history, most Setites encountered in Europe are of the priestly variety. However, the clan sees three major divides: the Priests, the Warriors, and the Witches.

Warriors of Glycon

Yes, all Followers of Set are subtle, forked-tongued seducers. But to the Warriors of Glycon, every pen is held by a fist; words without action are no more than weapons without a wielder. The priests of Set can have

their temples and cults. Leave the witches their caves and smoke. The Warriors of Glycon claim the body. Kings, merchants, craftsmen, and criminals all share a single thing in common: power is only relative to the bodies beneath it. They know it is not the mind, but the body that acts. Violence is a tool: steer the body and the mind can't help but follow. It was a serpent that slept with Olympias to give birth to Macedonia's great conqueror. It was also a serpent that put him down. It is violence, nothing more, that gathers the world, and words wielded by violence are all that ever hold it together. The rule of the warriors over the rest of the clan hangs precariously thin these nights. Echidna's children prophesy dire omens that forecast not only their own doom, but that of the Minyan generals as well. The priests retain their own guard trained in Potence, and some among Set's chosen display strange, new powers tied closer to the heresies they spread, than the gifts of Typhon and the Mother. Yet, as the warriors partake in the masses prepared by the priests in celebration of their god of the red desert, the offerings of supplicants swallow their attention, and any caution is soothed by affirmation of clan. Though the clan does not appear in any way divided, the witches are quick to point out that some venoms still the body, while others strangle the mind.

Sobriquet: Crooks

Disciplines: Obfuscate, Potence, Serpentis

Weakness: The Warriors are power-obsessed by nature, and each has a special focus. At character creation, the player must select a nominated source of power — military prowess, status, politically relevant secrets, alliances, wealth, etc. Additionally, Warriors must accept an opponent's surrender when presented (usually proven through the defeated opponent submitting to a Blood Oath), lest they lose a potential convert. Whenever an opportunity presents itself to directly acquire more power or a convert, the player must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) to avoid pursuing that lead to the exclusion of all else.

Quote: *"I will make myself into armor, because I'm hungry and hollow and just want something to call my own."*

Witches of Echidna

At one time, long before a myth propagated by a lone zealot from Ur would associate itself with the vampires of Europe, a kingdom devoted to the earth-encircling serpent encompassed northern Greece and Thessaly. Though her worship was later transposed upon the heavens as the dual deities Hydra, zigzagging at the elliptic, and Draco, spiraling around the "chasm," the motifs are unmistakably the same. The Oracle at Delphi, the "omphalos" (navel) of the world, older even than the "tree of rejuvenation" in the epic of Gilgamesh, was the Pytho. Thousands of years before Alexander's devotees would birth the Ptolemaic heresies that now dominate the clan, the Cretan veneration of the mother serpent at Knossos stretched to the far North, shedding her skin and sex from mother to father to son, from Hydra to Ophion to Jörmungandr. The Witches serve the mother. No matter the form, no matter the name, the costume, or the dogma, the Witches serve the mother. Echidna ripples through their hearts, growing through her cycles to meet the new age. Though the priests of Set confuse the semantic in their fanatic Hellenistic fervor, they have ever done their part to push the clan forward – to keep it young and to keep the mother's coils wrapping round the world. And for this, the Witches are grateful.

While the Warriors of Glycon vie for dominion and control and the Priests of the aardvark-headed god spread her sermon, the Witches of Echidna serve.

Sobriquet: Gorgons

Disciplines: Animalism, Presence, Setite Sorcery (Thaumaturgy)

Weakness: Echidna feasts with her children and displays herself through their Beast in times of stress. Whenever a Witch makes a frenzy check, he must also make a Self-Control check at the same difficulty level. If he fails either roll, his Appearance is reduced to 0 for the rest of the scene as Echidna's Visage lashes out in fury, twisting her acolyte into a tartarine demon. No roll is required for Witches with Instinct, who automatically assume Echidna's Visage whenever provoked to frenzy. Furthermore, Echidna claims her due. Each time a Witch uses or consumes blood, Echidna "consumes" a point at the end of the scene. For example, if a Witch spends two points to boost his Attributes in a scene, he actually loses three; if he drains a mortal of ten blood points, he only gains nine. The only exception to Echidna's feasting occurs when a Witch fuels his sorcerous power, either through Ritual or Thaumaturgy. Echidna is appeased and abated by the blasphemous energy coursing through her servant and demands no additional tribute.

Quote: *"All you wanted waits reflected on the back of fear. I am that ruin wearing your lover's skin."*

Toreador: Courtly Romance

Chivalry was an idealized code of behavior for warriors, to instruct them in correct ways of behavior. The golden rule of chivalry was to protect the weaker, whether women, children or elders, as well as the code for chivalric love. Chivalry included all the virtues: loyalty, discipline, gallantry and courtesies, honor, and proper ways of courting a lady.

There were three types of Chivalry practiced:

Chivalry to fellow man: Knights were famed for their battle prowess, but a chivalric knight only committed violence in a proper place – the battlefield. He protected women, children and the aged.

Chivalry to his faith: A knight vowed to protect the innocent and uphold his faith, wherever he traveled. Most of all, he would be a beacon of light against evil in the world and stamp it out where it was found.

Chivalry to women: This includes all forms of courtly love. Idolization of a noble female was accepted and expected. A knight chose a lady to honor. His first duty was to her and, after her, all other ladies.

There was also a code for women, though quite different from its male counterpart. It included being true to your knight who served you and upholding the expected virtues of piety, chastity (in most circumstances) and purity.

In the late 1100s, Andreas Cappellanus' treatise "De Amore" (Concerning Love) was released containing provocative ideas such as *marriage is no real excuse for not loving*. Most courtly love affairs were highly secret, but allowed for the release of emotional love outside of an arranged marriage.

Toreadors have taken the concept of courtly love to new art. The added dimension of worshipping a mortal lady or lord, vowing to protect a mortal, or committing violence in the pursuit of perfect faith created drama that was endlessly fascinating to them.

Locus Amoenus and the Parliament of Birds

The infamous chivalric poem *Roman de la Rose* (a practical guide on conducting a courtly love affair) was released twelve years ago and has been widely distributed. There is argument that it was written by a French Toreador, Guillaume de Torris.

The poem's success could be described as almost supernatural, given its explicit sexual references and incendiary suggestions were not censored by the Church as so many had been before. It caused such a furor, in fact, that Guillaume had to go into hiding. He reemerged in another forty years, having taken the name Jean Meun, and released another 17,000 lines to the poem.

In *Roman de la Rose*, the courtier Amans sees a beautiful rose in a walled garden. He is struck by Cupid's arrow and immediately falls in love. The owner of the garden realizes it and builds the wall higher, leaving Amans frustrated in his love. The rose in the poem symbolizes a beautiful woman, protected by her husband, as an allegory of his unattainable love.

After *Roman de la Rose* was released, Toreador started referring to their private literary/artistic gatherings as *locus amoenus* or "pleasant place", a reference to the walled garden in the poem. These gatherings were a safe place for Toreador to gather and bring their favorite mortals, whether artists for inspiration or beautiful subjects for seduction.

The focus and obsession of the *locus amoenus* was the worship of beauty, in all forms. It allowed the Toreadors

Princesse Lointaine

Princesse Lointaine is a French term that means unattainable princess. It refers to falling in love from afar with a noble lady or lord. Often this character is married, widowed or otherwise unavailable. Sometimes she/he had a powerful spouse or had taken a vow of chastity or devotion to the Church.

The character of a Princesse Lontaine was frequently used in medieval literature as a device to indicate yearning and love that was often unachievable. Sometimes this love affair was created by someone sight-unseen, merely from descriptions of beauty and virtue. This would be "love before first sight." The process, causing as much pain as joy, was an integral concept in courtly love.

As a plot device, the presence of a Princesse Lointaine can create unbearable tension for a Toreador character, who must love from afar no matter how violent their affections.

to pursue the subjects of their forbidden love in secret, in an atmosphere without judgment. This loose collective of Toreador could also debate the merits of potential new childer, though their decisions were not binding. Sometimes a childe was Embraced, regardless of how the group felt if their sire was passionate enough.

These impulsive decisions could cause great difficulties for the clan as a whole, especially if the new childe was a person of note. This would lead to a ceremony called *The Parliament of Birds*, after a poem of the same name by Geoffrey Chaucer. In a deliberate twisting of the story, the leader of the Toreador *locus amoenus* would allow the erring vampire to address the group, making a plea for their chosen childe.

If the Toreador's charisma is sufficient and their argument persuasive, the group will adopt the childe and cover up whatever mess was created by their unplanned embrace. If they are not, the group will fall upon the new childe and tear them to pieces, a sacrifice. Afterwards, a lock of hair of the childe will be returned to their sire, a memento of the uncontrolled love of their sire and a warning to consider the consequence of future bad decisions.

Marie de France and the Toreadors

One of the mortals who escaped Toreador embrace, but was present at many of their *locus amoenus*, was Marie de France, an unmarried noblewoman whose lais (poems) were one of the few literary efforts by a woman preserved.

Marie recorded a story called *Laüstic*; the tale tells of two adjoining houses, one owned by a Toreador knight and the other owned by a mortal knight and his lady. The Toreador Guilhem fell in love with this lady and she with him. They were unable to meet, but she was occasionally able to toss him love notes and tokens over the garden wall and to whisper words of love through the wall's crack. Every night, she stood by her bedroom window to dream of her love. Her husband, suspicious, asked her what she was doing every night.

She told her husband that she listened to the nightingale (laüstic), as it gave her great pleasure. In his cruelty, her husband ordered the nightingale captured. He brought it to her chambers and snapped its neck before her, tossing its little bloodied body against her dress, where it left a little spot. She mourned the dead nightingale and placed its body in a little jeweled box, to be sent to her lover. When Guilhem received it, he understood that he would never hear his love's voice again.

Marie did not record the true ending of the tale, though. The lady stood at her window one last time, weeping for her lost love, and threw herself through it. When Guilhem heard of his love's death, he snapped the other knight's neck and stole the body of his lady. He wrapped her in a winding sheet of golden silk. He placed her body in a casket covered in hammered gold and jewels.

He kept vigil every night over her casket for a month. For decades after that, he sent his servants to buy all the caged birds in the marketplace. Every night, he would set them free to fly away. Many of them flew back to live in his garden and every night, they sang to him in his lover's voice.

Marie de France was discussed as a potential Toreador, but her proximity to Henry II and his court made it impossible. Her famed lais, however, survived as a record of vampire adventures in the 12th and early 13th century. In fact, *Bisclaveret* was a poem about a Gangrel who tore off his adulterous wife's nose.

For the Love of the Secret

The secrecy required by the rules of courtly love worked hand in hand with the secrecy required for the Masquerade. The steps for a courtly love affair unfolded like a dance. First, the lady (or lord, in some cases) signaled her interest with her eyes and her demeanor. If the love was reciprocated, they exchanged many longing glances, to be followed a private declaration of love. Often a lady offered a token rejection, causing much show of anguish from the pursuer. Then the affair either blossomed or died on the vine.

Toreador found these intrigues irresistible. They perfected the art, and whenever the drama evaporated, they created new affairs. Whenever these machinations brought them political or fiscal advantage, it was so much the better.

Tzimisce: The Dragon's Claws

The Dracul

The name "fiend" is an insult. We were the Dragons of old. We shall be again.

Most do not realize that Clan Tzimisce is a clan split along old generational lines. Deep in the mountains of Transylvania and along the periphery of all Tzimisce lands, are those who call themselves Dracul, the first of their clan. Once they were the only Tzimisce, and until as recently as a few centuries ago, they retained a superiority of numbers. But power shifts as times change, and they have been relegated to the minority. They still possess significant numbers, but their power is on the wane.

The principle difference between Dracul Tzimisce and all the rest is that the Dracul predate the use of Vicissitude. In the manner of crotchety old men, they regard fleshcrafting as a debasement of the clan, a showy bag of tricks that betray the Tzimisce's destiny as sovereigns by gutting them of powers more complimentary to that task. Still, the tide of progress is against them, and some few have begun to realize that struggling against it may mean drowning in a sea of enemies.

Sobriquet: Dragons. Some among younger generation Tzimisce have taken to calling them the Old Clan, always in a disparaging tone.

Disciplines: Animalism, Auspex, Dominate

Weakness: The Dracul suffer the same weakness as all other Tzimisce.

The Koldun

Do not bother to run. There is no where you can go that I am not.

The Tremere aren't the only ones with magic. Among the traditions of blood sorcery among the children of Caine, the oldest is that of Tzimisce koldun. Rulers of the land by right, the koldun takes this to its natural conclusion, becoming one with the land itself and commanding its dynamic, vital power. Where Tzimisce are territorial, the koldun are sympathetic; violations of the land are violations of themselves.

Rare and extremely potent, koldun are afforded much respect in the fractious Tzimisce clan. Sought after for their wisdom and good counsel, they are largely immune to the internecine conflicts that rage among their brethren.

Sobriquet: None

Disciplines: Koldun are defined by their ability to use koldunic sorcery, which must always be learned as an out-of-clan Discipline. Koldun otherwise have access to whatever Disciplines they normally would have, depending on whether they are Dracul Tzimisce or not.

Weakness: The koldun suffer the same weakness as all other Tzimisce.

Revenants

Loath as they are to trust each other, the Tzimisce have discovered a way to breed whole *ghoul families* through refinement of their vitae. These revenants are self-sustaining, breed true, and are far more malleable (in ever sense of the word) than other Fiends, if not perfectly loyal. They are soldiers, governors, ambassadors, lovers, and the Tzimisce most often draw new childer from their ranks.

Revenants possess ten blood points of their own, as well as the Disciplines their masters teach them. There are dozens of revenant bloodlines, as each Tzimisce is prone to breeding her own, though a few who have risen above the rest.

Basarab: Handsome and unbent, the Romanian Basarabs trace the origins back to ancient Dacia. True children of Transylvania, they serve Clan Tzimisce willingly in their endless war of sovereignty. A son of Basarab (known to history simply as Basarab) eventually founds Wallachia, and another called Dracula comes to rule that land.

Disciplines: Animalism, Dominate, Presence

Weakness: Basarabs are repelled by both garlic and holy symbols. When presented with either, they must succeed at a Willpower check or remove themselves from their presence.

Bratovich: A violent, surly family, the Bratoviches serve as the kennel-masters of the Tzimisce, given charge over their monstrous warhounds.

Disciplines: Animalism, Potence, Vicissitude

Weakness: Given over to their own savagery, Bratoviches suffer the same effects of frenzy as the Brujah.

Danislav: This family represents a bit of a coup for the Tzimisce, given that they are lupine kinfolk. Having a Danislav in your court is a sign of status and prestige, but infamy has already gone to the revenants' heads. Whispers of rebellion circulate amongst their most highly-placed whispers, and the Tzimisce have completely failed to take notice. Additionally, some Danislav have somehow

acquired lupine Gifts, though they are careful to keep this a secret from their masters.

Disciplines: Auspex, Protean, Vicissitude

Weakness: All Danislavs take aggravated damage from silver.

Grimaldi: Once conniving Italian merchant princes seeking advantage against the Giovani family, the Tzimisce gave them what they were looking for in exchange for being eyes, ears, and sometimes swords, in the faraway lands where the clan has little sway.

Disciplines: Celerity, Dominate, Fortitude

Weakness: Tzimisce blood is weak in this family, who has no native ties to the Voivodate. They have only eight blood points.

The Obertus: This mysterious, scholarly revenant family was fostered by the Methuselah Dracon. When Constantinolple fell, Dracon was cast out and now these revenants are scattered, temporarily rudderless without the single guiding voice of their master to direct them.

Disciplines: Auspex, Obfuscate, Vicissitude

Weakness: Preoccupied with secrets and lore, each member of this family must choose an area of knowledge. It is treated as an Obsession Derangement.

Szantovich: Beautiful, scheming, and manipulative, these revenants were bred to infiltrate mortal and immortal courts . They are assassins and spies, but the temporal power they've amassed in the execution of their job gives some Fiends pause.

Disciplines: Auspex, Presence, Vicissitude

Weakness: The Szantovich have addictive personalities. Whenever treated to a particularly sensual experience, the Szantovich is forever weakened towards it. When exposed to it, they must make a Willpower check to do anything other than pursue that addiction. They may not spend Willpower points to resist an addiction.

Vlaszy: Bred from Magyar stock, the Vlaszy are stalwart horsemen, the cavalry of clan Tzimisce. They care little for their masters, but have sworn to serve them and are unswerving in that task.

Disciplines: Animalism, Potence, Presence

Weakness: Every Vlaszy swears a Blood Oath to a Fiend upon reaching the age of majority.

Khavi: This strange family serves only the fiend called Byelobog, who haunts the rivers and coasts and the Baltic. Their skin is pale and glistens like a maggot, sometimes sloughing off, sometimes appearing to rot. They serve only their master's interests.

Disciplines: Animalism, Obfuscate, Vicissitude

Weakness: The Khavi are particularly vulnerable to sunlight. They take damage from sunlight as if they were Cainite, but the damage is bashing, not aggravated. They can soak this damage with their Stamina and Fortitude.

Of Kupala, Vicissitude, and the Essential Debasement of Clan Tzimisce

It is with no small worry that I record my conjectures here. Though meant only for my eyes and to ease my racing mind, I realize the inherent danger in putting these thoughts to the pen. Perhaps some part of me hopes that by doing so, someone might find them, though certainly it would mean that I had passed into oblivion.

And for you, my hypothetical audience, I ask, have you wondered about this place we call the Voivodate? Transylvania is a harsh land, ruggedly beautiful but violent and unforgiving. More people have tried and failed to hold it than almost any other place in the world. Those who survive here do so because they fear it and give themselves to its mercy.

This is because beneath its soil, entombed within the roots of Carpathia, lies that being we called Kupala. Its poison leeches into the land itself, permeating outward in ever widening circles, reaching as far as Kiev in the east and Esztergom in the west. Like the allegorical moth and the flame, others are drawn to it by its mystery and majesty, only to be destroyed when they pursue it too fiercely.

And what precisely is Kupala? Christians of any predilection would no doubt call it a demon. Those with long memories or old faiths might believe it a god, though one of indifferent and undifferentiated malignancy.

The most powerful koldun sometimes claim to commune directly with Kupala, and perhaps they do. I have seen some of Kupala's servants with my own eyes, spirits of the river and wood and gorge strikingly similar to the spirits the koldun bargain with and command. If the spirits are the same, I shudder at the unbearable implications.

But I digress. I was talking about poison.

Yes, Kupala is a poison upon this land. Of that there is little doubt.

We, as inheritors of the land, claim immunity. But, and this is where my thoughts turn dangerous, what if that is not true? What if the Tzimisce are as susceptible to its contamination as everyone else? Certainly the Old Clan have said as much. In the past I scoffed at such a dire claim, but in recent months I have come to reconsider. In my heart I know it is wrong. I know that we are wrong.

I cannot, to this day, reconcile how the great voivodes

who rule over the land itself have come to possess a skill as crude and pedestrian as Vicissitude.

Moreover, why, when gifted with power over form and flesh and being, do we obsess over the monstrous? Why do we so seldomly create anything of beauty? Yes, the monstrous is fearful, and as I well know, fear has its place in conquest and rulership. And yes, sometimes form befits function, and occasions arise where practicality rules. But why do we embrace the monstrous aesthetic upon our bodies, in our homes, and in our own souls, when clearly we have other options? Why, even when we do attempt beauty does it always possess a certain fearfulness?

And, I think, the answer is obvious: Kupala.

We are as poisoned as any other would-be conquerors of these lands. More so even, for while the over-ambitious zeman or even the upstart Tremere (may they die the Hideous Death a thousand times) can simply leave, we have no such luxury. It is Kupala's great trick to have bound us to the soil of our birth and to him.

Meanwhile, we are beset by enemies on all sides. We can ill afford to abstain from the gifts we have, but by not abstaining, we become complicit in the erosion of our very selves. With each new generation, we are less the noble lords of old. We are becoming something else. Something terrifying, yes, but not Tzimisce.

Do you see the trap now? And how we are both the bait and the rat squirming within its jaws?

Ventrue: The Round Table

Arthur, born of Uther Pendragon and Igraine, united a Britain fragmented into many pieces. At a very young age, Nimue, the Lady of the Lake, granted him the legendary sword Excalibur in order to fulfill his birthright. Never had there been a king like Arthur, and songs and stories followed the path of his armies.

But all was not stainless in this kingdom that Arthur built. Unknowingly, he lay with his half-sister, Morgane Le Fey, who bore him a son called Mordred. Merlin was indeed the king's advisor, but his dark influence inspired Arthur to gather all the newborn children in the land and send them off to sea in a boat, subjecting to the justice nature offered.

Arthur's cruelty grew with his power. His fair Queen Guinevere felt this and drew away from him. It was she who gifted Arthur with the famed table, her knights peopled Arthur's armies, but he neglected her.

Arthur marched on Rome in a swath of blood, further legitimizing his rule and growing his kingdom with every step. His knights, lauded as scions of virtue and chivalry, gloried in unending victories. Instead of protecting the weak, the knights crushed them. Instead of distributing wealth to those who suffered, they enriched their own coffers and rode into battle in gilded armor.

The one exception was Launcelot du Lac, so lost in adulterous love for the Queen that he refused to participate in the slaughter. All of his victories were pyrrhic; his primary claim to fame was riding in the endless chivalric tournaments held by Arthur and his knights. Wearing Guinevere's token, a soft blue scarf, Launcelot felled every opponent with his broadsword and massive shield. When he was not astride his horse, he sat with his head resting on the Queen's knee, reciting poetry to her beauty and stealing kisses.

Nothing could stop them. Shame meant nothing to them. Arthur burned with unquenchable rage, a fire that consumed him from within. When Merlin counseled forbearance, Arthur dismissed him from service. Arthur travelled deep into the ancient woods to seek Morgane Le Fey's counsel. She told him of the Grail, a cup of unspeakable power, which grants the one who drinks from it eternal life.

Arthur gathered Galahad, Launcelot and Percival to set off on the quest. They suffered greatly in their journey, but finally arrived at a castle completely fallen to ruin. The knights were beset by dark creatures, but a wounded Arthur prevailed, reaching the tallest tower where the grail resided.

There, he found Morgane le Fey, glorious and triumphant in her dark beauty, fangs revealed in her smile. She seized him by the throat and drank him dry. In his weakened state, he could not resist and she poured the grail, the cup of her own blood in his mouth, the blood of a Ventrue. She transformed Arthur into a vampire and fled the ruins, content to push him down the path of his own destruction.

Launcelot broke down the door and found his king very pale and very stricken. He lifted him over his shoulders and returned to the others. They built a litter to carry him back to Camelot, as even the clouded-over gloom of Britain seemed to bother their king.

When they return to Camelot, the Queen shrieked at the sight of Arthur. He sent all the knights away from Camelot, even his favorite Galahad, and sat in darkness for a day and a night, brooding.

Guinevere took advantage of Arthur's indisposition and rode deep into the woods with Launcelot, not knowing that they belonged to Morgane le Fey. Seeing opportunity, Morgane sent her newly-Embraced son, Mordred, and bid him fetch Arthur forth.

Arthur disguised himself, travelling only at night and surviving upon the small woodland animals he captured. Arthur his faith in the hands of Mordred, who only wished to inflict harm upon him. He came upon Guinevere and Launcelot making love in their secret bower. Immediately he frenzied, flinging Launcelot into a tree trunk so hard he knocked the knight unconscious. He snatched up Guinevere and fled to Camelot as the night was waning. It was said his snarls could be heard for miles away.

Arthur summoned his knights to him, all except Launcelot. He presided over his own High Court, convicting Guinevere of treason by reason of adultery. The court sentenced her to be burned at the stake. Many knights left in vocal protest. Bedivere wept at the cruelty of the punishment. Percival railed in a booming voice. Through all of it, Arthur was immovable. He sat slumped on his throne, eyes twinkling dark stars in the low torchlight, and ordered Guinevere imprisoned, to be burnt on the morrow just after sundown.

Morgane came to him that night, with the peace offering of a young pageboy. Arthur nearly tore him in two in his hunger; his savagery and thirst overwhelmed him. Morgane soothed him, stroking his brow, and whispered loving hate in his ear, stoking his rage against Guinevere so his humanity would not assert itself and show mercy to his love, Guinevere.

He fell into an uneasy sleep and though he did not dream, his face flickered into a troubled mien. Morgane woke him at sundown, garbed in finest white samite and a slender silver crown resting upon her brow. Her ascendency over Guinevere was almost complete; she'd claimed Arthur as her own.

The drum beat slowly. Dressed in sackcloth with her hair loosed, Guinevere was led through the cavernous throne room and into the cold stone courtyard. Her eyes were red from a night of weeping. The pyre was built high and servants threw handfuls of dried sage and lavender at the base to sweeten the smell of Guinevere's flesh burning.

As the moon rose, Guinevere was bound hand and foot to the thick central post. Her hair blew wild in the cold wind. The drum beat on. Arthur stood on the hastily assembled dais, trembling under his thick cloak not from the cold, but the dread. The fire was lit.

Arthur wanted to weep, but he could not. He wanted to speak, but the words clotted in his throat. Morgane stood beside him, triumphant, her hand enclosing his in an unyielding claw.

Shouts and the din of hammering, clattering hooves drowned out the drums as a dozen knights charged into the yard. Launcelot led the charge, his face burning with a fierce glow and his armor shining in the moonlight. He rode directly into the flames and seized Guinevere, slicing her bonds with one stroke of his sword, Secace. He galloped away and the courtyard was still save the crackle of the dying fire.

Arthur stayed as still as a statue, carved from stone like a crypt. Morgane whispered words of passion and persuasion, using all her considerable powers to coax the unmoving king from his vigil. Dawn broke at the far horizon and she began to beg, finally fleeing as the first rays of sun slipped over the high walls of Camelot.

Arthur turned on the heel of his boot to face the east. He walked slowly forward until the sun came into view for his last time. The light flared and Arthur Pendragon, High King of Britain, was consumed.

Launcelot returned with Guinevere two days later to bury his king. He found no trace of the body, merely soft billows of ash slowly blowing away in the wind. Guinevere wailed and traced long marks of ash across her forehead and cheeks.

Launcelot picked up Arthur's sword, Excalibur, and knelt facing the sun. He spoke vows of fealty and bitterly heartbroken words of regret. When he turned to look at Guinevere, she was gone.

Launcelot left Camelot and traveled to the west. His beard grew long and his chainmail spotted with rust. Late on the fortieth day, he finally reached the shores of Llyn Llydaw, the fabled lake where the lady Nimue resided. He knelt at the edge as the water lapped wistfully at his feet. After his prayers, Launcelot stood and lobbed the sword Excalibur tip over hilt towards the center of the lake.

A pale arm thrust up from the water and seized Excalibur, dragging it beneath the water's surface. After a moment, even the ripples stilled and the lake was smooth again. Launcelot began his long, lonely trek eastwards.

As he crested the hill, he did not look back. If he had, he might have seen Morgane le Fey emerge from the lake, dripping and triumphant, Excalibur locked in her hand. She moved into the grove of trees where Nimue lay gasping her last breaths beneath Mordred as he drank his fill. Morgane plunged Excalibur into Nimue's heart, cleaned it with a handful of dead leaves, and then prepared to go forth to claim her kingdom.



The Unholy Host

Army of the Night

Alberto "Mythantar" Carpena
Alyssa Hillen
Antar Jibril
Arthur "Torakhan" Dreese
Bell-X
Borna "anothga" Pekaric
Brian Engard
Bryan Allen Hickok
Carl Charles Oglesbee II
Daniel Bell
Daniel Swensen
Dheyrdre Machado
Don Raphael - The Once and Future Toreador
Eadee
Emanouel Pontikakis
Gareth Hodges
Gotzon
James Park
Jeremy Kostiew
Joshua R Smith
Karina Gillis-Bugg
Keith A. Garrett
Keith R. Hickok
Kyle D. Hickok
Leonardo Giovanni
Lou Silvers
Malachi Dupree
Marcelo "Iron Maiden Abs" Caraballo
Marcus Sertorius Postumus
Mark Huba
Martyn Noyé
Matthew J. Locke
Moreno Bianconcini
Payton Lee
Poppy Drake
Prince Eckhard Mann
Prince jacin Montague
Ráhel Báthory
Really Good TV
Rose Bailey
Settimia
Severyn Dobromirski herbu Ostoja, Childe of Przemyslaw
Steven Carroll
Thomas Tobias Conrad
Tony Love
Travis J. Dow
Tristan Lhomme
Victor Stark
Vladimir Dimsky
WinterWunsch
Zoneplex

Anne West
Jerome Morrow
Juan Manuel de Castro y Lagoah, del Clan Lasombra
Ken Lowery
Rufus Xavier Sarsaparilla
Stephanie G

Peasant

Alan Viggiano Neto
Cleo
Darren Buckley
Dylan Boates
Ivan Vandalsvik
Kylie Z M
Lex Larson
Mynonaster
Sascha Demyah

Chris F
Dylan M Smith
Ethan Fifield
Jack Skeleton King
Justin Haynes

"Irrefutably" Thor Thorson Jr.
Arno van Buren
Ciara Nic Éire
Michael Raichelson
Paul Mysliwiec
Steven Lees
The East Street Coterie
Yo'Kasta Martinez

Lackey

Al Provance
Alexander Lucard
Ana Mizuki
Andreas G Schramm of the Gangrel
Andrew Cherry
Andrew Wilson
Angelo Pileggi
Anthony John Bridge
Ash Walter
Ben Bonds
Bobby Chow
Boris

Boyan of Vereya
Braden Kanipes
Brendan Sherlock
Brenticus
Brian "Chainsaw" Campbell
Brian Michael Caswell
Brian Newman
burningcrow
Calder Rooney
Cessa
Colin Blackbird
Conrad DuBois
Corey Elliott
Damien Stark
Dan Hagy
Dan Hall
Dan Keller
Darkshifter
Dash Magnum
David Chart
Davin Pawlowski
Deke Reisig
Dogglesnake
Ed Reinhardt
Eric "Lameth" Folco
Eric Castle III
Ernie Sawyer
Ezio Melega
Fernando C. Pereira
Fikealox
Franco Frare
Gerard "Lasombratu" di Lecco
Gideon Wolfe
Grael
Grant Hoeflinger
Grim
Guillaume Boisjoli
Hades Omicron
Herbert Igor Conti Wanderley
Hörmal Werda Högert
Hrafn
Hsieh, Wei-Hua
Ian MacRae
Imran Inayat
J.R. Farley
Jacob Ansari
Jake Waltier
Jamie Manley
Jarowit z Ostroroga
Jarvis Mishler
Jason "Fangs a lot guys" Best
Jason Brennan
Jason Ramboz
Jaya'zumbi
Jeff Erwin
Jesse Rodriguez
Jesse Stern
Jesse von Webster
Jim Burdo
Jim Schofield
João Mariano
John Baston
John Lambert
Jonathan D. Harter
Jonathan Grimm
Joonas Iivonen
Joseph The Everlasting Coyle
Joseph Virnig
Josh Morris
Julian Matson
Kerry "DragonReine" Chin
Kevin Weiser
Kjetil Hansen
Kristoff Miyazivka
Kurt Hanna and Maire Bourke
Kyle Payne
Kyra, the Madwoman of Sighișoara
Leath Sheales
Liberty Jones
Lisa Padol
Lord Magus Corone
Lord~Nexus
Luca Gioppo
Łukasz Rączkowski
Lycaina
Magdalena
Marc Faulise
Marcus Brissman
Mark Townshend
Martha von Reimlingen
Matt "Gangrel" Millman
Matt & Miranda Gnepper
Matthäus Cebulla
Matthew Earlywine
Matthew Gollschewski
Matthew House
Matthew Madden
Maxime Berar
Maxime Bono
Michael Kelly
Michael Lalaian
Michael Nutt
Mike Holland
Mike Kiesling
Mike Spector
Miss Mint
Mister, the Samedi
Mortis
Nate B
Nicholas Peterson
Nick Keyuravong
Nicole Mezzasalma
Ninjar
Odine
Owens
Patrick Bright
Patrick Sandoval
Paul S. Kim
Peter Gates
Peter Klevvall
Phil Hattie
Philip K. Creswell
Philipp Hinderer
Philippe Fenot
Philippe-Aubert Couillard Gerbeau
Phillip Bailey
Picks-at-Flies
Randall Wright
Razo D'Alessandro
Rich Shirley
Robert Mayotte
Robert Morgan
Robin & Aaron Alberg
Roni-Sue Lucas
Ross MacKenzie
Roxane Tourigny
Russ Ventimeglia
Sanra Phoenix
Saul Escobar
Scott Rick
Sebastian Gebski
Sebastian Menke
Simon TE Hall
Sir Thomas bani Merinita of Kent
Sten Bugge
Stephan Hamat-Rains
Stephen Ford
Sylvain "Sly" Pronovost
Talis Darkmoore
Tapani Mylly
Tass P
Tathel
Ted Ludemann
The Plaid Mentat
The Vilbrandt
Theo
Thomas Wolf
Tiffany MacLean
Tristsoalaire
Uilliam Ó Raghailligh
Viktoria Rachmaninova
Vladislav Lazarov
Willy kaceres
Wolfi aka Ragonael
Wynand CJ Hart
Yoshi, Rocky and Tobie
Zachary Chapderlane
Zsolt Prislop

Áine Keefer
Amaya De' Bardi

Andy Kwong
Aykhan Sahin
AYUKATA Taka'aki
Ben
Brian J. Burke
Bruno Zilli
Ciorba
Clayton Thompson
Crystal A. Chappelle
Darren T. Priddy
Dawn Hammett
Jen Ross
Kit Paige
Lambert Simnel
Lara Goodwill
Lukas Hofreiter
Marc T Davies
Peter Kuhnert
Prince Friedrich Von Hamburg
Richard Downs
Sekdar Hackholm
Some Old Boy
Sune Sejberg Nielsen.
Theron Bretz
Thomas the Black
Timothy Paul Groth
Victor Miranda
Walter Kohl
Weltwandler

Beckett
Benjamin Byers-Ferrian
Dave "Wintergreen" Harrison
Geoffrey Rabe
John "Mythos" Kennedy
Liam Allman
Lord Valdren
Misha Bushyager

"Jabbie" Schienhammer
Chris 'AkatsukiLeader13' Gawne
Ian Magee
Kent Soerenrar
Michael W Watts
Ryan Hammell
Scott Jenks
Shane Campbell
Thomas MacKay

Adrian Bigland
Alexander "Kuein" Yatskov
Alexander Rodriguez
Alyssa C
Andrew Moreton
Andy Humble aka Rune
Blarf Lives-With-Honor
Bob Ooton
Brandon Holfeltz
Cesar Cesarotti
Chris Eggers
coraxbio
Daniel
Doongar
Emma McAllister
Jamster
jason e. bean
Joseph Zavcer
Jussi Leinonen
Justin Delaney
Megan Greathouse
Mike Tidman
Nicholas Muehlenweg
Patrick Joynt
Phil Stafford
Shafi Ziauddin
Shimabuko
Steve Lord
Thom Langan

VAMPIRE LORD

A. Leslie
Aaron and Toni Davey
Aaron Buttery
Aaron Reimer
Adam Lowrey
Adam Zielinski
Adolf Steinhaus
Adrian Dragulescu
Ahriman
Aidenn Ossorio & Rain Pletcher
Aldo E Ibarra
Alec "Michel" Wills
Alex Childress
Alex Chobot
Alex Myers
Alexander Stone-Tharp
Alistair Graves
Alquick the Amazing
Amanda Spikol
Amber Vietzke
Ana Gabriela Nunez F
AnatoleSerial
Andrew Gedrich
Andy Bielecki
Andy Zeiner
Angela Lee
Annida Christofi-Clark
Anthony Howell
Antuan Wallace
Ara
Ari Multhauf
Austin Anderson
Beachfox
Becky Smith
Bozidar Vitrdrak
Brandon Stalnaker
Brehana Wellsbane
Brian Cusce
Brian Johnson
Brian Koonce
Brian Lynch
Bruce Lindsay
Caitlin Eckert
Calvin Kok
Cameron Wright
Chad Valdes
CHILL
Chris Cowger
Chris Czerniak
Chris Dickerson
Chris Greene
Chris Irwin
Chris McKellar
Chris Snyder
Chris Woodruff
Christopher Irvin
Christopher J. Misner
Chuck Childers
Clayton York
Clete D. Collum
Cody Killebrew
Colin J. Wixted
Colin Urbina
Cora Anderson
Corey Hansen
Cory G.
Craig Gaddis
CtrlAltFaceroll
CWT
Cynesra James
D. Hunter Phillips
D.J. Babb
Dalendar of Shadowfel
Damien Starlurker
Dan M.
Dana
Dana Tenneson
Dane "Noctis" Madsen
Daniel Gaghan
Daniel Gochnauer
Daniel Sellers
Danielle Harper
Darius of Venice
Darker Days Radio

David and Julie Scott
David Carlson
David Doucey
David Franklin Felton
David M. Hubbard
David W Kaufman II
Dean Black
Demitrius DeAvonte
Deoric "Owenth-Manye-Bokes" Pattison
Derek Guder
Derek Young
Douglas Bramlett
Dr. Jimmy
Dr. Reinhardt
dryack
Duane K.
Dursun, the Mongoose
Dustin Earl
Dwelfman
E.S.Betts
Ed Fuqua
Edward Stark
Eiddwen Glaw
Elias Neophytos
Emma Jones
Emmanuel "Tito" Betancourt
Eric Fickenscher
Eric Sipple
Eric Smailys
Erica Schoonmaker
Eudocia Obertus
Evan "Virgil" Odensky
Eve
Everett Boyer
Evo Shandor aka Scott R
flowerysong
Forrest Spilker
Franklin Hamilton
GameBanshee.com
Geoff Peterson
Geoffrey Parker
Greg Roy
Gwendolyn Gifford
Gwendolyn McClennen
Henry Peltokangas
Hiryo
Holden Shearer
Ian Nusskern
Ian Robertson
Iarlais
Ilyena
Isaac VanDuyn
J. H. Frank
Jackson Brantley
Jacob Juenger
Jacob Stocke
Jadd Hatchen
Jae Lyon
James Criss
James Troy
James Vincent
Jared Koon
Jaron Kaplan-Parr
Jason
Jason "Johan Dracis Viovode of the Eastern Gate" Pennel
Jason marks
Jason Place
Jayna Pavlin
Jeff "Shadow" Fowler
Jeff Dieterle
Jeff Vandenberg
Jeffrey 'Taihunsu' Pritchett
Jenny Langley
Jenny Raine
Jeremy Crews
Jeremy Purdom
Jesse James Grice Jr. Salubri
Jessica Hammer & Chris Hall
Joan Anonical Sartori
John Cooey
John Murphy
John Stegall
Joseph Burgus
Joseph Philip Michael Abel Vieni
Josh "5iN" Evans
Joshua Manor
Junius B. "Stoney" Stone III
Justin Driscoll
Justine Thermidor
Karen Joseph
Keegan Clements-Housser
Keegan Sullivan
Kevin DeVormer
Kevin Wolfe
Kierya
Kristopher Deters
Kurtess Mortensen
Kyla Nkal
Kyle Henderson
Kyle McCarty
Kyle Walker
Lady HeatherAshley
Lasombra Bishop of Tucson
Laughing Magi
Lawrence Thrall
Leonard Helding
Lev Erben
Lord Jacob Aurum
Lord Matthew Von Hedge
Loriean
Ludolf Spiess
Luiz Paulo, fúria de Roma
Malcolm McBride
Marcus B
Marius Kordaux
Mark Lewis
Mason Jones
Matt Carman
Matt Tupper
Matt York
Matthew Junge
Max Vaillancourt
Melik LaRoy
Michael (Mog) Osgood-Graver
Mike "Aldous" Torrey
Mike Ruch
Molly Auldington
Monte Blome
Morpheus Kristeori
Moyers
My Newton Moore
N8 V.
Nathanielstarr
Neall Raemonn Price
Nejlah Al-Rahab- Gangrel Antitribu
Nicholas Cassidy
Nicholas Guidotti
Nick Esposito
Nicole Porter
Nicole Talucci
Nishan Aznavorian
Nistine
Nythandros, The Prophet
Nyx Desalier
Octavio Arango
Oengus C Gallagher
Omer Ahmed
Oz "Cappadocian" Sozen
Patrick "Scarabus" Hanna
Paul "Beatle" Ring
Pete Masterson
Pip Padden
Rabbi Tiger Richardson
Rand Brittain
Raphen Becker
Reuben Israel Beattie
Rhea Shelley
Richard Pruiett
Rob Randolph
Rob Wieland
Roberto Hoyle
Robin Fisher
Rodger Bergeron
Rohel Terrazas
Ronald K. Janik
Roo Wetzel
Rosening
Ross Thomas
Rudolph Adolphus "Randolph Scott" Liudolfing Saxony

Ryan "Garth Deumbra" Stark
Ryan Schmidt
S D Stutzel
Saleem Halabi
Samuel McCoucha
Sarah Perry-Shipp
Scott Hiers
Scott Kehl
Scott Kendrick
Sebastynn Savin
Sethreich Ardestahdt
Shahar Bin Tal
Shelby Mehl
Sigismund of Koros
Silvio Embriaco
Stephen Knight
Steven Fader
Sylvanwulf
T.J. Barr
Tamarisa
Tanith Daughter of Night, Sister of Darkness, and Queen of the Hidden Kingdom
Tasha d'Anathema
Ted Pertzborn
Teresa Oswald
Terysita di Notte
The AIY
The Akkadian
The Outlander
Tim Flannigan
Timothy Jay
Timothy Mushel
Todd Grotenhuis
Treason Asherahleigh Blaque
Trevor Stamper
Trinyan
Tristan Valentine
Tronoth
Vincent Longobardi
Wade Geer
We Love Wolfie Boyer
Wilhelm Von Steyr
William McBane
William Perry
Zarek the Avar
Zhuliya, Voivode of the Black Valley
Ziv Ragowsky
Zoe Schrank

"Voivode" Dimitri Rustovich
Aaod
Aaron "Papa Emeritus" Alexander - aka "Papa Tzimisce" & "The Dark Prophet"
Aaron W. Scott
Aaron Woodside
Abdikadir Nuh
Adam Lake
Adrian Illdaw
Agmundr Nordskov (Gangrel - Viking)
Alec McClain
Alex and Jennifer Bagosy
Allan V. Aquino Vieira
Ander Rabann
Andres Lazcano "Makednos"
Andrew Jay Cardinal
Andrin Casimir
Andy Blanchard
Angela Seraph
Angeline de Lorraine
Anna Shaw
Anonymouse
Anthony D. Jennings
Anthony Dutra
Anton Mercer
Aodhfionn the Long Spoken
Ari
Ariel Kaiser
Arthur Tudor
Avram Lytton
Azura Calabrais-Blackstock
Bael the Cruel
Baron Von Schetzle
Benjamin "eSca" Reed
Benjamin Kaufman
Bentley W. Chism
Billy Barnes
Bjorn Nelson
Blackhawk
Blake Thomas
Brad D. Kane
Brendan McCann
Brendan Whaley
Brian King
Brian R. Pitt
Bryan "Lucius Vaebaen" and Denise "Sorai" Wyatt
Cale Hawthorne
Camp Counselor Bill
Caoimhghin
Casey Gillette
Cassandra Comnenus Ducai
Chad J Bowser
Charan DuFrançois
Charles Castellano
Charles Sherwood Morrill
Charles Stonewright
Charlie "PookaKnight" Cantrell
Chasym
Chris "Diablerist" Hitchcock
Chris Dyer
Chris Foster
Chris Tulach
Christoph Schulz
Christophe des Brumes
Christopher Gunning
Christopher Hauschild
Christopher R. Wain
Clay Huettemann
Count Vladikov
Coyotekin
Criss Walker
Cristina de Vallejo
Crystal Greenlee
D Sonderling
Dakkon
Dan Niekerk
Dan Peterson
Daniel C. Barton
Daniel Stack
Daniel Wright
Daniel Yauger
Darius DeChevalier
darksfallen
Darling Rose
Dashekita N. Brooks
David "Barachiel" Akers
David "JustDave" Talboy
David A. Robins (Shane Masters)
David Bjorne
David Bresson
David Evensen
David Lapp
David N Dow
David Weidendorf
David Yellope
David, son of David
Deadly Nightshade
Dean Steward
Demian Vitae
Dennis D. Harry
Devin & Linny
Don Christobal
Don Nilijandro Lara
Donatella Sforza
Dorsey Weber
Doug Atkinson
Douglass Kern
Dr. Gerold Willing
Dustin D. Dalton
Eamon Van Auken
Ed Moretti
Ed Shannon
Edwin Miller
Eidan Rodriguez
Emily McCabe
Eric Crabtree, Baali Apostate, Lord among the Damned.
Erik Daguerre
Erik Thurman
Erin K. Stanton
Erin Ruston

Evan "JabberWokky" and Sarah Edwards
F. Austin Diaz
Fleur Valois
Flint of The Cremated
Forevermore
Frank McCormick
Frank Precissi
Fred Pilarczyk
Frederick Korte, Salubri Knight
Gabriel Califano
Garron Lewis
Gary R Smith II
German Naranjo Faccini
GH Trace Webster III
Gordon "Eldagusto" Gordon Gordon
Grant G. Gruenbaum
Greg Bullard
Greg Meyer
Gregory Faber
Grigore Draculesti
Grimmshade
Haroon Alsaif
Harth Silnwey
Heath Horne
Henry F. Bruckman Vargas
Henry Lopez
Herman Von Karsenstein
Hissy Wings
Ian "Squee" Sargeant
Ian Hamilton
J. Anthony Malerich
J. Noah Wiley
Jacques de le Cœur -Greg D-Jairain
James "Speaks-with-Pups" Wagner
James A Youhas
James and Ashley Simons
Janelle of Cricklade
Jason and Amy Berteotti
Jason Dickerson
Jason Geis
Jason Hammond
Jason Haskins
Jason J. Chapa
Jason Van Pelt
Jason Wilcox
Javier Palenzuela
Jay (Salvitus) Wright
Jay Button
JAYSON "the14thguest" TURNER
JD Fernandez
Jean-MIchel Du Pont (Toreador)
jeff bristet
Jeffrey LaLuc
Jennifer Nelson
Jeremy A. Mowery
Jerry Austin Hawkes
Jessica Gains
Jessica Lilith Darke
Jim Flood
Jim Moran
Jimmie rush jr
Jody Bowman
Joel W. Dowling
John "Wolfe" Kelley
John B. Geany
John Carnathan
John R. Trapasso
John Valdes
Jorge "Digital Necro" Reyeros
Joseph Lonergan
Joshua Ramsey
Josie Wicker
Josselin de Poitiers
JP "Exrandu" Bauer
JPKahlenbeck
Juan Iago Cortez
Justin Bladecki
Justin Caletges
Justin 'Romero' Castro
Justin Tack
Kahir De Umbras
Kaladorne
Karrie "Bernadette" White
Kate Gryn
Kevin C. Miller
Kevin C. Wong
Kim Cheek Bullock
Kimberly Morris
Kirk Foote
Kirpal Sukumar
Kody W. Stinson
Kroisis
Kyle Winters
Larissa Bussell
Lars Haymaker
LeAnn 'Ellyham' LaFollette
Lee Tate
lestant
Locutus of Clan MacKenzie
Lord Aaron McKay
Lord Peteus, Ventrue Historian
Lord Vladdek Sasul
Lynnette A. Linsner
Lyon de Monsoreau
M Arendt
M. Grancey
Magus
Marc Kuczborski
Marcus Giovanni
Marcus Kerensky
Marcus Maniakes
Marcus Xavier Figuerola
Mark Austin Fleming
Mark Crump
Mark Moore
Mark P. Redford
Matt Clay
Matt MacGregor
Matt Ross
Matthew Binswanger
Matthew Koelling
Matthew Oakes
Matthew Orwig
Matthew Powers
MereMiles
Michael Herrinton
Michael Lenzo
Michael Patrick Foight
Michael V. Roberts
Michel Jean Renard
Mike "Fr. Leprous Shadow" Patrick
Miranda Polsean
Morgan Weeks
Nadim Saracen of Transylvania
Nathan Kelly
Nezra
Nicholas Faust
Nick "Lord Mechanar" Belanger
Nikika (Jovian) Giovanni
Nimbral
Noble Thayer Graves, Apprentice, Clan Tremere
Noskavian
Oubliette
P. Maes
Patrick A. Martin
Paul O'Leary
Pedro Serrano Filho
Pensman
Peter Fine
Phadius Godwin (Donny Joyce)
Phaolane de Fluc du Lac
Qoorl
R. Preusser
Rachael Hayes Thomas
Randall Crawford
Rane Staten
Raul Urbina
Reginald Stilton
Remy de Lioncourt
Renatus
Rhett Greenfield
Rich Palij
Richard G. Skibba
Rob "Freebeard" McNair
Rob Gatlin
Robert Harrison
Robert Jordan
Robert Small

Robert W. Applegate III
Rose Gomez
Russ Trippett
Russell Graham
Ryan Harmon Smith
Ryan Hinson
S. Scott Mullins
Sam Damon
Sam Kastner
Scott "Arkhem" Gomoll
Scott Ephriam Bigil
Sean A. Ashcraft
Sean W
Sera and Ruadhan Smith
Serena Marie
Sethareal
Shan "Shanathan" Morris
Shan W Simpson
Shane Rose
Shannick d'Oerd
Shaun D. Burton
Shaun O'Heron
Shawn "Sutekh" Glass
Shawn & Victoria Felde
Shimon Klein
Soren Haurberg
Stéphane "je ne suis pas goth" Zuckerman
Stephen The GM" Peters
Steven Johnson
Steven Lau
Steven Sauer
Synnovea
Taylor Dale Wright
The Count of Monte Carbonari
The Fog
The Order of St. Jude
The Sassy Cappadocian
Thomas J. Wood
Tim Boser
Todd Keck
Tracy Cook
Troy Lenze
Troy Wiersma
Tyberius
Vesper Abaddon
Viktor "Slayer of Blood Traitors" Kamenov
Vladimir "Sleepwalker" Valezarus (John "King" Roberts)
Voivode Darien Silvanasek
Walter F. Croft
Warren P Nelson
Wilhelm von Karolinas The Younger
Will Schweikert
William Deseron
William Roger Wakeman
William W. Lee
Wyatt Cerilli
Xane the Black
Xelinor
Z Spellstorm
Zero Ninja

"Bookmark Ana" Silva
Aalvar
Aaron Dembski-Bowden
Abner Rodrigues
Adam Koebel
Adam Smith
Adam Steen "Gaghiel" Bing.
Agata Olewicz
Ahmed Ghobash
Ahrtimmer
Akshahar
Alasdair Watson
Alejandro Moran
Alexander Kratochwill
Alexander Lachwitz
Allen Mitchell
Almoni
Ammariel Melwasul
Andara Shadowfang
Anders Holmström
András Babós - Babszem
Andrea Ciceri
Andreas "Zanity" Bengtsson
Andreas Sleipnes
Andrew Hislop
Andrew Nicholls
Andrew 'Whitenoise' Rogers
Andrzej Kubera
Anja Kraus
Aoren
Arthur De Flaneur
Arthur Van der Spiegel, House and Clan Tremere
Arya-Katie
Astuneta
Aura Stephenson
Azroth of Caan
Ben Hammond
Ben May
Ben Taxman
Benegot Kirberg
Benoit Devost
Bertrand von Carlovingian
Boris "Borinel" Ulyanskiy
Bruno Pereira
C.James Blukacz
Carl Carlstedt
Caroline Henry Hyll
Casimir Slanzar
Cedryck Mimault
Chad Hazel-Kepler
Charles Crowe
Charles Dunne
Chase Strolenberg
Chris Reay, High Regent of the Durham Chantry
Chris W Mercer
Christian O'Neal
Christophe Loyce
Chronos Phaenon Eosphoros
Claire Reynolds
Claude Martel-Olvier
Claus Larsen
Colin Janke
Colm O'Hara
Craig Bishell
Dacar Arunsone
Damien Titchener
Daniel
Daniel "Squid" Ericsson
Daniel Haddon
Daniele "Chojin" Cappelletti
Danni Feveile Börm
Darren MacNeil
Dave "Ingvi" Luxton
David "XLII" van Nederveen Meerkerk
David 'dj' Coleman
David Duerschlag
David Poppel
David Rego
Deydred
d'Hodel
Diego Martinello de Oliveira
DIMITRIS LOUMAS
Dmitry Avramenko
dr Michał Sołtysiak
Dr. Lewis Atholl Johnston
Drew "Industrial Scribe" Scarr
Edmund Gilbert
Eduardo Magdalena
EGWM
Eli Freysson
Elias Ebert
Elizabeth Bratovich, David Sanchez's Herald
Elizabeth DeVille
Enzo Christiano
Ethan Hatch
Fabio Vitanza
faux
Flavius Belisarius
Floyd Tarrant
Fotius
Fraser Imrie
Fredrik Pettersson
Fuzzy
Gabriele "El Diablo" Radaelli
Gehirnschmecker
Georg Lukowsky

George Taher
Gerald "Tsabrak" Gonzales
Gerrit
Glenn Ng
Guy-Samuel F. Dussault
Hansbeck Balshiv
Harry Richardson
Helder Lavigne
Henrik Augustsson
Hertha Klaps
Holger Schrenk
Ian A. A. Watson
Ifrill
Ignacio Granados Jiménez
Ikalios
Iolyn Ap Llyr
Issar
J. C. Carvalho
Jacob Middleton
James Desmond
James Dyer
James Wax-Edwards
Jared George
Jason Italiano
Javier "He-Who-Walks-Between-Worlds" Montegrís
Javier Mutti
Javier Valdés López
Jeff Vansteenkiste
Jerec Alderik
Jérémie "Blacky" Bouillon
Jérémie JULIEN
Jeremy Pogany
Joe Dunham
Joey Daemen
Johannes Paavola
John Yngve Fredrik Lundgren
John, Prince of Kent, Clan Cappadocian
Jon 'Rossini' Brotherhood
Joonas Teurokoski
Jordane Thiboust
Juhani Seppälä
Julian
Karoly Kopataki
Kay Hoddy
Ken
Kenneth Peltokangas
Kevin "Wael-ky-ri-ge!" Warmerdam
Khalidah "Meritkepiset" bint Sadaqah al-Misri
Kjell Kenneth Moens
Kjetil Kverndokken
Koray Giovanni
Krzysztof Zajkowski
Kylan Day
Lachlan Smith
Laima von Lasher-Fassbinder
Lark Cunningham
Lars Helmer
Leslie Weatherstone
Lin Liren "Dragon Crosses Oceans" (林立人)
Lloyd Pledger
London Eye
Lord Raath
Lucas Bonsignore-Boisset
Lucas van Toren
M. Aleixandre
Manolis "Solomon Quintus" Gkourgk-outas
Marc Collins
Marc van Wanrooij
Marc-André Perreault
Marcia Keglevich
Marco Andre Mezzasalma
Marco von Nürnberg
Marcus of Vienna, in honor of Prince Valerianus
Maria de Borvarosa
Mark Horne
Mark Anderson
Mark Hendrickson
Markus Veit
Martin Wagner
Matthew Dawkins
Mauro Ferretti
Mel & Will
Michael A. Staniewski
Michael Buchheim
Michael Ehrhardt
Michaela "Windrider" Reimers
Michele Ranaldi
Mictlan
Mishaal Dhillon
Mitchell Roggeveen
Mr Silvertongue
Nic Matuzic
Nyk Huntington
Olinto Lopes Barsante Pires
Oliver Hambsch
Ols Jonas Petter Olsson
Ompakim Klungland
Pablo Pérez Gómez
Panu Laukkanen bani Tremere
Paweł "nimdil" Matysiak
Pedro Figueiredo Dupret
Peter Rolf
Petri Wessman
Pew Pew Man
Phelios Dawn
Philip Grassie
Philip Jaques
Philipp Offenbach
Piotr et la CJD
Piotr Piegat
Prince Maximiliaan van Havre, Prince of Mechelen, Belgium
Quasi Mortuus
Raedot
Raphael Bourdot
Richard "Spyder" Partridge
Richard McGain
Richard Percy
Richard Stewart
Richard Tjerngren
RIP
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Twentieth Anniversary Edition

Vampire: The Dark Ages

NAME: NATURE: CLAN:

PLAYER: DEMEANOR: GENERATION:

CHRONICLE: CONCEPT: SIRE:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength_____●OOOOOOOO
Dexterity_____●OOOOOOOO
Stamina_____●OOOOOOOO

SOCIAL

Charisma_____●OOOOOOOO
Manipulation__●OOOOOOOO
Appearance____●OOOOOOOO

MENTAL

Perception_____●OOOOOOOO
Intelligence____●OOOOOOOO
Wits_____●OOOOOOOO

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness_____OOOOOOOOO
Athletics_____OOOOOOOOO
Awareness_____OOOOOOOOO
Brawl_____OOOOOOOOO
Empathy_____OOOOOOOOO
Expression_____OOOOOOOOO
Intimidation___OOOOOOOOO
Leadership_____OOOOOOOOO
Legerdemain___OOOOOOOOO
Subterfuge_____OOOOOOOOO
_____OOOOOOOOO

SKILLS

Animal Ken___OOOOOOOOO
Archery_____OOOOOOOOO
Commerce_____OOOOOOOOO
Crafts_____OOOOOOOOO
Etiquette_____OOOOOOOOO
Melee_____OOOOOOOOO
Performance___OOOOOOOOO
Ride_____OOOOOOOOO
Stealth_____OOOOOOOOO
Survival_____OOOOOOOOO
_____OOOOOOOOO

KNOWLEDGES

Academics_____OOOOOOOOO
Enigmas_____OOOOOOOOO
Hearth Wisdom_OOOOOOOOO
Investigation___OOOOOOOOO
Law_____OOOOOOOOO
Medicine_____OOOOOOOOO
Occult_____OOOOOOOOO
Politics_____OOOOOOOOO
Seneschal_____OOOOOOOOO
Theology_____OOOOOOOOO
_____OOOOOOOOO

ADVANTAGES

DISCIPLINES

_____OOOOOOOOO
_____OOOOOOOOO
_____OOOOOOOOO
_____OOOOOOOOO
_____OOOOOOOOO

BACKGROUNDS

_____OOOOOOOOO
_____OOOOOOOOO
_____OOOOOOOOO
_____OOOOOOOOO
_____OOOOOOOOO

VIRTUES

Conscience/Conviction__OOOOO

Self-Control/Instinct__OOOOO

Courage_____OOOOO

OTHER TRAITS

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

ROAD

_____
O O O O O O O O O O
Aura:_____( )

WILLPOWER

O O O O O O O O O O
☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

BLOOD POOL

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

HEALTH

Bruised		☐
Hurt	–1	☐
Injured	–1	☐
Wounded	–2	☐
Mauled	–2	☐
Crippled	–5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

WEAKNESS

MERITS AND FLAWS

MERIT	TYPE	COST	FLAW	TYPE	BONUS

OTHER TRAITS

_____ OOOOOOOOO	_____ OOOOOOOOO	_____ OOOOOOOOO
_____ OOOOOOOOO	_____ OOOOOOOOO	_____ OOOOOOOOO
_____ OOOOOOOOO	_____ OOOOOOOOO	_____ OOOOOOOOO

RITUALS

NAME	LEVEL

PATHS

	OOOOO
	OOOOO
	OOOOO
	OOOOO
	OOOOO
	OOOOO
	OOOOO

EXPERIENCE

Total:_____ Total Spent:_____

Spent On:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

DERANGEMENTS

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

COMBAT

WEAPON/ATTACK	DIFF.	DAMAGE	RANGE	RATE	CLIP	CONCEAL

ARMOR

Class:_____

Rating:_____

Penalty:_____

Description:

_____

_____

_____

Expanded Backgrounds

Allies

Mentor

Contacts

Resources

Fame

Retainers

Herd

Status

Influence

Other (_____)

Possessions

Gear (Carried)

Equipment (Owned)

Feeding Grounds

Transportation

Haven

Location

Description

HISTORY

PRELUDE

GOALS

DESCRIPTION

Age:
Apparent Age:
Date of Birth:
R.I.P:
Hair:
Eyes:
Race:
Nationality:
Height:
Weight:
Sex:

VISUALS

COTERIE CHART

CHARACTER SKETCH

It's 1242. The Mongol army crushed Baghdad, then Russia under its heel, then moved on to devastate Poland and Hungary. The Holy Roman Empire stood to war with the Papacy. The second Lombard League wielded the word of the Pope and fought off Frederick II.

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VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE

