LORE OF THE CLANS

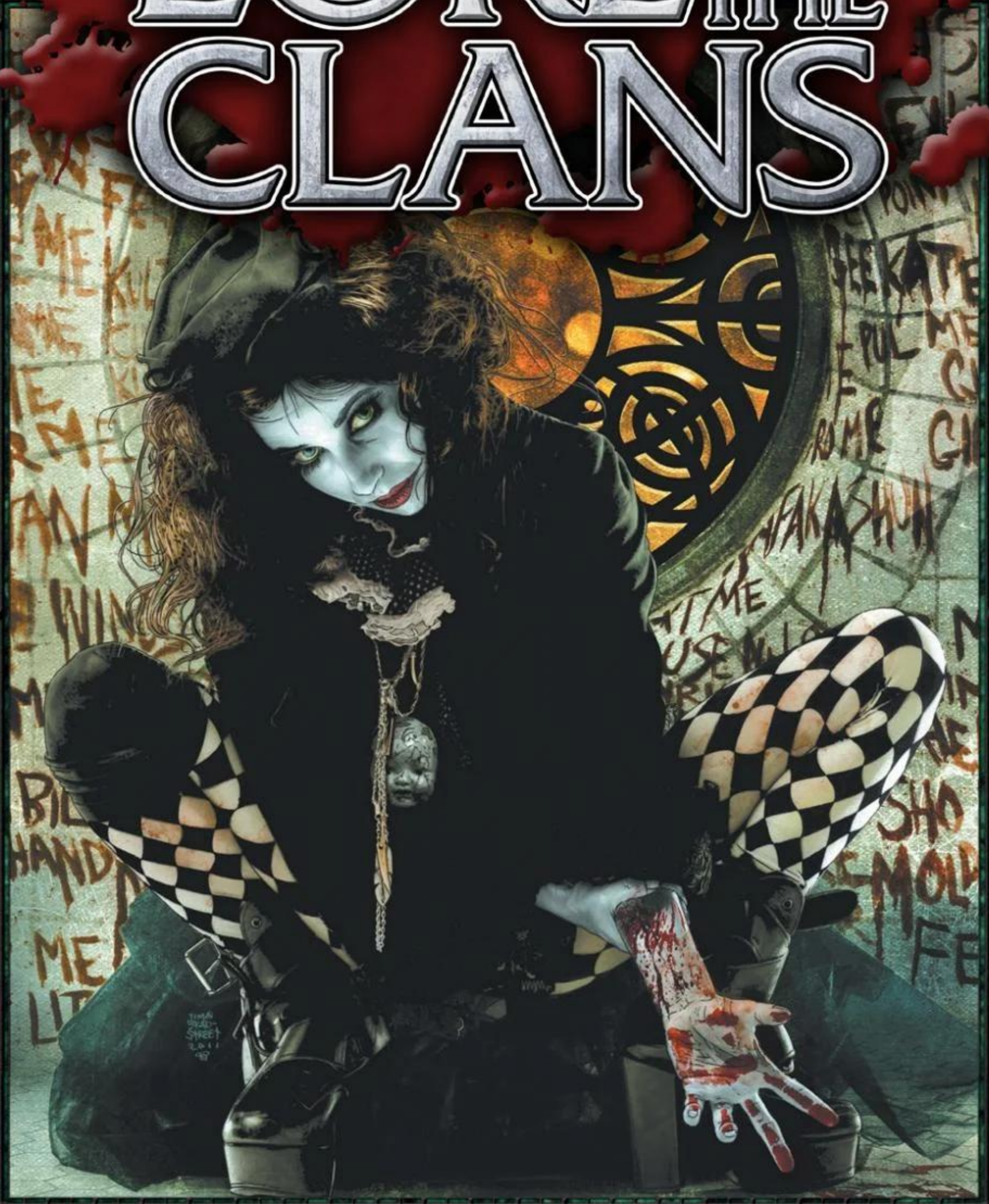


20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE

LORE OF THE CLANS



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THE MASQUERADE

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piecing together lies

"My name's Beckett." The Gangrel stood in the empty parking lot, holding his hand out. Drusilla looked at it, skeptically, and Beckett sensed the neonate's hesitation. "I don't bite," he added, smiling to show his teeth.

After another moment, Drusilla took the hand and shook it. "I hear you're the guy to talk to about our history," she said.

Beckett chuckled as he took his hand back. "More of an archeologist, although I've picked up a few things here and there." He put the battered leather hat back on his head.

"I tried asking my sire, and she sent me to you. She said it was in exchange for a favor she did for you in the past."

Beckett snorted, and the hat slid over his eyes. "The translation wasn't even that good." He paused and slid the hat back to look at the neonate. "Not that you should pass that on to your sire, of course. Your question was—"

"Yes," she interrupted. She wasn't sure why, but something about the way Beckett smirked made her eager to get her answer and leave. "I asked my sire why vampires don't write down their history. Most of what I've learned has been through what other vampires remember. It seemed... inefficient."

The archeologist sat down on the concrete, and after a moment, Drusilla joined him. "That's not the right question. Vampires write things down all the time. I've seen writing about Kindred affairs as far back as Sumeria. I've even heard rumors of tablets written in some kind of proto-language that our forbearers used purely for vampiric needs."

Drusilla's eyes widened, but Beckett continued. "So the question really is why didn't we do it more often before the Masquerade? Most of the theories I've heard ultimately revolve around one truism: Vampires have a certain amount of faith in our ability to be... persuasive. If you lie to me, I believe I could make you tell me the truth, or whatever truth you think you know. I can't force a book to change its words." He adjusted the hat on his head again. "I have my own theories, of course, but that's one I come across time and again when I've tried to encourage others to document their experiences in writing."



"So why hasn't there been an effort to consolidate our oral tradition? Many of the stories I've heard are contradictory or full of omissions. Can't we just compile them?"

Beckett laughed again. "Childe, if you put a group of vampires into a room and told them they couldn't leave until they agreed on something, they would more likely frenzy from hunger and kill each other. Besides, if you've been told for hundreds of years that your Clan was special and unique, would you really want to find out something different?"

Drusilla looked crestfallen. "So you're saying that vampires are too proud and self-centered to care about the truth of where they came from?"

Beckett stood back up, forcing the neonate to scramble to her feet. "That's the easy answer. We all care about truth, in our own way. But when some of us can conjure truth from our blood and others can literally change your mind, it's hard to sort out what truth is. Most settle for a truth that feels right, instead of one that stands up on facts, and it's better to get an emotional truth from a person than from a book." He tipped his hat and turned to walk away.

"Wait!" Beckett stopped and turned back to the neonate, his eyes glimmering red in the shadows. Drusilla felt a momentary stab of fear, but she pushed it down. "If what you say is true, why do you spend so much time looking into our history?"

He paused for a moment, considering the question. Finally, he turned and walked away, saying over his shoulder, "Only an outsider can piece together enough of the lies to find the truth underneath."

Introduction

"Fiction [is] fact distorted into truth."

- Edward Albee

My sire always told me, "There's no instruction manual for being dead, *strákur*." I believed her, because she was older and smarter than me, and the Kiasyd value knowledge if nothing else. Oh sure, there are a lot of traditions, and some of them even have Capital Letters.

Many sires spill a lot of poison into the ears of their childer, telling them the One True Way to be a vampire. My sire did, when she wasn't starving me until I could recite her lessons in perfect Icelandic. Some vampires don't even bother, kicking their errant progeny to the streets and letting them figure it out for themselves. A few smother their instruction in religious imperatives, philosophical tenets, or mystical confluences. But not one of them has a pamphlet with clear, easy instructions once you've become Damned.

Worse, all of them lie to their progeny, to their broodmates, and to themselves. All vampires lie, except me, of course. But the best lies are those that are told between two truths, yes? So-called "Kindred" swap tall tales in Elysium or spin wild sermons in their pack houses, but enough facts have to be right before someone discards the whole story. It's a tenuous balance.

However, there's a difference between *truth* and *facts*. Facts are dry things, scraps of information desiccated and pinned to the page, bereft of all flavor and vibrancy. Our bloodline excels in collecting such facts. The truth, however, feels *right*. Once you hear the truth, it slots nicely into a groove in your worldview, and you feel smarter and better for knowing it.

Facts are static, something to collect in a book and preserve for centuries. The truth evolves and changes over time, as elusive as the wind. Some things are truer now than when the elders recounted them hundreds of years ago, and some things that fall from a fledgling's mouth start off as true, but they don't last the night. When a large number of Camarilla vampires get together to violently overthrow their Prince, or a pack of enraged Sabbat hunts down a Bishop for heresy and a taste of her blood, facts are the first casualty in the conflict. But I'll bet you dollars to krónur that they all think what they know is true. It *has* to be true for them.

I have made a special study of the Clans. Each Clan has its own version of the truth, one passed on from sire to childe over the centuries. Thirteen versions of reality shared among the undead, and each one tweaked and modified just a little in each telling. Sometimes it's because of a forgotten name, conveniently replaced with a more useful one. Other times it's to erase a moment of failure from history. And once in a while, it's because what really happened gets in the way of what everyone knows is the truth.

Here are those thirteen truths, childe. They may line up with other things you know, or they might not. What isn't said can often tell you far more about a Clan as what *is* said. Sometimes the narrators present tantalizing rumors and conspiracies, while others digress into areas not often considered by many. Some of what they say have no facts to back them up, but not everything is a lie, either.

But the narrators aren't as important to the truth as the stories, the messages, the "thou shalts" and "thou shalt nots" that comprise their message. Vampires slice and present the world to each other as they understand it, through the lens of anecdotes, propaganda, and whitewashing. What each listener and reader takes away from a Clan's lore will be different, but they all know in their hearts that they are closer to the truth.

Let us find instruction from amidst the lies, together.

What's In This Book

Each chapter addresses one of the thirteen Clans of the modern nights from the perspective of a vampire in it:

Silent assassins shackled with a number of curses, **the Assamites** are divided by an age-old conflict between three casts.

Once philosopher-kings of an ancient civilization, **the Brujah** struggle between rejecting and embracing their eternal anger.

The Followers of Set venerate a chthonic God in a variety of guises, as they work to bring others into their decadent religion.

The Gangrel are bestial and untamed, lurking in the untamed fringes of Kindred society as they struggle against Kindred and beasts alike.

The Giovanni are an insular collection of necromantic families who stole immortality to control both this world and the realm of the dead.

The Lasombra are proud nobles and leaders and rivals to the Ventrue who are willing to do anything to be on top. Anything.

The Malkavians are a Clan fractured and unified by madness, using their unique perception and gifts of prophecy to guide and educate the "unenlightened."

The Nosferatu are hideously deformed information brokers that lurk in the shadows, to avoid both their fellow Kindred and an ancient enemy.

The Ravnos are nomads and tricksters that travel all over the world to combat demons and spread the word of their fragmented beliefs.

The Toreador are artists and sensualists that laud their connection to humanity while seeking adoration and physical beauty.

The Tremere are masters of blood sorcery, a secret society that is both ally and villain to many of the Clans in the modern nights.

The Tzimisce are eldritch Old World lords that master flesh and bone to transmute themselves (and others) to a higher philosophical plane.

The Ventrue observe the ancient traditions and status quo of Kindred society, while working against those that would disrupt it.

Each chapter starts with some history of the Clan, followed by information about how the Clan interacts and works now. At the end is a wide variety of combination powers, Merits, Flaws, and other mechanical bits for players and Storytellers. Use them or ignore them as you like to expand, refine, and modify typical members of that Clan.

Concluding the book are a number of **Appendices** covering the *antitribu* of the Clans, various Kindred of Note, as well as those Kindred who claim no Clan at all: the Caitiff.

Storytellers, you're encouraged to read over everything, too. Decide what's true for your chronicles. The selected material presented here is from a wide spectrum across two decades of **Vampire: The Masquerade**, along with new and intriguing ideas never presented before. Some parts may work perfectly for your chronicle, while others won't. Use what makes sense, and cast the rest into doubt and heresy—this material is meant to work for your game, not to mandate the only way each Clan can be portrayed.



Assamite

"It will have blood, they say; blood will have blood."

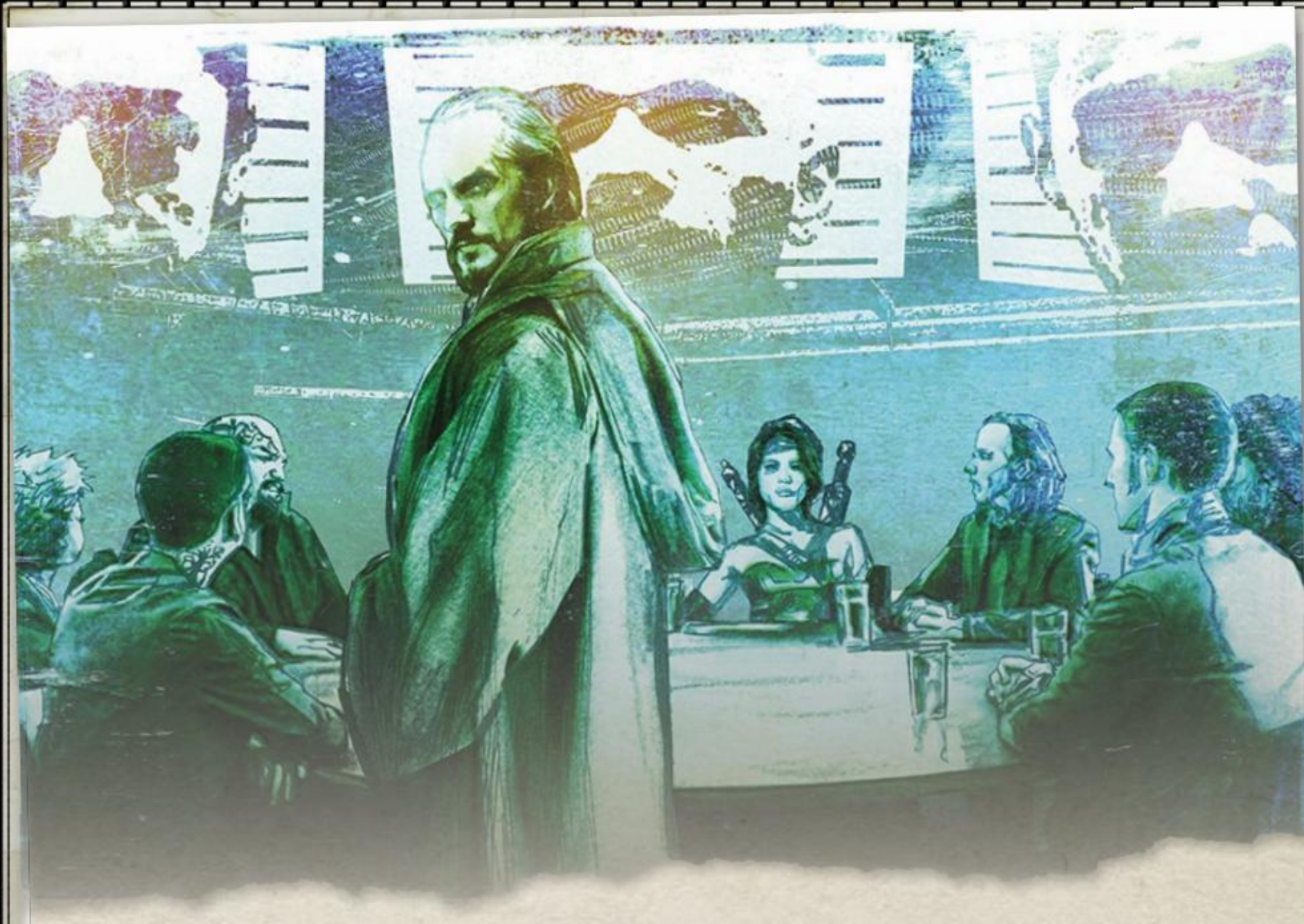
— William Shakespeare, Macbeth

a silent conspiracy

Miriam bowed respectfully to the new arrivals and welcomed them in Arabic, Farsi, and Turkish before leading them down the corridor to the conference room where Tegurius and the other guests awaited. Inside, the newcomers hesitated as they took in the assembly before quietly taking their seats. It was a remarkable cross-section of the Children of Haqim. Indeed, it was nearly unimaginable that some of these Assamites would ever have sat in the same room, absent the hospitality of the Vizier himself. An enormous circular table took up most of the room, with place settings for each guest meticulously arranged so that no one was sitting next to a Clan-mate whom he openly hated. A half-dozen small TV screens circled the table, situated so that everyone could see. Only the most important guests actually had seats at the table, with childer and lackeys sitting behind, representing all bloodlines and factions of the Children of Haqim. Well, all but one, thought Miriam grimly. None of the Assamites present belonged to the Web of Knives.

From the scholars came the Vizier Tegurius, the mad Russian doctor Dmitri Borodin, and the mathematician/assassin David Wendt. From the sorcerers came Sarah Schneier, the Amr's favorite, and Badr Alkhaiwani, the spymaster. From the warriors came the legendary Fatima Al-Faqadi and Hilel al-Masaari, who was once the Sultan of Cordoba. Behind each of those luminaries sat other, less infamous but still notable Assamites. Donya Tehreni of the Sisterhood of the Erinyes. Daniel Goldman of the Leopards of Zion. Perhaps most incongruously present, a stocky crew-cut soldier who could only be Randy Hopkirk of the informal "sniper society" known as Thousand-Meter Club. Miriam idly wondered what the pale boy from Alabama would look like in a hundred years when his skin had darkened. Tegurius rose, his natural charisma making him the center of attention even among this collection of luminaries.

"I thank you all for coming and hope your journeys were not troublesome," he began. "We have much to discuss and then much to plan for. I have spoken with many of you before now. About changes on the horizon. About future challenges for our Clan. Indeed, challenges about what it meant to even be an Assamite. You are all here now because... because that future appears to be closer than I had previously thought."



He turned to Miriam and nodded, and at the signal, she clicked her computer. Each of the TV screens flickered on, showing video footage of an elderly Arabic woman who seemed to be in the throes of a drug high.

"I was given this video by the Amr. The woman you see before you served the Amr as a seer. By all accounts, she is — or rather was — a gifted prophetess whose visions have always been completely reliable. This is her final prophecy."

As the video continued, the old woman's eyes rolled back up into her head and she began to speak. "He is coming. The Black Shepherd comes to cull the flock. The Hateful Spawn. The Herald of Destruction. As the Lord of Death culled his childer at Kaymakli, the Black Shepherd shall cull the Children at Alamut." The old woman repeated those same words over and over in mounting hysteria. She didn't even seem to notice when blood started to drip from her eyes and then pour from her nose and ears. After less than a minute, she began to convulse before falling over, apparently dead.

Tegyrius looked around at his peers within the Clan, whose expressions ranged from confused to horrified. "The Amr sent me this prophecy because he finds it credible, as do I. It appears that a 'culling' of some sort lies in store for our Clan." The Vizier's face hardened. "I do not intend to be a part of it. Do any of you?"

With that question, a conspiracy was born.

A History of the Children of Haqim

As I look towards an uncertain future, I find myself forced to consider and reconsider the past. There is much of our Clan's history for which I am one of the few extant witnesses, but far more precedes even my venerable age. Perhaps if we Viziers had done more to educate the Children of our history and legacy... but no, events happened as they did and could not have happened any other way. What matters is where we are today and what decisions we make next. Still, history can still serve as our guide, and so I set my own history to paper for the benefit of my fellow Assamites.

As I have said, I am a vizier, and so my biases should be obvious to any astute reader. For the record, my sire and grandsire were... reticent about sharing the details of their own unlives, and there are few older than them who would speak at all about our collective past. Accordingly, much of what I know of our origins is hearsay and conjecture, likely with a healthy dose of deliberate misrepresentation. As a childe, I was naive. It would be many centuries before I would countenance the possibility that my kin might lie about our history.

The First Nights

There are two wildly contradictory tales surrounding Haqim's own Embrace and early unlife. The version that I believe to be closest to the truth is as follows, though I acknowledge the alternative origin, well-established amongst the extremist wing of the warrior caste before I joined the Children. Though I find it unpersuasive, it is not impossible that their version is correct.

In my preferred history, Haqim was a warrior and military leader during the age of the First City who received the Embrace from a member of the Second Generation. There is little textual evidence as to which one. Although his background was as a warrior and hunter, he devoted his early unlife to intellectual pursuits, making him learned for the time. It appears that he did not Embrace childer of his own until the rise of the Second City. His first childer were men and women of learning, and they laid the foundations of the vizier caste. As the eldest caste, we should have held dominion over the rest of our Clan to this very night. That we failed has been our gravest error.

In time (and supposedly in response to pressure from his fellow Antediluvians), Haqim created a second bloodline, the warrior caste. Ask a warrior, and he will tell you that Haqim created their caste to serve as judges of the conduct of the other Cainites of the Second City. Rubbish. None of the other Clans would have ever tolerated a single Clan having the power of judgment over them, let alone asking for it, as some legends say. The warriors were to serve as elite troops to fight in military campaigns against the enemies of the Second City, primarily the thrice-damned Baali. When the warriors proved no match for the demonically empowered Baali, Haqim created a third bloodline, the sorcerers. Of the sorcerers, the most powerful (and most frightening) was the mysterious Ur-Shulgi, whose form was that of a horrific child whose skin had blackened as if burned. It took the combined prowess of all three castes, and especially the terrifying might of Ur-Shulgi, to finally end the Baali menace, at least for a time. My grandsire described an encounter with Ur-Shulgi once. I think it was the only time I ever saw him show fear.

From the beginning, there was friction between our castes, bound together by shared blood, but little else. Over time, the greatest issue would be population growth. For selection as a vizier, a prospect needed to demonstrate intelligence, political acumen, and some degree of education. In the Bronze Age, such qualities were rare. To be a sorcerer, the prospect needed to demonstrate the even rarer qualities of some degree of functional occult knowledge and, ideally, be able to work some form of magic as a mortal. Selection as a warrior... required only the ability to kill. Admittedly, the warriors only selected those who were the absolute best at it, but even the most accomplished fighters, soldiers, and assassins were far easier to find than suitable candidates were for Embrace as a vizier or a sorcerer. Is it any wonder that by the time our Clan relocated to Alamut, the warriors made up over half our numbers?

The Eagle's Nest

In the fullness of time, the Second City fell, its rulers cursed by Caine himself. Our history is unclear on whether Haqim and his Clan were present at the time. Some of our legends say that he had already relocated to Alamut by then, sickened as he was by the corruption of the other Antediluvians. Other less politically correct anecdotes say that Caine cursed us as well, that the peculiarities of the viziers and the sorcerers stem from the displeasure of Haqim's grand-sire, and the warriors also suffered punishment with a blood-borne curse at that time. There are few records of those nights, and no Children who observed them first hand are around to tell the tale. Exactly *why* there are no written records of the First Nights is a matter of some debate,

given the existence of an entire caste deeply concerned with record keeping. The consensus is that records dating back to that time were lost during the transition to Alamut, or else deliberately destroyed when the Web of Knives came into prominence. However, there are persistent legends of a "secret library" that the elder viziers hid away from their enemies within the Clan. As for the Curse, if Caine did levy one against us, he would not be the last to do so, and his curse was not as debilitating as those that would come later.

Whatever the circumstances, Haqim eventually led the Children to a new communal haven — Alamut, the Eagle's Nest. I will not commit its location to writing. Indeed, I could not even if I wished, for that location remains occluded by the will of an Antediluvian who had mastered the ultimate expressions of Disciplines dedicated to stealth and silence. Haqim's power shielded Alamut from discovery for millennia, and Alamut became the heart of the Assamite Clan. Typically, no more than a few dozen of the Children permanently resided in its labyrinthine tunnels at a time, although they share space with enough ghouls and mortals to serve and feed the Kindred inhabitants. All loyal members of the Clan from the moment of our Embrace instinctively know the way home, just as the will of our Ancestor binds us all against revealing that home to outsiders in the face of the cruelest of tortures or the most seductive magic. Betrayers of the Clan give themselves away by the fact that they lose all memory of Alamut's location. Only once did an outsider penetrate the veil which protects Alamut, and that was enough to change the course of our history.

While the elders of our Clan made Alamut the center of our power, the rest of the Children spread out across Asia and North Africa, in some places coexisting with other Kindred and in others dominating the region. Unfortunately, our founder Haqim took an exceedingly dim view of our entanglement with the Jyhad. While seemingly loathe to outright forbid Assamites from involving themselves in Kindred politics, he communicated his unhappiness in increasingly obvious ways until, finally, he exploded after a fight broke out within Alamut itself between Children on opposite sides of the Peloponnesian War. Denouncing all sides for putting political machinations above Clan unity, Haqim left Alamut that night. He returned on a few occasions but only briefly, and he offered no input into the Clan's affairs when he did.

The Rise of the Warriors

When Haqim abandoned Alamut, it provoked the most extremist and elitist of the warriors into an impulsive action. Or perhaps, it merely gave them the opportunity they had been waiting for. Opinions differ. Since the days of the Second City, Haqim had made a practice of leaving his childer to their own devices for decades at a time, and in his absence, a policy arose whereby the leaders of the three castes would choose an "Eldest" vampire to direct the Clan's affairs in Haqim's absence. With superior numbers and fighting skills, the extremist warriors staged a bloodless coup and established that henceforth, the Clan would always choose their Eldest from the warrior caste, using claims that it had been the viziers who were solely responsible for alienating the Clan's founder.

Incensed but lacking the resources to fight back, the viziers and the sorcerers acquiesced, and for the next two millennia, the warriors would be the face of the Assamite Clan. To be fair, the warrior caste itself split evenly on the matter, with many of those outside the coup leaders indignant on our behalf. Ultimately, though, they chose to support their caste rather than allow the whole Clan to fall into civil war. Those dissidents were instrumental in protecting the viziers and sorcerers against hardliners who openly talked of our extermination.

Not all accepted the new status quo, though. There had always been Assamites who chose independence over Clan loyalty and had elected to make their own way: The Dispossessed. After the warriors seized control, the numbers of Dispossessed swelled with viziers, sorcerers and even many of the less doctrinaire warriors who felt unsafe within their own caste. All fled Alamut to pursue their fortunes elsewhere. During this era, two additional bloodlines were born: the Shango, Assamite sorcerers who turned their back on the Quietus discipline and became a part of the African Laibon community, and the so-called Bedouins, warrior nomads who wandered North Africa with little concerns for the plans of the leaders of Alamut. Those plans were ambitious indeed.

As the extremists consolidated their hold on the rest of the Clan, they followed the same course as other conquerors by rewriting our past in order to exalt themselves over their kin. In the newly approved history, the purpose of the Assamites was to judge and punish all other Cainites for their sins, real or imagined. In time, they even developed a new origin for Haqim himself. No longer had one of Caine's childer selected him for the Embrace. Instead, he was a hero who fought against the evil Caine, murdering the nameless king and queen who had been Caine's first childer and stealing their blood to make himself a vampire of the Second Generation instead of the Third. Afterwards, he led his followers directly to Alamut where he commanded the

warriors to scourge the world of Caine's other offspring. A fanciful tale, to be sure, particularly when one considered the dearth of any evidence that Haqim had sired any Third Generation offspring of his own.

Less fanciful and more troubling was the new philosophy that accompanied the new and improved history: the Path of Blood. In its earlier iteration, the *Road* of Blood was a noble philosophy that asked its adherents to act honorably, to punish the wicked, protect the innocent, and resist passion in favor of reason. Over the ensuing centuries, the extremists twisted it into a ruthless and violent approach to unlife that commanded its followers to not only kill without moral hesitation, but to commit *diablerie* at every opportunity. We viziers were horrified at these developments, but lacked the power to curb our brethren's new ideas. Soon though, we would find a new philosophy of our own, while the warriors would reap the consequences of their own bloodlust.

The Prophet, the Devil, and the Web

The seventh century C.E. saw two seismic changes among the Children: the birth and growth of Islam and the Baali curse. Outsiders often fail to understand how these two events altered our Clan. Indeed, most outsiders don't even know that the Baali curse happened, and incorrectly assume that the Assamites, regardless of caste affinity, have always had an insatiable lust for Kindred blood.

Many modern Children think that Islam inspired some sort of mass conversion among the Assamites and that, from the start, we were the vampiric wing of the Islamic movement. On the contrary, the extremist leaders of the emergent cult of Haqim *loathe* Islam because the principles of humility, mercy, and compassion found within the Qur'an are incompatible with their vision. Allah was not, after all, a proponent of genocide, while those extremists seek nothing else but the annihilation of all other Cainites.

It was for those reasons that those of us who stood outside the extremist cult quietly undermined all efforts to influence the growth of Islam into a form more to their liking. In time, our efforts bore fruit. By the ninth century C.E., it was increasingly difficult to find potential recruits for our Clan in the lands where we traditionally roamed who were not faithful to Allah in life. It was just as difficult to persuade newly Embraced childer who had been faithful all their lives to abandon that faith in favor of blind devotion to a genocidal blood-god, particularly when two of the three castes insisted that said blood-god was not at all as he'd been portrayed by his more energetic worshipers. Although the majority of the Assamites were never Muslim, Muslim Assamites did come to represent a plurality of the Clan. Moreover, with the viziers, the sorcerers, and more than a few warriors united in preserving the Islamic Assamites' right to worship Allah as they saw fit, Islam served as a vital bulwark against the Cult of Haqim.

Such a bulwark was needed, for the birth of the Prophet was not the only major event of that era to impact our Clan. In 636 C.E., the Baali once more stretched forth their tainted hands in the Middle East. It would be the last time those dogs would dare to act so openly, but our victory was pyrrhic. Even as our warriors and sorcerers brought down the walls of the infamous hell-city of Chorazin, the Baali smote their attackers with a terrible infernal curse. The warriors were the first and most heavily affected. I like to think that the reliance of the viziers and sorcerers upon reason and rationality was what protected us, and I cannot help but note that the extremist warriors fell to the curse more easily than those who eschewed emotionalism. Regardless, within a century, most of the warriors and a sizeable percentage of the other castes suffered, contaminated with a terrible lust for Cainite blood. In time, the other Clans would come to think of us as nothing but a depraved Clan who had always thirsted for their blood.

Undaunted by these changes, the extremists fought back with an indoctrination campaign intended to fill the Clan with new recruits who were free of the "weakness" imposed by Islam. They were ready to embrace the hunger imposed by the Baali Curse as just an obstacle on the path to godhood. Finally, the extremists had a name for their movement: the Web of Knives, yet another thing we would have stamped out in its infancy had we the means to have done so. Created as way of "building the perfect warriors for Haqim," the Web of Knives eventually became the dominant political faction within our Clan and, in many ways, the face the Assamites would present to the other Kindred for centuries to come.

The Middle Ages and the Tremere Curse

It was against this backdrop that the Crusades came to the Middle East. Despite our differences, the Children united against the intruders. The Islamic Assamites, along with the much smaller cadre of Jewish Assamites, wished to protect the Holy Lands of their religions against Christian

domination. The viziers and sorcerers wished to defend the territories that were our political domains from theft by potential enemies. The Christian Assamites (and there were indeed some) elected to defer to the will of a majority that gravely outnumbered them and was suspicious of their loyalty. The Web of Knives, for the most part, reveled fattening themselves on the vitae of European Cainites. Once more, the Children fully immersed themselves in the Jyhad to the point that we would one day direct the heirs of the Prophet to sack fabled Constantinople itself. How Haqim must have wept if he could see it.

Nor was the Jyhad limited to the Holy Lands. Warriors in and out of the Web of Knives used atrocities committed by crusaders as pretext for their own forays into Europe, aided by the social upheaval accompanying the Anarch Revolt. Entire cities were denuded of their Cainite populations, elder and Anarch alike, consumed by our assassins. Our conflicts with the other Clans continued into the fifteenth century C.E., when the newly born Camarilla decided to flex its muscles and declare a Blood Hunt against all Assamites wherever they might find us. Even we viziers laughed at this, until the Nosferatu spy was captured in the very heart of Alamut. The discovery sent a shockwave through the Children. Since time immemorial, Alamut was sacrosanct. After bitter arguments (some violent), the Old Man in the Mountain made his decree: protect Alamut. We had to obtain peace with the Camarilla.

The leaders of the Web of Knives were furious, even more so when neither the Du'at nor the Old Man would reveal precisely *why* it was so important to preserve the sanctity of Alamut, which, despite its role in unifying our Clan, was really just the most prominent of many secret Assamite lairs. The truth is a secret held only by those four: Alamut holds a significant quantity of the Heartblood, Haqim's own blood, within a well deep within the Mountain. Al-Ashrad believed that if the Tremere gained access to Heartblood, they might be able to target Haqim himself with a killing curse through his sympathetic link with the Mountain. Through him, they could enslave or even slay the entirety of the Clan wherever we might hide.

Therefore, it was that our representatives bound the entire Clan to the Treaty of Tyre, thereby providing the Tremere with a sympathetic link that let them target us with a less destructive punishment. In the space of a single night, the Tremere cursed every Assamite to suffer pain and to risk Final Death upon the consumption of Kindred vitae. The Web of Knives raged. No longer could



they pursue "Haqim's command" that they devour their way to apotheosis through the sacrament of diablerie. For those who did not pursue the Path of Blood, the results of the Tremere Curse were more... ambiguous. It effectively neutralized the much more debilitating Baali Curse, and largely defanged those adherents of the Path of Blood who were openly genocidal in their aims. However, those positive benefits were outweighed by the humiliation of our defeat at the hands of the Camarilla.

On the other hand, not all of the Children were victims of the Tremere Curse. Al-Ashrad counseled that undoing the curse would be the work of centuries, but some of the Children, mainly the eldest leaders of the Web of Knives, were impatient. They journeyed in secret to the forgotten ruins of Chorazin and did... something. Al-Ashrad has advised me that I should not ask about the matter, and while I find that condescending, I also find the *way* he counseled me to be unnerving enough to acquiesce. Few things in this world frighten the Amr. Suffice it to say that a sizeable contingent of warriors freed themselves from the Tremere Curse, apparently killing the handful of viziers and sorcerers who accompanied them in the process. In doing so, they judged themselves superior to the rest of the Children and washed their hands of us, opting instead to join the nascent Sabbat as the Assamite *antitribu*. I am told that the most potent of them rule the Sabbat to this night from the shadows as lords of the so-called Black Hand.

The majority of the warriors remained among the Children. Lacking the ability to freely pursue the vitae of other Cainites, they petitioned the Amr for some way to do so indirectly, and, with some reluctance, he complied. The result was a form of simple ritual magic within the ability of any competent Assamite that allows one to "tithe" a quantity of vitae to a sorcerer who then processes it into a form that a warrior can safely consume. Enough vitae converted in this manner allows a devotee of the Path of Blood to eventually bring himself closer to Haqim in a manner similar to diablerie, but without the soul-damaging side effects. Therefore, it came to pass that the mighty warriors of Haqim, the scourge of all Cainites, became common hit men willing to murder any target in exchange for a dribble of their employer's blood.

A Humbled Clan

The most disruptive elements of the Web of Knives were gone altogether, having abandoned the Clan to become *antitribu*. In this manner, the Children achieved a certain degree of equilibrium that had been lacking for centuries. Constantinople fell, but other predominantly Muslim governments, empires, and caliphates rose in its place. The viziers shaped them as best they could, mainly with the goal of preventing the European vampires from encroaching into our domains. The sorcerers withdrew to their researches into the deeper mysteries of Dur-An-Ki, our Clan's answer to Thaumaturgy, making enough token efforts towards breaking the Tremere Curse to satisfy the warriors.

Paranoid Cainites frequently accuse the Assamites of having masterminded the events known to the West as "9/11." Typical Western bigotry. We were as surprised as anyone else was, mortal or Cainite, by that atrocity. The attack would have offended us just for its cowardly execution, but 9/11 also led to rampant Islamophobia among Westerners unprecedented since the Crusades, to say nothing of the violence it unleashed across the Middle East.

Within months of the attack, America and its allies were dropping bombs. By seeming coincidence, a few of the American bombing campaigns struck our holdings in the affected areas with unusual accuracy. The first clue we had that it was more than mere coincidence came when American forces in Baghdad, due to an apparent communications error, failed to secure the National Museum. As a result, a large number of antiquities were looted, some of which (unbeknownst to the kine) dated back to the time of the Second City. While the theft was an embarrassment to the American government, it would be worse if they knew the truth. Our agents who had infiltrated the Americans brought back the bodies of the last few guards to remain at the museum before the looting. They had been burned beyond recognition — not by any conventional incendiary, but by a supernatural attack so obscure that our sorcerers cannot identify its origin.

Two months later, Al-Ashrad sent me a video recording of a prophecy made by a mortal seer who was a part of his retinue, one he had never dared to make either a ghoul or a Kindred lest the Blood interfere with the mortal's remarkable insights. Her final prophecy was one so horrific that she died from its making. It predicts the rise of the Black Shepherd, one of the sobriquets used by the slumbering Methuselah Ur-Shulgi. It predicts a culling of our Clan. Combined with the mysterious enemy who has used the fog of war to infiltrate our domains, I must assume the worst. The Assamites must prepare as best we can, even if it means doing the unthinkable.

Tonight's Assassin

What does it mean to be an Assamite? A difficult question, for no other Clan is as diverse as the Assamites, and we have never been as much in flux as we are right now. Three distinct bloodlines united under a common identity, plus more bloodlines on the outside looking in. An independent Clan with close ties to the Sabbat, but whose leaders are considering mass defection to the Camarilla for protection from a rising Methuselah who may not even exist. Two deeply felt and completely incompatible religious movements, plus a plethora of smaller religions chafing under their own lack of Clan influence. A dominant caste completely unsuited to lead the Clan in the modern era, but which does so anyway just because it outnumbers the other two combined. A universally recognized stereotype of "crazy Muslim assassin" that ignores alternative identities ranging from Reconquista-era Spaniards to Zionist Jews to American solders Embraced during the first Gulf War. A rich tradition of blood sorcery about which the Tremere know little, though the promise of sharing our knowledge with our old enemies may yet earn us a place at the Camarilla's table. After millennia of evolution, who are the Assamites tonight?

Religion and the Assamites

Religion plays a greater role among the Children of Haqim than in any other Clan save, perhaps, the Followers of Set (I have not bothered to learn of their ways). Among the main Clan, the vast majority of our new recruits who joined within the last two centuries were Muslim at the time of their Embrace. A much smaller percentage was ethnically and religiously Jewish in life, and an even smaller cohort is comprised of a wide cross-section of religious views, ranging from Zoroastrianism and pre-Christian and pre-Islamic polytheism (among elders) to Catholicism, Protestant, and Evangelical Christianity.

While it is not unusual to cling to mortal beliefs for the first few years, most do not have a faith strong enough to survive undeath without breaking or bending. Among Assamites who have been among us long enough to reconsider their faith, barely a plurality still follows the precepts of Islam, though this does include many influential elders. The next largest religious affiliation effectively worships Haqim himself. More accurately, they worship the image of Haqim the Destroyer fashioned by the Web of Knives as a focus for their beliefs — an image at odds with Haqim as most of the elders who were his contemporaries remember him. A sizeable number of sorcerers worship the ancient Mesopotamian pantheon, although "worship" is perhaps not the best term for a system of beliefs adopted solely to facilitate certain magical practices.

The remainder of the Clan is either agnostic, irreligious (including Children who consider themselves "damned" according to the religion they once followed), or else still attempt to follow whatever beliefs they held in life. Such beliefs include Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The latter two are especially common among those Assamites who dwell in India, along with a smaller number of Sikh Assamites. Likewise, many of the Shango bloodline in Central Africa still follow the Yorùbá religion of their ancestors.

Muslim Assamites typically follow the Five Pillars of Islam, albeit in a manner adapted to the vampiric condition. For example, they observe the custom of Salat, ritual prayer in the direction of Mecca, but the Assamite prays five times during the night instead of the day. Likewise, Assamites are generally unable to perform the Hajj (a pilgrimage to Mecca) unless they have permission and assistance from the mysterious vampires who have appointed themselves guardians of that holy city. For centuries, a mysterious supernatural effect known as the Keening bars most vampires from Mecca, but a ritual performed by the city's custodians can alleviate it for specific vampires. As those custodians are selective about whom they allow into Mecca, most Muslim Assamites will instead make at least one pilgrimage to Alamut to pray to Allah in the presence of the Well of the Heartblood, a practice the Web of Knives grudgingly tolerates. Instead of fasting during Ramadan, the Assamite must reduce his blood intake to the minimum needed to avoid torpor and frenzy.

The Contract

Anyone who wishes to contract with the Assamites for assassinations must usually do so through the Silsila, though in cities where an Assamite openly resides, she will usually be willing to facilitate introductions for a fee. No Assamite loyal to the Clan will accept a contract that has not gone through the Silsila. Assassinations of mortal targets are usually paid in cash, although at exorbitant rates: a quarter million U.S. dollars per hit is cheap for an Assamite killer. If the target is supernatural or is under the protection of supernatural beings, the price goes up accordingly. If the client is a vampire, blood is always the price, which the client must bleed into a magically prepared clay vessel while the Assamite watches. The vessel is not a storage medium but a transference device. The blood

immediately materializes in a companion vessel in the possession of a sorcerer, who then prepares it for future use by the Clan.

The Silsila has a formula by which the relative difficulty of the kill is balanced against a particular quantity and quality of vitae to be paid. The assassin must tithe ten percent of all payments to his sire, and another ten percent to the Clan. The Vizier collects any money or other material payments for appropriate reinvestment. Occult artifacts go to the Amr, who compensates the assassin as appropriate. The Caliph receives any payment in vitae collected directly from vampire clients, adding the Clan's share to the Well of Heartblood. Whatever vitae remains for the assassin is held by the Amr in a special urn for the benefit of the assassin until enough is accumulated to reduce their Generation through the Dur-An-Ki ritual called "From Marduk's Throat."

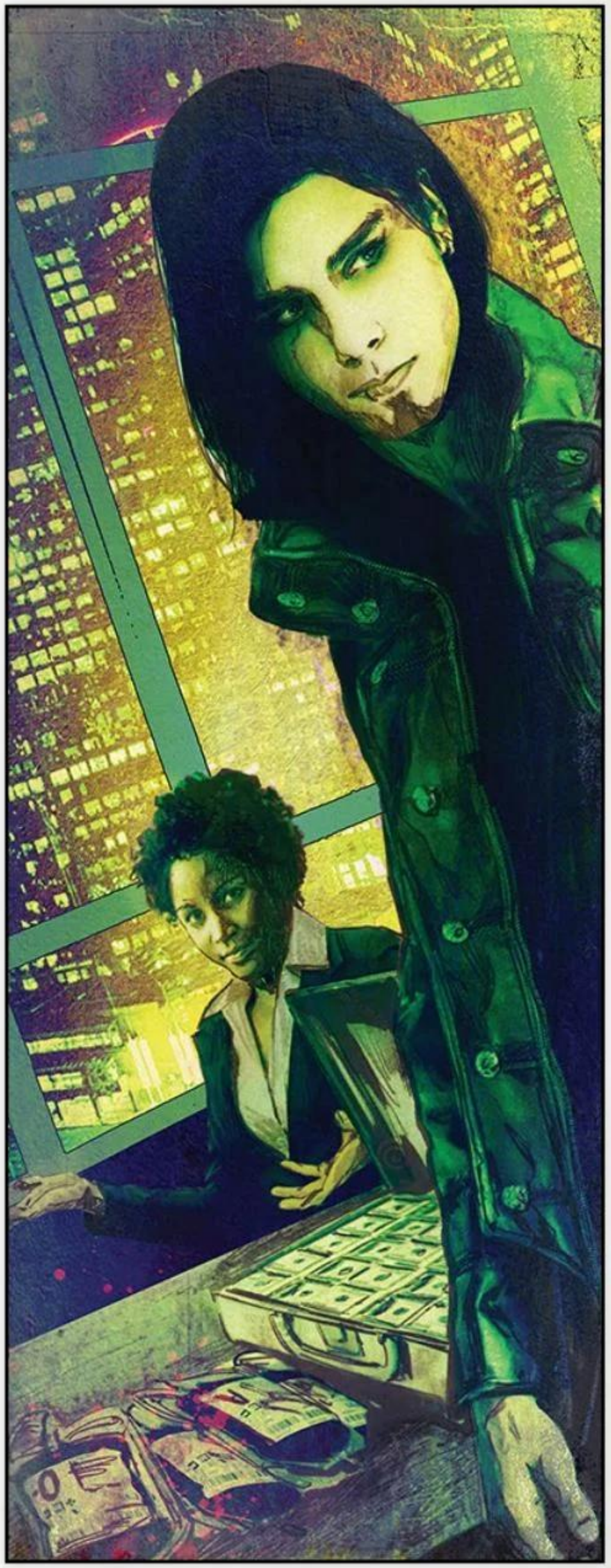
The Laws of Haqim

Most Assamites know of and at least attempt to follow the laws laid down by Haqim when he founded Alamut. The problems lie in differing interpretations and in disagreement on which laws are most important. For example, the Law of Destruction forbids Assamites from slaying "those of the Blood." The viziers, and to a lesser extent the sorcerers, see this as a prescription against genocide, while most of the warriors limit the meaning of "those of the Blood" to fellow Assamites. The most reactionary of the Web of Knives would go further and say that only warriors are "of the Blood," and the other castes exist at their sufferance.

The Law of Leadership

Honor the Eldest among you, for he is to rule my House when I am absent.

This law has been a basis of the Clan's de facto gerontocracy since antiquity. Most elders are afforded respect by their juniors regardless of caste. The Web of Knives is the exception; its members generally scoff at the idea of acknowledging the Vizier and the Amr as being in any way equal to the Caliph and the Eldest. Warriors outside the Web of Knives are more respectful to the elders of the other two castes, but even they assume the primacy of the Caliph and the Eldest. For their part, Tegyrius and Al-Ashrad both recoil from the idea of submitting to an inhuman blood-god like Ur-Shulgi should he arise, no matter how old the Black Shepherd is.



The Law of Protection

Ward the mortals from Caine's descendants and treat them with honor in all things.

Increasingly, those Assamites outside the Web of Knives feel moved to protect mortals from those of us who look upon humans as livestock rather than beings worthy of consideration.

The Law of Destruction

Slay not those of the Blood, for that judgment is for the elder alone.

As noted, the Clan is divided on who is and is not of the Blood, with the Web of Knives openly espousing genocide against the other Clans.

The Law of the Word

Deceive not those of the Blood, for my House is founded on Truth.

Truth is subjective. Assamites rarely lie to one another, but neither do they feel compelled to keep those with whom they disagree up to date on their plans.

The Law of Judgment

Judge those of Caine's blood and punish them should they be found wanting.

As with the Law of Destruction, a sharp division exists within the Clan on the question of who deserves punishment and what punishments are appropriate. The Web of Knives demand the ultimate sanction against all vampires outside the Clan for violations against their interpretations of the Laws of Haqim. More humane Assamites look back to the lessons of the wars against the Baali and interpret this as a commandment to fight and punish vampires who prey indiscriminately, or those who truck with demons.

The Castes

The Warriors

The warrior caste represents a majority of our Clan. Of those, about half joined the Clan through indoctrination into the Web of Knives, while the rest were Embraced according to older traditions. In the latter case, the sire typically chooses a suitable candidate, Embraces her, and then largely leaves her to her own devices with minimal oversight beyond ensuring that she fulfills her tithing obligations to the Clan.

The leader of the warrior caste is the *Caliph*, usually the oldest and most powerful of the warriors. Personal power is more important to the office of Caliph than age or respect. Any warrior can theoretically challenge a Caliph to a duel of honor for any perceived failure in the performance of his duties. There is the expectation that a Caliph who loses such a duel will submit to ritual diablerie by his opponent, assuming he wasn't destroyed outright before such diablerie could take place.

The current Caliph is Thetmes, a Fifth Generation Egyptian Embraced in 25 B.C.E. He is a devotee of the corrupt version of the Path of Blood, and since he predates Islam by over six centuries, he has very little respect for either its precepts or its practitioners, an attitude that is the source of his antipathy towards the current Old Man. Thetmes rose to the position of Caliph after personally slaying the prior Caliph in combat over his predecessor's disastrous mishandling of the Siege of Vienna in 1529 C.E. In almost five centuries, no one has ever challenged his authority over the warrior caste.

They suffer from the Tremere Curse and the Baali Curse, though the former negates the latter. Should anything ever lift the Tremere Curse, the Baali Curse would immediately affect all warriors.

The Viziers

The viziers represent about a third of the Children. There are very few viziers found among the Sabbat, but a sizeable number are Dispossessed. Viziers fulfill a variety of roles within the Clan. They usually oversee the Assamite's political or financial interests, but may also serve as researchers, diplomats, historians, or even artists. In many ways, they are the Assamite answer to both the Ventrue and the Toreador, and many Dispossessed viziers note with some sadness that they generally get along with those Clans better than they do Assamites of the other two castes.

The leader of the viziers is, well, the Vizier. The fact that the same name is used for both the caste and its leader is sometimes confusing for outsiders, but the viziers themselves are pretty good at context and always seem to know who they're talking about. In earlier eras, some Viziers went by the archaic term "Fikri," but it has fallen out of use. Unlike the Caliph, a democratic vote decides the position of Vizier, after a period of intense politicking and influence peddling. Once elected, the Vizier serves for a term of 63 years, unless he is removed prematurely through whatever means. Viziers may service multiple terms, but not consecutive ones.

The current Vizier is Tegyrius, who is in his third term. Tegyrius was a soldier in life, albeit a high-ranking soldier in Alexander's armies — in other words, a politically adroit cosmopolite as well as a warrior. For much of the last two centuries, the declining influence of the viziers over the Children of Haqim has demoralized Tegyrius. However, since the invasion of Iraq, he has become galvanized by his firm conviction that the rise of Ur-Shulgi is imminent. Certain that the Black Shepherd's impending arrival means nothing good for his caste or for the Clan as a whole, he is the prime mover behind the Preservationist Conspiracy.

They suffer from the Tremere Curse and the Curse of Obsession. A few viziers have contracted the Baali Curse from their warrior kin. In such viziers, the Baali Curse often supplants the Curse of Obsession, to which these viziers are usually (but not always) immune.

The Sorcerers

The remainder of our Clan belongs to the insular sorcerer caste. Both the warriors and the viziers see great value in the power of the sorcerers, but neither group quite trusts them. Clan legends pertaining to the Baali are just too ingrained for the typical Assamite to be comfortable around someone who can command demons and djinn with a word. As with the viziers, there are very few sorcerers among the Sabbat. There are a few sorcerers among the Dispossessed, but the rarity of the sorcerers and the loneliness of their lifestyle compels them to seek the company of others of their kind. Unfortunately, while the viziers can get along with their own counterparts among the Camarilla, most sorcerers can't even sit in the same room with the jealous and paranoid Tremere without a magical duel breaking out. A pity, since most members of the Camarilla would be delighted to deal with thaumaturges who didn't attach as many strings as the Tremere did.

The leader of the sorcerer caste is the Amr, a position that has been synonymous with Al-Ashrad for nearly two-thousand years. A mage himself for well over five centuries even before his Embrace, Al-Ashrad defines the post of Amr so completely there is only one Assamite of antiquity who is a match for his power. Unfortunately, that Assamite — Ur-Shulgi — is the one Al-Ashrad most fears will emerge to make that challenge, which is why the Amr has joined Tegyrius' conspiracy. Al-Ashrad is not alone in his origins, as a small but vital percentage of the sorcerers were mortal mages prior to the Embrace. Some of them have even retained connections to their prior occult affiliations, which can occasionally provide valuable intelligence to the Children.

The sorcerers suffer from the Tremere Curse and the Curse of Prominence. A few sorcerers have contracted the Baali Curse from their warrior kin. In such sorcerers, the Baali Curse usually supplants the Curse of Prominence, but some sorcerers suffer from both.

Politics Among the Assamites

The Du'at is the collective name for the Caliph, the Vizier, and the Amr, and on paper, they all have equal power and equal status. In practice, the Caliph outranks the other two and isn't afraid to let them know it; although the Old Man does what he can to restrain the Caliph, and regularly defers to the Amr and Vizier within their areas of expertise.

Below the Caliph is the Silsila, an informal court consisting of Alamut's permanent resident warriors. In earlier nights, the Silsila consisted of equal numbers of the three castes, but warriors have dominated it for the last millennium. As such, it has ceased to be an advisory body and has instead become the Caliph's private army for ensuring the warriors' dominance over the other two castes. The Web of Knives tends to view the Silsila as the informal priesthood of the Cult of Haqim. Naturally, Assamites outside that faction are less respectful of the Silsila, though usually not to their faces. The Silsila also acts as point agency for outsiders who wish to contract with Assamites for assassination purposes. If a Cainite finds that she needs an Assamite to kill for her and she is not incompetent, she will eventually make contact with the representative of one of the Silsila, who will then contact her for negotiations.

Counterbalancing the Silsila is the Council of Scrolls, an advisory body of fifteen Assamites consisting primarily of viziers and sorcerers, though no ban exists preventing warriors from membership. The Eldest and the Du'at *are* barred from membership in order to prevent conflicts of interest. Each member of the Council is considered the Clan's expert-in-residence when it comes to whatever matter falls within that seat's purview.

Major Factions

The Web of Knives

Founded at the dawn of the twelfth century C.E., the Web of Knives is a death cult. Its founders were all hardline Assamite warriors who disapproved of the effect that Islam

had on their Clan in general. These founders sought to forge a technique for transitioning new recruits directly from mortal existence into the brutal, blood-soaked world of their new religion. When one of the Dervishes finds a mortal who is exceptionally skilled at combat, he gives the mortal the opportunity to join the Children. Sometimes, he is even honest enough to say that the alternative is death.

The new recruit spends the next several years at one of the group's secret training facilities where he learns every form of combat and every technique for assassination, as well as being brainwashed into the group's religious dogmas. Most don't make it and end up tossed into unmarked graves dug by fellow recruits to show them the price of failure. Those who survive long enough to impress their masters become ghouls, and spend more years learning how to kill supernatural beings as easily as other mortals, all while becoming even more devoted to the Web of Knives and the Path of Blood. Typically, this phase of the training lasts for seven years or so, at which point survivors who have proven their loyalty have one final test: the targeted assassination of a specific individual about whom the initiate has no information save a name and a picture. Those who succeed receive the reward of the Embrace. The penalty for failure is self-evident.

While the order was founded in the twelfth century C.E., it did not recruit a single female until the eighteenth, and the number of female since then can be counted on one hand. For most of its existence, the Web of Knives was a small organization, although its political influence was wildly disproportionate to its size. Warrior Assamites who did not belong to the organization nevertheless admired its dedication and intensity. During the first Gulf War, the Web of Knives sought to increase its size and stature with a "recruitment drive" of military personnel (both Middle Eastern and Allied soldiers) who demonstrated field competence. By the time the Americans invaded Iraq in 2003 C.E., those recruits had been vampires for five years and were completely devoted to the Web of Knives. They, in turn, led the next round of recruitment, this time of soldiers who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as particularly skilled terrorists and insurgents. The recruits of that "class" have only just completed their training. Its sudden and precipitous growth is one of the main factors that led to the birth of Tegyrius's plans for defection.

All members of the Web of Knives are devoted followers of the Path of Blood (as reimagined by the group's founders), and most of them long for the day when the Tremere Curse is lifted and they can pursue apotheosis through diablerie, as well as fulfilling Haqim's command that they exterminate all other Cainites. All of them believe the Clan origin that states that Haqim seized the power of the Blood for himself in order to fight against Caine's evil, that the warriors were Haqim's first childer with the "lesser castes" coming later, and that godhood is obtainable through diablerie.

The Preservationist Conspiracy

The Preservationist Conspiracy is a faction so new that it barely has a name. The conspiracy is the brainchild of the Vizier Tegyrius and the Amr Al-Ashrad, both of whom have concluded that the Children of Haqim are doomed so long as they remain on their present course. The Web of Knives is out of control, and their lust for violence has turned much of the Middle East into a charnel house. They reject both Islam and modernity in favor of a debased ideology that calls for genocide against all Cainites.

However, the Web of Knives alone would not be an insurmountable obstacle. What tips the scales towards treason against the rest of the Clan are the clear signs of Baali moving behind the scenes, and the possibility of one of the most terrifying Methuselahs in the world rising to purge the Clan. Neither Tegyrius nor Al-Ashrad has any illusions about which factions are likely targets for purging, nor which faction will lead the purge. Accordingly, desperate measures are necessary to preserve the true legacy of the Children of Haqim.

So was born the Preservationist Conspiracy. For the last decade, the Vizier and the Amr have been recruiting and laying the groundwork for a mass defection of Assamites who share their socio-political views to other sects, whether it's to the Camarilla, the Sabbat, the Ashirra (a multi-Clan alliance of Muslim vampires active across the Middle East), or some combination of the above. At present, the conspiracy includes a bare majority of the viziers and the sorcerers. The rest are warriors who don't fit within the loyalist paradigm, either because of extreme devotion to Islam or simply opposition to the barbarism of the Path of Blood. Those who have demonstrated the most loyalty to the conspiracy and the most political and social acumen have already been sent abroad to form connections, gain allies, and pave the way for more refugees if and when the Final Nights begin. Among such forerunners, the viziers and the sorcerers gravitate towards Camarilla territories. The former have had good luck posing as Toreador. The latter must usually pose as Caitiff and hope that no one asks too many questions.

The Assamite Antitribu

Many Kindred mistakenly assume that the Assamite *antitribu* represent a separate bloodline. That is untrue.

The *antitribu* are simply Assamite warriors who are not subject to the Tremere Curse. Among the Tremere, the conventional explanation for that oddity is that the *antitribu* had already abandoned their Clan before the curse took hold, and thus they were not subject to the sympathetic magic. Among the Assamite sorcerers, more sinister theories hold sway, theories suggesting that those who became the *antitribu* somehow invoked the power of the Baali to overcome the magic of the Tremere. Regardless, the "Free Assamites" found that they had no place among the Children, and so they offered their blades to the Sabbat, which was eager to accept. There, the Angels of Caine could sate their lust for vitae and their desire to lower their Generation via diablerie without sanction.

Few outside the *antitribu* understand it, but there are really two factions of Assamites in the Sabbat. The first wave of Assamite *antitribu* consists primarily of elders who clearly remember their time among the Children. To them, the Sabbat is a means to an end — the destruction of the Camarilla and especially the Tremere so that the rest of the Clan can be freed. In that capacity, those elders became the backbone of the Black Hand, the military generals of the Sabbat.

However, as part of their duties, those Assamite elders were forced to Embrace haphazardly and without opportunity to teach their childer the ways of the Assamite Clan. Further complicating matters is the fact that one of these "Assamite ways" is the Path of Blood, which would be heretical to any Sabbat priests who learned of it, so the *antitribu* must walk a fine line. As a result, the younger Assamites know nothing of the Clan's history, of the legends of Haqim, or of the castes. They know only that they hunger for the blood of Cainites. Moreover, to the extent that they have learned anything about Haqim, the younger *antitribu* have learned that he's an Antediluvian who will someday rise to kill everyone. This does not endear the *antitribu* to the Children of Haqim, and vice versa.

Minor Factions

The Dispossessed

The Dispossessed are not really a faction. Indeed, they are arguably the antithesis of a faction, as historically, the Assamites use the term to describe what other Kindred would refer to as "autarkis" — that is to say, Assamites who want nothing to do with other Assamites. The term is ancient, and reportedly used after the fall of the Second City to describe Clan members who sought their own destinies instead of journeying with Haqim to Alamut. Arguably, the Preservationist Conspiracy can be viewed as a large group of "soon to be Dispossessed," but it's really more accurate to say that the Preservationists want an Assamite Clan of their own, while the true Dispossessed merely wish to be left to their own devices.

The Leopards of Zion

The Leopards of Zion have come and gone over the centuries. As long as the Assamites have recruited from the Middle East, they have recruited Jews. As long as there have been Jewish Assamites, there have been Leopards ready to defend their people against whoever would threaten them. The Leopards of Zion are an informal group of loyal Jewish Assamites who invariably support the Jewish people and the State of Israel wherever possible. This often causes friction between Leopards and Palestinian Assamites, and so the Leopards must tread softly. Further complicating matters for the group is internal friction — not all of the Leopards are convinced that Israel's general attitudes towards Palestine are good for the nation in the long run. Currently the group papers over such divisions. They are vastly outnumbered by Assamites who have little to no regard for Israel's sanctity at all, and they cannot afford any internal divisions.

The Thousand-Meter Club

Like the Leopards, the Thousand-Meter Club is a social group. Instead of an alliance based on ethnicity, club members unite in their mutual respect for mastery of a single weapon: the sniper rifle. Membership is extended to any Assamite who successfully assassinates a target from a distance of 1,000 meters or more without the use of any Disciplines. The unofficial founder is Sgt. Randy Hopkirk, a U.S. Marine sniper from Alabama who had over fifty confirmed kills in World War II before his sire selected him for the Embrace. There are no official requirements for joining the Thousand-Meter Club other than a confirmed kill from at least 1,000 meters. As a practical matter, however, that usually requires exceptional skill with firearms.

Kairouan Brotherhood

A family of inbred ghouls, created by the Assamite Sorcerers of Al-Qayrawan as a method of studying and experimenting after the Assamites encountered the Tzimisce revenants in Europe. Rumors say that the warrior caste drove the mystics out of Alamut for their "unnatural" experiments, but this family continues in the modern nights. Some are merchants and deal with the viziers more than other Assamites, while others still have ties to the sorcerer caste.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Antitribu Shovelhead

You were an accountant before the Watts Riots. You think it's important to remember that for some reason. You don't remember what the trigger was (something racial maybe?), but you're pretty sure it was really cover for a Crusade. That's what the Sabbat calls it when they march into a city, grab some handy locals, hit them with a shovel, and feed them some blood before burying them alive. Well, not alive. You were definitely dead when you dug yourself out of the grave.

They said you were an Assamite, and you were as surprised as anyone was when you survived the Crusade. Once you realized you were a goddamned vampire, you thought about killing yourself. It was the right thing to do. But before you had the chance, you got into a scrape with the one of the local Camarilla vamps, and you drained the bitch dry. Goddamn. It was better than coke, even better than sex. So you decided that you were probably damned anyway. Might as well see if there's any more of that "vee-tay" for the taking.

Contract Assassin

You were 14 the first time you killed a man. Granted, it was your own father and it was because you were tired of his disgusting touch in the night. Unfortunately, the penalty for murder was harsh under Moroccan law, even when the "victim" was a child molester. Luckily, for you, someone thought your actions were both justified and skillful. He visited you in jail and offered you freedom and power you'd never dreamed of provided that you were willing to kill again... and again. Your sire was not a part of the Web of Knives, which was why he was even considering a female. You gathered that he wanted to prove a point to his political rivals. Three years later, he was sufficiently satisfied with your skills with a gun, a knife, a bottle of poison, or your bare hands to receive the Embrace. You've been proving his point ever since, usually for one million USD per kill.

Crypto-Kabbalist

The Leopards have always defended Israel. Once that meant using swords, then guns, and then jet airplanes. You used to do it with numbers and computer programs as one of Mossad's top computer analysts. Then, an Assamite sorcerer recruited you to see if it was possible to do Kabbalah-based numerology rituals with computers. You're still working on that, but you've become a pretty good sorcerer in your own right, and despite your ostensible loyalty the Assamites, you haven't ignored the chance to use your powers on behalf of the Nation of Israel when you can.



Demon Hunter

You were a little girl the first time you saw a djinn (well, *you* thought it was a djinn). You had awoken to a strange noise and crept into your parents' room to see what it was. You gasped as you saw the boy with bright red skin floating in mid-air over your parents' bed. He looked at you and giggled. Then he set your parents on fire. Everyone else said it was a bomb, one of many that fell on Beirut during Lebanon's civil war. You knew differently and devoted yourself to learning everything you could about the djinn, the efrit, and the other evil spirits of the Middle East. Your studies led you to the Children of Haqim and your devotion (as well as your unusual ability to see dematerialized spirits) eventually led to the Embrace. Now, you wander Lebanon and Syria as you will, ignoring the violence of the kine in your search for the evil spirits that fatten themselves on it, spirits that you either bind into your service or destroy in the name of Allah and Haqim.

Dispossessed Anarch

You never asked for the Embrace, and you certainly never asked to be Embraced as an Assamite warrior. From the start, you wanted nothing to do with your weird Clan of crazy Islamist killers. Luckily, your sire wasn't in the Web of Knives, so he didn't cart you off to be brainwashed. He was just a warrior who thought he'd found a kindred spirit (so to speak) in a French Legionnaire serving in Algiers. He taught you just enough to survive, and other Kindred you encountered taught you where to go. A year later, you were in L.A... just in time for the Sabbat to attack. You fought back and helped out as you could, and you even saved the unlife of an important Anarch Baron. He repaid you by bringing you into his crew and by not asking any questions about your occasional use of Quietus.

Envoy to the Camarilla

In life, you were a Jew whose work with the Danish Resistance led to becoming an Israeli intelligence operative after your post-war emigration. In death, you discovered that you had joined a Clan that was hostile towards women, towards Westerners, and increasingly towards Jews. Your fellow viziers were all right, but your parents had told you stories about what it was like in the 1930s before everything went to hell, and you could see the writing on the wall. When one of Tegyrius's people started to sound you out about joining their conspiracy, you interrupted him to tell him quite a few things you'd already figured out that he didn't know. Then you asked what you could do to help.

That's how you ended up here in a Camarilla stronghold, posing as a Toreador neonate. You play the part of a glittering and somewhat vapid socialite while you look for ways to ingratiate yourself to the Prince, ways that can open doors for everyone else who's looking to get out.

Ice Queen

The Thousand Meter Club doesn't have many members to begin with, but unlike much of the Clan, it is surprisingly accepting of women. Of course, you're used to competing against men successfully. You and women like you fought for Mother Russia and for the Revolution against the Nazis. Your specialty was the sniper rifle, and with over fifty confirmed kills, you were damned good at it. By the war's end, you'd been recruited into a much better fighting force by your sire, a woman with skin the color of midnight who watched you kill four Germans who never had a clue where you were. "Magnificent," she said as the last one's head disintegrated. You've traveled with her ever since serving as her protégé, her bodyguard, and her occasional lover.

Mujahid

In life, you were a member of the Republican Guard who fought in the Iran-Iraq War during the 1980s. The conflict between the governments bored you, as did the conflict between Sunni and Shia. You were a soldier, you were paid to kill, and you were good at it. Sometimes, it bothered you when your fellow soldiers looked at you like a monster, but that was their weakness not yours. After the war was over, you mustered out and were looking for work when a man showed up at your home. Without even introducing himself, he spat in your face and then tossed you a knife. Even though you were armed and he was not, he still beat you senseless. Despite that, he still smiled at you and said you had potential. Then he showed you his fangs and asked whether you wanted to be a killer or a victim. You never hesitated. You never will.

Oil Company Executive

In life, you were a minor relative of an Arab oil sheik, not connected enough to be wealthy in your own right, but close enough to get a good education, including a business degree from America. You graduated just in time for the 1973 Oil Crisis, which briefly put OPEC on top of the world. It didn't last – the 1980s saw a massive collapse in oil prices – but by then your place in the Saudi Arabian national oil company, Saudi Aramco, was secure. More importantly, your reputation as a savvy and ruthless businessman preceded you; so much so, it attracted the attention of a vizier elder who was having some problems grasping the intricacies of the energy sector as it applied to late twentieth century geopolitics. He needed your

expertise and offered immortality in exchange, a bargain you found quite satisfactory. Tonight, you split your time between the boardrooms of Riyadh and the pleasure palaces of Dubai. There are deals to make in both venues.

The Seer

You were nine when you first had a vision of the future. You were fifteen when your vision told you how and where you would die. You were seventeen when you vision told you that your death was not your end but your true beginning. You were eighteen and a woman when you left your home in the south of Morocco for Egypt, where you wandered the nights until you found a particular apartment that called out to you. You knocked on the door, and when a tall man with ebony skin opened the door, you smiled and said, "I am ready to die, master." You have not had any more visions since your Embrace, but you took to Assamite Sorcery as though you were destined for it... which, of course, you know that you were.

Merits and Flaws

Sectarian Ally (1pt. Merit)

You have a close friend in one of the Kindred sects. Perhaps you are a warrior who is in touch with one of the *antitribu*, a vizier who shares common business interests with some Camarilla Ventrue, or a sorcerer who corresponds with one of the rare blood magicians of the Anarch Movement. Your ally can help you navigate the currents of their sect, but they might want something in exchange from time to time.

Thousand Meter Killer (1pt. Merit)

You have proven yourself worthy to join the Thousand Meter Club through your remarkable skill with the sniper rifle. The difficulty of all rolls associated with sniping is reduced by -1. You also double the normal range when using a sniper rifle as a weapon.

Outcast (2pt. Flaw)

Your have rejected the ethos of the caste into which you were Embraced. Perhaps you are one of the few viziers or sorcerers to support the Web of Knives or pursue the Path of Blood. Perhaps you are a warrior who has little stomach for combat, preferring instead to be a diplomat or a student of the occult. Perhaps you made some kind of public spectacle that revealed your disdain for your fellow caste members. Your sire now rejects you, as do the other members of your caste. The difficulty of all Social rolls against members of your caste is at +2.

Broken Antitribu (3pt. Flaw)

You are one of those most pitiful things — an Assamite *antitribu* who still labors under the Tremere Curse. You have pledged yourself to the Sabbat, but you cannot perform diablerie and can only partake of Kindred vitae already transubstantiated through the Vaulderie. As a result, the difficulty of all Social rolls against other Sabbat members is at +2.

Multiple Curses (3pt. Flaw)

In addition to the normal curse imposed upon you by your caste or sect, you suffer one additional one associated with the Assamite Clan. Most likely, you are a rare vizier or sorcerer within the Sabbat who suffers the Baali Curse in addition to your normal caste-imposed curse, but at the Storyteller's discretion, other combinations may be possible.

Discipline Powers

The most common powers associated with the Quietus Discipline are in **V20**, pp. 203-209. In general, the warriors favor these powers for their combat applications. However, a vizier seldom has need to kill an enemy by spitting in his face and a sorcerer even less so. Accordingly, below are alternate versions of the common Quietus powers available to the vizier and sorcerer castes — only the modifications to the powers listed in **V20** are presented here. The player of a vizier or sorcerer character must decide when purchasing the individual power whether to take the traditional version associated with the warriors or the caste-specific version.

Sorcerer Quietus

• Silence of Death

Despite no one being able to hear her, the sorcerer can still speak. While this may seem a meaningless distinction, many applications of Assamite Sorcery require verbal incantations, which this power allows the sorcerer to use without drawing attention to herself.

•• Scorpion's Curse (Scorpion's Touch)

The sorcerer version of Scorpion's Touch is Scorpion's Curse. It allows the sorcerer to place a ward on a solid surface such as a door, a section of floor, or even a small object such as a box or a letter. The sorcerer may ward any object or area up to her Intelligence dots in square yards/meters. A few seconds after the power is activated, the blood ward fades and can only be spotted with a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 9) or a Perception +

Investigation roll (difficulty 7). The ward lasts for a number of days equal to her Occult dots before dissipating, but while it lasts, anyone who touches the affected area or item is targeted by the Discipline just as though a warrior using Scorpion's Touch had successfully touched him.

••• Dagon's Call

The sorcerer and vizier equivalents for Dagon's Call both work the same. Instead of ravaging the target's body, the Assamite harrows the mind.

Mechanically, this power works the same as the warrior version except as follows: First, the roll is the Assamite's Manipulation versus the target's Intelligence. The difficulty for both rolls is the other's permanent Willpower. Second, instead of inflicting lethal damage, each net success for the Assamite strips the target of temporary Willpower. If the Assamite spends a Willpower point and continues to roll even after the target has lost all her temporary Willpower, additional successes strip the target of one dot of *permanent* Willpower. This represents the most damage that this power can inflict in a single night regardless of successes, but a target who has lost all of her Willpower dots through use of Dagon's Call on successive nights is reduced to a mindless husk.

As with the warrior version, the Assamite need not be within the target's presence to trigger this attack.

•••• Baal's Caress

The sorcerer version of Baal's Caress is less useful for slaying enemies than for smiting demons. With this power, the sorcerer can spend one point of blood that he smears across his eyes. For the rest of the scene, the sorcerer can perceive dematerialized spirits and similar creatures as if they were material. If he spends additional points of blood to coat a melee weapon such as a dagger or sword, that weapon can strike such targets and harm them normally despite their intangibility.

••••• Taste of Death

The sorcerer equivalent to Taste of Death works exactly the same as the warrior equivalent, except that the attack only targets dematerialized spirits and the like as if they were solid. This is if the sorcerer has already used Baal's Caress to make himself capable of perceiving such beings.

Vizier Quietus

• Silence of Death

Once the zone of silence is activated, the vizier can decide whom, if anyone, can hear him when he speaks. Thus, while the power is active, he can allow one or more people to hear him while no one else can. More importantly, he can deliver instructions backed by Presence or Dominate without anyone else noticing.

•• Ishtar's Touch (Scorpion's Touch)

The vizier version of Scorpion's Touch is Ishtar's Touch. Instead of yielding a deadly poison, this power converts the vizier's blood into a touch-activated narcotic that puts the victim into an inebriated state under which he is more vulnerable to Presence, Dominate, and even mundane Social manipulation.

The vizier's player must spend a variable number of blood points (up to their Generation maximum) and roll Willpower, (difficulty 6). If the roll succeeds and the vizier touches the target's exposed skin, the tainted blood passes into the target's blood stream through the skin. The target must then roll Stamina + Fortitude (difficulty 6) — each success subtracts from the successes rolled for the vizier. If any successes remain, the power takes effect.

While the effect lasts, the target is unable to spend Willpower to resist mental or social manipulation by the vizier, and the difficulties for all rolls by the vizier for such manipulation (whether natural or supernatural) are reduced by the number of blood points spent, to a minimum of 4. This effect only lasts while the target remains in the vizier's presence, after which she will come to her senses. However, if the vizier returns to the victim's presence, she will automatically fall back into her addled state.

This debility lasts for a duration determined by the vizier's successes as follows.

Successes	Result
1	One turn
2	One hour
3	One day
4	One month
5	One year

••• Dagon's Call

As per the sorcerer equivalent above.

•••• Baal's Caress

The viziers are rarely as eager to slay their opponents as the warriors are. Subjugation is much more desirable. The vizier may coat a weapon with her vitae just as the warrior does with her version of this power. However, on a successful strike, the blow does not inflict any damage at all. Instead, success on the damage roll causes the target to

lose a point of temporary Willpower. More importantly, if the target loses *all* of his temporary Willpower by Baal's Caress, he temporarily becomes fully blood-bonded to the vizier. This effect only lasts for a single scene, but during that time, the target responds to the vizier as if he had drunk the vizier's blood three times. If the target is already bound to another vampire, she may roll Resolve (difficulty 7) to resist commands from the vizier that conflict with the wishes of her regnant as she understands them.

Ironically, Tremere, due to their Clan weakness, are particularly vulnerable to this power, and will remain under the effect of the temporary blood bond for the remainder of the night rather than a scene.

••••• Taste of Bliss (Taste of Death)

Unlike the distasteful and caustic version of this power used by the warriors, the vizier equivalent is Taste of Bliss. Instead of spitting out a deadly acid, the vizier softly exhales a fine reddish mist towards the target. The vizier may target someone up to 10 feet (3 meters) away per dot of Strength and Potence he possesses. Hitting the target requires a Stamina + Athletics roll, (difficulty 6). If the attack hits, the vizier's player rolls two dice per blood point spent, and the difficulty is the target's current Willpower. Each success strips the target of one point of temporary Willpower, and if the target loses all of her Willpower, she treats the vizier as if she has a full blood bond to him until the sun rises. Moreover, if the attack succeeds in causing the target to lose even one point of Willpower, treat the attack as if the target had actually consumed a point of blood for normal blood bonding purposes.

Combination Disciplines

If a combination Discipline power lists a caste-specific version of Quietus as a requirement, only the exact power listed must be of the caste type. For example, if the requirement is "Quietus (Vizier Caste) •••••," then the character only needs to have Taste of Bliss — the other four Quietus powers can be any combination of default or vizier-specific Quietus. If no caste-specific version is mentioned, any version of Quietus will suffice as a prerequisite.

Baal's Sight (Auspex ••, Quietus (Sorcerer Caste) ••••)

Oft times, the demon hunters of the sorcerer caste lack the time to activate the spiritual sight associated with Baal's Caress. This power removes the requirement that they do so.

System: Upon learning this power, the sorcerer gains the permanent ability to see dematerialized spirits and the like. There is no roll and no cost for doing so, and this counts as part of the requirement for the sorcerer version of Taste of Death (p. 27). However, the power permanently alters the sorcerer's eyes, rendering them disturbingly bloodshot as if he had a permanent infection in both eyes. In addition, any spirit in the sorcerer's presence will intuitively sense that he can see them, which some spirits find offensive.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Draught of the Soul (Auspex ••••, Quietus •••••)

This power is largely a relic of the days before the Tremere Curse. While many Assamite elders still know it, Draught of the Soul is useless to those who cannot drink the blood of other Cainites. The *antitribu* can still make use of it, however, and if the Tremere Curse is ever lifted, all Assamites will have the potential to drink the memories of their victims instead of just their souls.

System: This power can only be used when an Assamite commits diablerie. The player spends a number of Willpower points equal to the victim's Intelligence and then rolls Willpower (difficulty equal to the victim's permanent Willpower plus one for every Derangement she had; maximum 9).

If the roll is successful, the player gains one experience point for every Skill in which the victim's rating was equal to or greater than that of the character. The bonus experience points can only be spent to improve Skills in which the victim's rating equaled or exceeded that of the Assamite. These experience points should be kept in a separate pool. At the Storyteller's discretion, the character may also be able to access specific memories of the victim, usually while in a dreamlike state. If the player's roll botches, the character gains a permanent derangement, usually one previously held by the victim if appropriate.

This power costs 27 experience points.

Eyes of Alamut (Auspex ••••, Quietus •••)

This power allows for a most cunning surveillance. The Assamite must touch the target to activate the power. If successful, then for the next hour per success, she can see through the target's eyes and hear through his ears.

System: To activate Eyes of Alamut, the player must spend a Willpower point and roll Perception + Awareness



(difficulty is target's current Willpower). This power can only be used to scry on someone who the Assamite has physically touched, and the connection only lasts for an hour. A target who also has Telepathy (Auspex ••••) may notice the fact that someone is riding his senses with a successful Perception + Occult roll (difficulty 6). Such a character automatically realizes the intrusion if the Assamite uses Command From Afar and the control attempt is unsuccessful.

This power costs 21 experience points to learn.

Eyes of Blades (Auspex ••, Celerity •••)

The Assamite can use her preternatural speed to evade or parry a flurry of attacks.

System: At the start of the character's combat turn, the player spends two blood points and one Willpower point. This counts as activating Celerity for a turn. During this turn, the character may take no action other than self-defense, but she can defend herself with her full dice pool (whether dodging or parrying) against *every* attack made against her on that turn.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

Forced March (Celerity ••, Fortitude ••)

Forced March allows the Assamite to cover ground quickly. This power cannot be used in combat but can aid the Assamite in moving with great speed without the debilitating vitae cost of conventional Celerity.

System: The Assamite spends a number of blood points equal to half his Celerity rating, rounded up. For a number of hours equal to his Fortitude, the Assamite multiplies his normal running speed by his Celerity rating. Thus, an Assamite with Fortitude ••• and Celerity •••• who could normally run at around four miles per hour (six kph) could use this power to run at a speed of 16 miles per hour (25 kph) for up to three hours.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Honeyed Words (Auspex ••, Presence •)

The viziers are preternaturally skillful at telling their listeners what they want to hear. So skillful, in fact, that a vizier sometimes doesn't even need to know what he's talking about. This power assures the vizier that, no matter

what words tumble out of his mouth, they are always the perfect response.

System: The player must roll Manipulation + Expression (difficulty 6). For the remainder of the scene, the difficulty for all rolls to persuade, manipulate, or interrogate a single target through mundane conversation are reduced by the number of successes rolled to a minimum of 4. Additionally, the Storyteller (or player if this power is used against a player's character) must advise the vizier's player if the vizier is in danger of saying anything that might offend, confuse, or worry the target. It is possible to use this power to baffle someone with highly technical jargon that the vizier himself doesn't understand at all.

This power costs 9 experience points to learn.

Shadow Feint (Celerity ••, Obfuscate ••)

Shadow Feint combines the characteristics of Celerity and Obfuscate to blur the perceptions of her enemies.

System: At the beginning of any turn in which the Assamite has activated Celerity and in which her first action is an evasive one, the player may spend an additional blood point to activate Shadow Feint. For the rest of the turn, the difficulty of all rolls to target the Assamite increase by +2, to a maximum of 9. This is an Obfuscate power and cannot affect any vampire whose Auspex exceeds the Assamite's Obfuscate.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Assamite Weaknesses

Given the diversity of the Assamites and the unusual number of curses levied against them over their history, we've spelled them out for you here.

The Curse of Growing Darkness

All Assamites suffer from this. For younger Assamites, this is a minor inconvenience — after a century, most Caucasians will look vaguely well-tanned, most Arabs and Middle Easterners will look dusky, and most Africans will have ebony skin.

After three to five centuries, the skin tone becomes distinctly unnatural. There are, after all, no ethnicities in the world whose skin tone is *literally* jet-black, which is common among Assamite elders. An Assamite elder who is more than five centuries old suffers a +1 difficulty to Social rolls among mortals due to his unusually dark skin tone. An elder who is more than a thousand years old suffers a +3 difficulty and looks distinctly inhuman, though not as disturbing as the typical Nosferatu or Tzimisce. Both of these penalties can be overcome with appropriate levels of Obfuscate.

Most Assamites think this curse is an inversion of the minor curse on the other Clans, who generally grow paler as time passes. The Amr, who for some reason is immune to this curse, is of the opinion that the Curse of Growing Darkness was the *original* curse levied on the Clan by Caine, and that the other various Clan weaknesses came later.

The Baali Curse or the Curse of Hunger

This curse — an unquenchable thirst for Kindred vitae — currently afflicts only the Assamite *antitribu* (as described in **V20**, p. 429). Until the imposition of the Tremere Curse, it afflicted many of the warrior caste and a few members of the vizier and sorcerer caste. Now the curse has spread. Although this curse is presently dormant in mainline Assamites, if the Tremere Curse were lifted, it would likely return with a vengeance. In such a case, the Curse of Hunger would automatically take root in all warrior caste Assamites. For viziers and sorcerers, suffering this curse on top of their normal caste curses constitutes a three-point Flaw.

The Curse of Obsession

This curse afflicts the vizier caste. Its origins are unknown, and it may date back to the Second City. It manifests as an Obsessive-Compulsive disorder (as described in **V20**, p. 434).

The Curse of Prominence

This curse afflicts the sorcerer caste. The Amr claims that this "curse" is actually benign and that it is merely a natural result of their magical heritage, rather than a punishment levied against the caste. It manifests as an unusually vivid aura that marks all sorcerers as having magical power in the eyes of anyone with Auspex or comparable mystic senses, (as described in **V20**, p. 434).

The Tremere Curse or the Curse of Blood

This curse afflicts all Assamites other than the *antitribu*. It causes Assamites to suffer a deadly allergic reaction to the consumption of Kindred vitae, (as described in **V20**, p. 49). If Ur-Shulgi rises, it is likely he will lift this curse as his first act.

New Dur-An-Ki Ritual: From Marduk's Throat (Level Five)

This ritual is the means by which Assamites can continue to reduce their Generation despite the limitations imposed by the Tremere Curse. It is also the mechanism by which the sorcerer caste maintains some influence and control over the Clan despite their small numbers, as the ritual's difficulty means that only very experienced sorcerers can use it. The sorcerer creates an alchemical substitute for vampiric blood, allowing an Assamite who drinks enough to decrease her Generation. The ingredients include a wide variety of chemicals, herbs, and other exotic materials, but the most important ingredient is Kindred blood.

To reduce the drinker's Generation by one level, the potion must incorporate a number of blood points from vampires of lower Generation than the drinker equal to four times the maximum blood point value of the desired Generation. For example, an Assamite who sought to reduce her Generation from Eighth to Seventh would need to procure twenty-eight points of blood from Kindred whose own Generation was Seventh or lower. Regardless of how much vitae that is, the result of the alchemical process will evaporate down into a thick sludgy material that the imbiber must consume in a single attempt.

The potion is foul, and requires the imbiber to successfully roll Willpower (difficulty 9). If that roll succeeds, the Assamite must then successfully assimilate the blood into her body. This requires an extended Willpower roll (difficulty 9), seeking 15 successes for a new Generation. Failures don't stop the process, but they do deal six dice of lethal damage apiece (soaked normally). Assimilation is so painful and distracting that any attacks made against her during this time face a difficulty of only 2.





BRUJAH

"I rebel; therefore we exist."

— Albert Camus, The Rebel

PAYING IT FORWARD

Shelly clutched her stomach as she stumbled down the street. She'd lost a heel from one of her shoes, and that made walking complicated. The trauma of her attack made it even more so. Part of her was still amazed to be alive and relatively unhurt. When the asshole in the leather trench coat grabbed her and dragged her into the alley, she felt sure that she was about to be raped and probably killed. Instead, there was a sharp pain in her neck, and then she woke up sometime later with a headache and a burning sensation in her throat. Dazed, she staggered out of the wrong end of the alley and was a few blocks away before she realized that she was lost. Then she heard the whistle.

Turning quickly, Shelly saw a trio of young gangbangers step out onto the street and start walking towards her. She remembered now that she'd been heading for an underground party in a less-than-safe part of Chicago, but she'd told her friends that it would be okay as long as they didn't go past the expressway. She now realized that she was quite a ways past 51st Street. Now, she wasn't okay. She had dodged one encounter only to stumble into another, and it looked like she might well get raped and killed after all. Yet somehow, that pounding in her skull and that burning in her throat actually seemed like bigger problems to her than the approaching thugs.

"You look a little lost, pretty thing. Don't you worry. Me and my boys are gonna take good care of you. Show you a real good time." The leader of the trio leered at her, and his two buddies laughed cruelly. She should have been afraid. Of course, being angry at her circumstances was an understandable reaction too, but fear should have crowded out the anger. Tonight, it didn't. The boys laughed and advanced. The pounding and the burning got worse. Then everything went red, and the screaming started. The tiny part of Shelly that retained some awareness of her surroundings was genuinely surprised that the screams weren't hers.

Everything was red, fuzzy, and unbearably hot. The sensations subsided for a moment as something warm and delicious flowed down her throat, easing her strange thirst. However, as soon as the liquid stopped flowing, the red came back stronger than before... right up until something that felt like a sledgehammer struck her right between the eyes.

She awoke sometime later in another place. The thirst was still there, but weaker and, for the moment, manageable. The pounding in her head was much fainter but still there, as if waiting for the right moment to crank back up again. She was on a couch in a tasteful yet Spartan apartment. Framed pictures of concert posters covered the wall. Across the room was a young black male who looked to be in his early twenties if not younger, sitting in a leather office chair behind a smart IKEA desk. He was wearing a Versace suit over a T-shirt, and was reading an "Intro to Conversational Greek" textbook. As Shelly sat up, he set the book aside on top of some other books about Greek philosophy, mainly Aristotle.

"So," he said. "Are we cool? Or are you gonna frenzy again?"

"Frenzy?" she asked weakly.

"Yeah, it's what we call it when we go crazy and kill everything that moves. You feel like you're gonna do it? Because I'd hate to have to punch you out again before we talk. I mean, a black guy hitting a white girl just looks bad, you know? Makes me feel like I'm conforming to stereotypes."

At those words, she suddenly felt a brief stab of... not pain, exactly, but a flash of anger so intense that it made her head hurt again. Then it was gone. "I'm okay. You don't need to hurt me."

"I don't plan to. When were you Embraced?"

She just stared at him, and he rolled his eyes. "Okay, when were you turned? You know, into a vampire?"

"A... vampire?"

He sighed and then opened his mouth. Shelly gasped as his incisors slid down into wicked fangs.

"What's your name?" he asked, retracting the fangs.

"Sh... Shelly."

"Okay, Shelly, my name's Dre. Now, I'm gonna spell things out for you. Sometime recently, maybe earlier tonight, some asshole attacked you, bit you on the neck, and made you pass out. When you woke up, you were thirstier than you'd ever been and you had this splitting headache that grew and grew until those idiots pissed you off and then everything went black. Sound familiar?"

She nodded quietly.

"Now here's what I need to know. Did you see the vampire who did this to you? Or did he say anything?"

"I... I didn't see his face. He was big and wearing a heavy coat. But he did say something." She wiped a tear from her eyes and then froze when she realized it was blood. "He said... 'Tell 'em Jack sent you.'" She didn't look up from the bloody tears on her fingertips.

Dre cursed softly. "Well, then, I guess that makes you my little sister or something. Smiling Jack is my sire too. He blows into Chicago like clockwork every few years, Embraces someone into Clan Brujah — that's what you are now, a Brujah like me — and then splits, leaving all the other Brujah to clean up his mess."

"Bruja? That's Spanish for 'witch,' isn't it?"

Dre laughed. "You know, I said the exact same thing when I was in your shoes. Don't worry, though. I got a guy you can talk to tomorrow night, once you've rested. He's a Brujah too, but he's old as shit and pompous as hell. But he answered all my questions after my Embrace, and he can do the same for you."

Without meaning to, Dre glanced over to the mirror on the wall and took in his reflection. He hadn't aged at all, but the expensive suit he wore instead of threadbare gang colors was just one sign of how he'd grown in the last twenty-five years. He turned back to Shelly. "Consider this me paying it forward."

THE TRUE HISTORY OF REBELLION

IN THE BEGINNING

Our Clan's origins date back to the first human city, Enoch, which was founded more than 10,000 years ago. Accordingly, reliable records about our earliest nights are... spotty. There are disagreements as to names, dates, genders, and motivations. What I tell you of those nights is merely the most commonly recited fable.

Caine, the first vampire, founded the city of Enoch, and abandoned his childer and grandchilder after the Great Flood destroyed the city. His heirs rebuilt, but conflict broke out in the Second City between those of the Second and Third Generations, with the latter destroying the former. The city fell soon after. At some point during this conflict, the one we call Brujah was slain. Most say one of her Fourth Generation childer, a man called Troile, committed diablerie upon her, but there are other stories saying that Brujah was murdered by the Ventrue Antediluvian and Troile diablerized him in retaliation. According to those stories, the bloody enmity between the Brujah and the Ventrue dates to that night. Then again, other stories say Troile was the Antediluvian and Brujah *his* murdering childe (or maybe hers, since even the genders of the relative parties are speculative).

The early Brujah were considered a Clan of learning, at least according to our collective mythology. It seems unlikely to me that the entire Clan had such restrained proclivities. After all, our Clan is known for strength, speed, emotional manipulation, and berserker furies, and while many ancient Brujah were philosophers, it seems improbable that our ancestors collectively played the role of "The Learned Clan" assigned to us by antiquity. Then again, perhaps the earliest Brujah, resentful of our legendary temper, sought to fight against their natural instinct for violence by becoming more intellectual and philosophical. Troile's Fourth Generation peers supposedly were more emotionally restrained than those descended directly from him, so perhaps our historical reputation stems from them. In any case, it's a moot point — no one has called us "The Learned Clan" in a long time.

THE TIME OF CARTHAGE

Those early Brujah certainly played important roles in Mesopotamia, in Athens, but most importantly, in Carthage. The jewel of the Phoenician Empire, Carthage was one of the most cosmopolitan cities of its day, and had Hannibal been just a bit more successful in his endeavors, it would have been the center of Western civilization instead of Rome, and we'd all be much better off. While the Roman Ventrue encouraged all vampires to hide their activities from mortals, the Brujah of Carthage walked a different path — open and direct involvement with the city's mortals under the rule of Troile himself as the city's god-king. The Idealists among us say that it was a utopia in which Kindred and kine lived together in peace and mutual respect. The Ventrue, unsurprisingly, disagree. Moreover, since the winners write the history books, most mortal historians ascribe to Carthage a lurid culture of human sacrifice, and most Kindred historians accuse Troile of consorting with demons. It didn't help that while Brujah dominated the city's Kindred population, Troile also allowed a sizeable population of Assamites and Setites to make their havens there. Despite Troile's best efforts, there were probably many abuses of mortals by members of those Clans and by younger Brujah corrupted by them.

The initial conflicts between Carthage and Rome were the sort of military skirmishes that one might expect to flare up between two competing empires sharing spheres of influence. We don't know what led the Roman Ventrue to conclude that Carthage was an existential threat and to commit themselves to its annihilation, but something did. Probably the Malkavians, who infested Rome and spread madness and paranoia in their wake. Eventually, Rome took the city, burned it to the ground, and salted the earth, supposedly to prevent any Kindred who had melded into the soil from emerging. According to some tales, Troile himself lies buried beneath the Tunisian soil, trapped for eternity. Certainly, he has never made his presence felt in all the nights since. Well, not his physical presence. Some think our hereditary tendency towards frenzy is a result of a blood-based link to a crazed Clan founder who lies trapped for eternity in agonized hunger beneath the sands of Tunis.

The broader effect of the loss of Carthage can be seen in the rise of Roman (and therefore Ventrue) hegemony. At the time Carthage fell, it was the only civilization remotely capable of counterbalancing Rome's power. Without Carthage, there was nothing to stop Rome from becoming the dominant socio-political force in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. With it came the authoritarian megalomaniacs of Clan Ventrue, who spent the next two millennia convinced that their destruction of Carthage justified their right to rule over all other Kindred. Carthage fell long before Caesar, but few Brujah were surprised when the Roman Republic became the Roman Empire,

and the very idea of individual liberty was sacrificed on the altar of Roman nationalism. There's a reason the twentieth century fascists picked the Roman image of an eagle clutching a bundle of sticks as their symbol, after all.

FROM INQUISITION TO REVOLT

The Roman era and the later "Dark Age" that accompanied Rome's fall represented a dark time for Clan Brujah. No, that's inaccurate. We honestly haven't had a time since Carthage fell that wasn't dark by some measure. Our successes since then have been sporadic and have often cost us more in lives and principles than we've gained. The first stab at a Brujah resurgence came in the Middle Ages during the Anarch Revolt. The Revolt had its origins in the Catholic Church's Inquisition against the Catharist heresy. While in the process of burning Albigensians at the stake over various doctrinal disputes, the Inquisitors discovered to their surprise that some of the Cathars were, in fact, vampires. Upon finding conclusive proof of our existence, Mother Church did exactly what one would expect of a religion that sprang from authoritarian soil fertilized by the Ventrue — they tried to kill us all.

For a time, they were quite successful. So much so that the European elders decided to send their own childer to their Final Deaths against the Inquisition in the hopes that once all the foot soldiers were dead, the Church would think the war over. Understandably, some of those childer balked at dying for such a purpose, but they lacked not just leadership but the ability to articulate a response other than suicidal obedience. As it happened, there were relatively few Brujah Princes in Europe caught in the path of the Inquisition. Our anti-authoritarian bent, combined with the antipathy of the Ventrue and their bootlickers, largely prevented the Brujah elders of the day from achieving temporal power.

Ironically, this was a boon to our Clan during the Inquisition. Barred from the levers of power but still gifted at persuasion and rhetoric, those Brujah found themselves uniquely positioned to offer an alternative course of action to the terrified childer of the other Clans: Just Say No! The Brujah presented young vampires of the other Clans with an idea that had honestly never occurred to them: rebellion. Defy your sires. Reject their commands. Live your own unlives free of the dictates of others. Have no ruler. The idea spread so well, a word developed for those Kindred who would have no ruler: Anarch.

While our Clan certainly led the Anarch Revolt, we are not so arrogant as to claim we did everything. The Tzimisce Anarchs defeated the blood bond with a ritual that rescued many potential recruits from slavery. The Lasombra also played their part, though in a way that even many of the Brujah Anarchs found troubling — they diablerized their own Clan founder — an event that sent shockwaves through the Kindred of Europe, and one soon repeated against the Tzimisce founder.

Frankly, I'm not so squeamish as to recoil from the idea of Amaranth, although I have never partaken myself. It was a War of Generations, after all, and diablerie was one of the few ways to even the odds between elders and ancillae. However, to every Kindred back then diablerie was the vilest of sins, and cannibalization of two Antediluvians shook the Anarchs even as it galvanized the elders into harsher countermeasures. Then, one of our own elders, Patricia of Bollingbroke, attacked Hardestadt, one of the most influential Ventrue in Europe, and according to some tales, actually diablerized him. Whether that's true or not, the entire Clan turned against our movement with the same ruthlessness than had annihilated Carthage.

The forces against us were insurmountable no matter how hard we fought, but I chose to believe that in the end, we defeated ourselves. The moral clarity of the Anarch cause was blurred and sullied by the high-profile diableries, and even more so when the Assamites offered us their assistance. Basically, if we would provide information on the movements and havens of traditionalist elders, the Assamites would remove said elders, claiming their blood in the process. What started out as a movement of noble freedom fighters fell into a disarrayed collection of Judas goats. It didn't help when the Anarch leaders learned the price they'd paid for help from the Tzimisce: the Vaulderie ritual that allowed us to sever blood bonds did so by replacing those bonds with equally strong emotional ties to the Anarch Movement as a whole. We weren't really freeing the childer of our enemies. We were just enslaving them to different masters.

FROM REVOLT TO "LOYAL OPPOSITION"

Just like that, it was over. Beset at all sides by the nascent Camarilla, by the Inquisition, by the Assamites, and by bloodthirsty cannibals within our own ranks, the Anarch leaders simply surrendered. The Treaty of Thorns allowed most of us — mainly the ones with no black marks in our auras — to join the Camarilla. For many of the Revolt, especially those of Tzimisce or Lasombra stock, that was



unthinkable. First, their pride would not allow it. Second, many of them were exuberant diablerists and would never have been accepted. Finally, most of them had become addicted to both the Vaulderie and the taste of elder blood. Thus, from the ashes of our noble idea, the nightmare of the Sabbat was borne. To this day, the Ventrue point to the Sabbat as an example of why other Kindred should never listen to us. Pompous fuckers.

After Thorns, a small percentage of our Clan chose to join the Sabbat as *antitribu*, but the rest of the Brujah returned to the fold. To be honest, we didn't miss the *antitribu*, as many of them were the ones most prone to frenzy and the ones least likely to present a reasoned argument for, well, anything. They see it as a strength, but we know it for what it really is. We Brujah anticipated being terribly misused by the victorious Ventrue elders, and most of us made a show of how angry we were over the treaty's cruel abuses. In fact, the wiser of the Brujah Anarchs were quietly delighted with the concessions we'd won, particularly once it was clear how those concessions could serve us in practice.

The treaty guaranteed the right of the Anarchs to "work peacefully" to achieve our ends, but did not specify what those ends might be. It guaranteed us all the same rights and privileges of any other Camarilla member. It required anyone who had seized our domains to return them to us, while requiring us only to return assets we had seized to our sires or Clan elders, most of whom were Anarchs just like us. Most importantly, the treaty contained the following incredibly ill-conceived language: "Anarchs are guaranteed the freedom to act as they please short of breaching the 'Masquerade' imposed for the protection of all Kindred from the kine." To put that another way, as long as we helped to preserve the Masquerade and refrained from outright violence against our Camarilla peers, we had the freedom to do whatever we wanted.

I'm still amazed that the Camarilla put such language in a treaty that they considered a binding magical document. I can only assume that the Ventrue were so arrogant that they couldn't imagine the possibility of truculent Brujah insulting them in the heart of their Elysiums. To be honest, I cannot say for sure that the treaty itself was a binding magical document, but we have certainly spread the rumor that it was far and wide, and the Tremere have never openly contradicted us. The Treaty of Thorns was also (or so I'm told) the mechanism by which the Tremere bound the Assamites with their famous blood curse, and as far as most Camarilla vampires know, violating the treaty

Be it known that the Anarchs will enjoin with the Camarilla as an accepted part, making it whole. Anarchs are expected to work peacefully to achieve their own ends. They must become defenders of all and they shall receive full entitlement to all rights and privileges belonging to all Camarilla Kindred. All Anarchs shall be accepted back unto their elders and their formerly denounced Clans without any fear of reprisal. Only the most vicious of atrocities shall not be forgiven. These shall stand written for the Justicars to hear within one year after which all allegations are no longer valid. All Anarchs shall reclaim all remaining and rightful property confiscated from them. In return, they must turn over any war gains taken during the conflict by giving them to their sires or any recognized Clan elder.

Know also that if the Anarchs are further warred upon, this open Jyhad invalidates their responsibility to maintain peace with their attacker. They may act freely without fear of reprisal from any non-active members of the Camarilla. Anarchs are guaranteed the freedom to act as they please short of breaching the "Masquerade" imposed for the protection of all Kindred from the kine.

— Excerpt from the Convention of Thorns

by engaging in sect-wide suppression of the Anarchs could potentially free the Assamites to start their campaign of diablerie again. Then again, it's possible that everything I just told you is nonsense. The Tremere aren't saying either way, and even if the treaty is not magically binding, they might be using it to subtly keep the Anarch Movement around as a way to indirectly undermine the Ventrue. That's certainly consistent with how the Tremere operate in my experience.

Regardless, most Camarilla elders have been remarkably tolerant of Anarchs — and Brujah are largely synonymous with Anarchs in most Camarilla domains — unless they can prove that we've breached the Masquerade or engaged in unprovoked violence, at which point that generally try to crush us like bugs. It's a loophole we've used with considerable success ever since. Instead of interfering directly with Camarilla politics, we go after the mortals. We don't breach the Masquerade, but we push against it as much as we can get away with, using our Presence to inspire mortals to rise up against autocratic governments. In the American colonies, Brujah lit the spark of the American Revolution. In France, we watched from the shadows as angry peasants stormed the Bastille in the name of *Liberté, Equalité,* and *Fraternité.*

FANNING THE FLAMES OF REVOLUTION

FRANCE

Unfortunately, almost immediately, the French Revolution was co-opted despite our best efforts. Not that it was ever really *our* Revolution. Despite what our more prideful kin would tell you, the Kindred rarely have the power and freedom to directly shape mortal society. We Brujah can at best nudge revolutionaries and then fume when our enemies nudge back. In France, those enemies were not the Ventrue for once. The Inquisition had decimated the so-called "Kings" who barely maintained any influence over the *Ancien Régime.* No, it was the Toreador under the leadership of Francois Villon who adroitly undermined us. A whispered word here and

there, and the Montagnards wiped out the Girondists whom we supported and ushered in the Reign of Terror. The bloodshed quickly grew beyond even Villon's power to contain, but the results suited him just fine, as every single mortal suspected of being an agent of the French Brujah lost his head. Within ten years, Napoleon had crowned himself Emperor, and when he proved inadequate for the job of conquering Europe, Villon blocked our efforts to preserve the Republic while the monarchists who subsidized his decadent lifestyle helped the Bourbons back onto their old throne. The Brujah of France were never fully defeated, though, and France has been a hotbed of revolutionary thought ever since, with Toreador-influenced governments repeatedly brought down by popular revolt.

Finally, the rise of the Third Republic in 1870 ended the monarchy for good, and in the twentieth century, the Toreador and the Brujah actually joined forces in the face of Nazi invasion. The Camarilla denies any Kindred involvement in the rise of Hitler, but you'll never persuade me that the Third Reich doesn't have the fingerprints of some Ventrue bastard all over it. Anyway, in the aftermath of World War II, a surprisingly conciliatory Francois Villon made many concessions to his Brujah allies.

The era of détente between the French Brujah and Toreador ultimately allowed for an intriguing cross-fertilization of ideas between artists and revolutionary ideas, one that had its origins in an unusual movement among the kine: The Situationist International. Born in the aftermath of World War II, the Situationists were a group of artists, political activists, and armchair revolutionaries drawn together by a common interest in neo-communist theory and avant-garde art. The group, which was Marxist in nature but opposed to the authoritarianism of the communist dictatorships of the day, sought to use surrealist art to critique the role capitalism played both in destroying the quality of human life and in making a global fetish out of rampant consumerism. The Situationists earned the name because of their belief that it was possible to counteract the pervasive spectacle of capitalism by creating "situations": moments of self-awareness and self-discovery that would inspire individuals to reject mass media culture in favor of the pursuit of their own individual needs and desires. Initially a purely artistic movement, the SI became increasingly anarchist and revolutionary in character, culminating in its role in the 1968 insurrections at universities across France and Belgium. After that apex, the SI's influence declined until its dissolution in the early 1970s.

Whatever influence the Situationist International had on mortal politics, it was definitely influential among the Kindred of France, especially a small coterie of artists and activists who had been effectively shut out of the Paris art scene by more traditionalist Toreador who were scandalized at the idea of using art as a vehicle for revolution. Dada and Surrealism had been around for decades, and in France they had been important avenues for Kindred artists, particularly Malkavians, the more avant garde Toreador and, of course, the Brujah. Generally, however, the intensely conservative French Toreador establishment rejected those movements as serious art. However, of all the Kindred Situationists, only the Brujah would go so far as to see surrealist art as a weapon to use against their political opponents.

Brujah Situationism manifested as an effort to use artwork to galvanize public opinion and undermine Camarilla authority in a way that the Camarilla leaders could barely even understand, let alone suppress. Some Situationists made heavy use of performance art, often using their powers to compel others to perform strange acts in public places that confused or enraged onlookers. Others found ways to incorporate their Kindred disciplines into works of art or musical performance that could affect viewers. In the 1980s, the Situationists incorporated magical techniques derived from the so-called Punk sorcerers who had been forced to flee Britain for France. The extreme countercultural themes that impregnated Punk Sorcery were a good fit for the absurdist revolutionaries of the Situationist movement, and members who had initiated themselves into Punk Sorcery devised several art-themed rituals designed to shock and infuriate the Toreador art establishment and, by extension, the Toreador Camarilla leadership with which it was largely synonymous.

AMERICA

Let me take a step back for a moment. Across the Atlantic, the American Revolution was generally better for our aims. Some of our elders insist that the Brujah played a direct role in the Boston Tea Party, and that the Idealists advised many of the Founders on how to establish a modern democratic state free of the excesses of monarchy. I don't know about all that, but I do know Crispus Attucks ended up in our Clan, so that's something to be proud of.

From our perspective, the results of the American Revolution were imperfect but largely successful. The main sticking point was that the Southern states were unwilling to consider any federal interference in the slave trade, let alone abolition of it. According to some tales, this obsession with chattel slavery was driven in part by the presence of Autarkis vampires — mainly Ventrue, Malkavians, and

Toreador, but with a surprising number of Tremere and Setites—who were using the slave plantations as herds and, in some cases, as fodder for vile blood magic experiments. I don't know if there's any truth to that, but many Brujah elders who supported the North in the later American Civil War considered the abolition of American slavery to be a small revenge on the Ventrue for the fall of Carthage.

Today, the Brujah may not control American democracy, but we have ensured that no other Clan does either. In the 1940s, a Brujah Justicar forbade the Prince of Washington, D.C. from interfering in the affairs of the federal government, a fact that rankles the odious Prince Vitel to this day. Of course, the 1940s would also mark another important moment in our history, this one taking place on the opposite side of the country, but I get ahead of myself.

RUSSIA

Our third major revolutionary effort was perhaps our most successful, but also the one about which our Idealists are most ambivalent. In 1917, after decades of planning, a council of European Brujah engineered the fall of the Tsarist regime and exterminated the Kindred alliance that had quietly dominated Russia for centuries. While the Brujah Council's influence over the Soviet Union fluctuated over the coming decades, their hold on the Soviet Kindred would be nigh absolute... until 1991, when something woke up and apparently killed them all. After a quarter-century, we still don't know what it was, and neither does anyone else. For the moment, the Brujah mostly ignore the issue. Let the Ventrue and the Tremere send their spies and assassins to certain, if mysterious, death.

From the start, the Soviet experiment was troubling to many in our Clan. Our traditions call for us to seek a closer relationship with the kine (at least to the extent permissible under the Masquerade) and to seek individual freedom for ourselves and egalitarianism for all. The Menshevik faction of the Revolution best represented the ideology of the Russian Brujah. Unfortunately, the Mensheviks lost rather decisively to the Bolsheviks, forcing the Brujah revolutionaries to make the best of things. The "best of things" ended up being a brutal totalitarian society as repressive as anything ever fashioned by the Ventrue. By some accounts, the death toll attributed to Stalin is greater than Hitler's, particularly if one subscribes to the view that the 10 million or so Ukrainians who died during the Holodomor (a famine so severe that it was given a *name*) died by deliberate genocide rather than mere grotesque incompetence.

It is unclear whether the Brujah Council ever directly controlled Stalin in any way, and certainly not enough to stem his abuses. On the other hand, the Council had enormous access over the Soviet society as a mechanism for spreading communist revolutionary thought. During their regime, the Council was quite free in financing Anarch activities around the world; so much so that when the Council fell, Anarch cells across the world were caught flat-footed and put at a serious disadvantage in their revolutionary activities.

THE ANARCH FREE STATES

However, the true jewel of Clan Brujah is the Anarch Free States. It represents the clearest expression of Brujah ideals and Anarch thought. It is the closest we've been to the dream of Carthage in two millennia. Naturally, it's a barbarous shit hole. The Free States came into being in 1944, when the Prince of Los Angeles, an obsequious Toreador twit, ordered that a Brujah named Jeremy MacNeil be severely beaten for the crime of seeking justice after the Prince's lackeys abused a number of Caitiff.

In doing so, Don Sebastien made two fatal mistakes. First, Sebastien assumed that MacNeil was a typical Brujah relatively new to the Embrace. MacNeil was, in fact, a battle-hardened 400-year-old elder. Second, Sebastien, who was surprisingly ignorant of Camarilla traditions for the Prince of a major city, failed to realize that unprovoked state-sanctioned violence against an Anarch leader violated the terms of the Treaty of Thorns. In so doing, he effectively gave the Anarchs of L.A. an excuse to violently retaliate to a degree unprecedented since the end of the Anarch Revolt. MacNeil, who was more versed in the details of said treaty than Sebastien, concluded that the Anarchs of L.A. were now in a state of war with the Camarilla, and he treated it as such. Unfortunately for Sebastien and most of the L.A. Camarilla, MacNeil was quite good at warfare. Within a month, L.A. was the first truly Anarch city the world had seen outside of the Soviet Union. Within six months, most of Southern California was an Anarch-held territory, which the Camarilla, still grappling with post-War chaos, could not address.

Unfortunately for the Anarchs, Jeremy MacNeil seems to represent the best and the worst of our Clan. An Idealist dreamer committed to anarchism (with a small "a"), MacNeil not only refused to seize direct control of the Free States, but also took steps to prevent anyone else from doing so, whether in or out of our Clan. The result is not a New Carthage where all Kindred share power as equals. Instead, it is a demilitarized zone where informal vampire gangs claim control over however much territory they can reliably hold. MacNeil installed permanent

committees to preserve the Masquerade and to defend the city against counter-revolution, but beyond that, he failed every test of Kindred governance.

Yet somehow, he's still there. Despite everything, MacNeil and his Brujah allies (Foccart, Attucks, and García, among others) have kept the Free State project working, defending it against the Camarilla, the Sabbat, the Setites, and internal civil war. As most Brujah come to learn, though, history *always* repeats itself.

REBELLION TONIGHT

The Rabble are a complicated family. We are more than we appear to those outside. We are also less than we wish to be and far less than we were in the noble past we imagine for ourselves. We are more in touch with humanity than any other Clan, having spent millennia seeking to elevate our mortal brothers and sisters into equivalence with the Kindred. We are also more divorced from them than most Kindred, for the passions that flare up inside us often burn too hot for the mortals nearby to endure.

INDIVIDUALITY

I like to think that the defining characteristic of a Brujah is her intense desire to maintain her individuality in the face of powerful social groups that demand conformity, whether through the Traditions or the Vaulderie. We seldom seek out overt power among either the Kindred or the kine. A position of authority necessarily carries a requirement of conforming to the expectations of those in authority over you, as well as those over whom you hold authority. Politics is an addicting game: as an addiction, it undermines one's free will, and as a game, it ultimately is nothing but a petty distraction.

Even those of us who do hold power still strive to maintain that sense of individuality. Brujah Princes (and Archbishops, if you're a part of *that* lot) are rare compared to the other Camarilla Clans. Most Princes rule through rigid social control; their power lies in the ability to force their peers to act in a certain way or risk shunning. A Brujah Prince rules by the force of her will, by her charisma, by her passion. Failing that, she rules by being supernaturally strong enough to crush her enemies, whether through the cruel subtlety of emotion-shaping disciplines or the more direct means of a vitae-augmented lead pipe to the head. Regardless, the Brujah Prince will usually be more direct than rivals of other Clans will. The courtly parties might not be as ostentatious, but at least you always know where you stand.

RAGE

Of course, while *I* think individuality defines the Brujah, many others would say that what most defines us is *rage*. Anger burns hot in the soul of every Brujah. Your subconscious, my friend, is dry tinder awaiting a spark, and it always will be. The fire of a Brujah's soul has an inexhaustible fuel source. Personally, I think the fury of the Brujah, though a disability to be mastered, also carries a potent benefit — our rage prevents us from stagnating by making complacency an impossibility for us. All the other Clans gradually devolve into static, unchanging mockeries of humanity, but the Brujah are blessed with a boundless, barely constrained fury. From time to time, we *must* upset the status quo. Spend a hundred years studying a Brujah, and you *still* won't know what might set him off. Even among Brujah Princes, it is simply not possible to be a static creature when you might rip apart a trusted lackey just for delivering bad news. That is not to say we are proud of our rage. It is a curse, no doubt, and one we must resist, particularly so long as we are bound to respect the Masquerade. But it is a simple fact of our unlife — a Brujah *will* frenzy, and nearly every time he does, his world will somehow change.

It is difficult to explain the nature of Brujah frenzies to the other Kindred. All vampires suffer frenzy, after all, and our brethren often fall into the trap of thinking that Brujah are simply weak-willed when it comes to resisting it. They don't understand. A Brujah does not frenzy because some stimulus or frustration has destroyed her calm and unleashed her Beast. *We don't have calm.* Every Brujah I know is angry all the time. Every minute of our collective unlives is filled with a relentless, barely concealed annoyance with the universe. Some Brujah get headaches before it happens. Some have told me that at all times they hear a faint ticking, or the sound of distant never-ending drums, or perhaps even an annoying tune that got stuck in their head 300 years ago and has never gone away. The fury always manifests as something different, but it's always there, waiting for its opportunity. We are not provoked to mindless anger. We are always angry, and eventually something provokes us into letting go.

INTERNAL POLITICS

Unsurprisingly, we Brujah lack the structure of some of the other Clans. Certainly, we are not as structured as the Ventrue or the Tremere, both of whom style themselves less as Clans than global conspiracies. At best, we have three... descriptors, terms that we use to define different approaches to the Brujah condition: Iconoclast, Idealist,

and Individualist. These are not political movements, nor even clear social divisions. Nor are they permanent states, as Iconoclasts who survive long enough often become Individualists or even Idealists, while Idealists sometimes tire of the ivory tower artifice of their unlives and become Iconoclasts, if only for just long enough to bash a few heads. As always, we Brujah are agents of change.

To many outsiders, an Iconoclast is the stereotypical Brujah. She is the head banger, the barn-burner, the raver and ranter, the Brujah who spends the first thirty minutes of each night meticulously shaving her head down into a Mohawk so that there will be no question about how much contempt she has for social conventions. The term iconoclast literally means "one who destroys sacred relics," and Iconoclast Brujah are eager to tear down everything the other Kindred venerate. Well, almost everything. Most Iconoclasts respect the Traditions, if only to the extent self-preservation demands. Even then, the Iconoclast saves her greatest respect for the Masquerade, without which we all court Final Death. The other Traditions are often objects of derision. Who is that Toreador to say the Brujah cannot enter his domain? Who is that fat Ventrue Prince to say the Brujah cannot Embrace whomever she wants? In Camarilla domains, being an Iconoclast is often a prelude to becoming an Anarch, usually when the Iconoclast goes too far and is banished from acceptable society.

In many ways, the Iconoclast is synonymous with the Anarch, and cunning Iconoclasts are skilled at using the loopholes provided by the Treaty of Thorns to vandalize the Prince's home and crank-call the harpy's personal cellphone. Among the mortals, the Iconoclasts are likely to have herds among biker gangs, radical student groups, and the violent fringe of political activism, ranging from the ELF to the KKK. An Iconoclast is the Brujah most likely to stir a mob into burning down the same neighborhood where her haven sits. She is also the Brujah most likely to revel in her frenzies, treating the burning madness of her fury as an orgiastic release of pent-up frustrations. Not that she's stupid, mind you — many Iconoclasts are quite intelligent and creative in their destruction. She just doesn't see any real value in the status quo. Which, for an immortal predator with emotion-controlling powers, is as frightening a mindset as one can imagine.

An Idealist, on the other hand, considers himself the thinking man's Brujah. He resists frenzy, at least until a rival provokes him during a debate by refusing to submit to his superior reasoning. The elders of our Clan insist that the Idealist was the original archetype of the Brujah, dating back to the salons and debate halls of Carthage, Athens, and Rome. Where Iconoclasts settle disputes by barroom brawls, Idealists really do debate, often in stultifying formats that risk provoking frenzy among Iconoclasts who show up to watch and are then bored into a violent tantrum. Sometimes, the Iconoclasts are right to be angry, as some Idealists become so hidebound and conservative they become obstacles to change rather than agents of it.

The rational intellects of the Idealists have been invaluable to the Clan, however. It was the Idealists, after all, who negotiated the provisions of the Treaty of Thorns that allow the Iconoclasts to get away with their antisocial activities. Unlike the Iconoclast's embrace of the Brujah frenzy, the Idealist rejects that part of his nature. Most Idealists strive with all their unbeating hearts to resist frenzy every step of the way. Supposedly, some of the eldest of them work towards a new philosophy that will supersede *Humanitas* and grant greater control over frenzy. They call it the Path of Entelechy, though I know little of its precepts and less of how successful it is in its intended purpose. Idealists often develop herds among student groups, political activists, trade unions, and local government officials.

Individualists fill in the gaps between Iconoclasts and Idealists. Well, that's what the Iconoclasts and Idealists say. Most Individualists would say they're just doing their own things and avoiding of the violence of the Iconoclasts and the pomposity of the Idealists. The Individualist charts his own course and pursues his own agenda, neither demanding that others follow him nor setting fire to the haven of anyone who disagrees with him. Alas, the price such a Brujah pays for individuality is, well, being an individual. Iconoclasts can always find someone else to help them form a mob. Idealists can count on the support of any peers they have persuaded through reasoned debate. An Individualist is on his own unless he actually cultivates allies who share his goals. Where frenzy is concerned, he neither delights in it nor suppresses it. Frenzy is simply part of what he is, one more thing to deal with in the night. Individualists can acquire herds and followers among nearly any social grouping consistent with their personal agendas.

Traditionally, either the Idealists consisted of the elders of our Clan (the ones who honed their debate styles while wearing a toga) or younger Brujah stepped in intellectual forms of rebellion (mostly communists or devotees of more obscure socio-economic theories). Iconoclasts, on the other hand, consisted of younger Brujah of violent proclivities who lacked political acumen, while Individualists checked the box marked "Other."

In recent nights, though, we have seen the birth of new strains of Brujah thought that combines all three philosophies into something new. Inspired by mortal movements such as Occupy Wall Street and Anonymous, these twenty-first century revolutionaries take their debates to private Internet forums and seek to convert the Internet into another battlefield of the Jyhad. While their identities are a secret, most believe that the kind of computer-savvy Brujah who work to undermine the "hyper-capitalist global control" model favored by our rival Clans dominates the leadership of the Red Question faction of the Anarch Movement. Their manifesto, *Anarchs Unbound*, displays the sophisticated reasoning of our Idealists, but yoked to an aggressive libertarian philosophy that speaks in the language of the Individualists. However, when the time for debate is over, the Red Question employs cutting edge cyber-terrorism techniques to engage in creative destruction on a scale the bullying Iconoclasts find delightful.

GATHERINGS

Any large gathering of Brujah is fraught with tension—we do frenzy at the drop of a hat, after all—but despite that, we do gather. The nature of a particular Brujah gathering is shaped by the politics and personalities of those on hand, from the frenetic cacophony of an Iconoclast rant to the staid aesthetics of an Idealist debate.

The *rant* is probably the oldest form of Brujah gathering, since the basic concept of people gathering to argue about something of mutual importance has probably been around since the caveman days. Any Brujah can call a rant, from the hoariest elder to the wettest neonate, but there's no guarantee anyone will show up unless either you have some degree of clout in the Clan or the issue up for discussion is so important that the Rabble come out anyway.

Rants can take place anywhere, from coffeehouses (after the kine have been "asked" to leave) to abandoned warehouses to private estates, provided it's big enough to accommodate the city's Brujah. Crowding makes us anxious, after all. Generally, the Brujah who called the rant is the one to first raise the matter under discussion, after which everyone else who can bully their way up onto the stage gets their say. Nor are the Brujah limited to the official topic of debate – anyone who can gain the crowd's attention can argue about whatever they want. Unsurprisingly, given the anarchic nature of the rant, frenzies are common, which is another reason kine are not welcome. In fact, frenzies are not the only source of violence. There are apocryphal tales of anarchist Brujah



who grew so bored with the political bromides of some communist Clan member that they threw a Molotov cocktail onto the stage while he was talking. Seems a bit extreme, but that's the Iconoclasts for you.

Another common Brujah gathering is the *rave*. While most associate the term with the mortal underground party scene briefly ascendant in the 1990s, our use of the term is far older. As early as the fifteenth century, European Brujah often made a point of eschewing the elaborate courtly balls favored by Ventrue and the Toreador in favor of reels, barn dances, and other raucous entertainments favored by the peasant classes. We are creatures of passion, and the free-spirited dances of the common folk have always appealed to us in a way that the bloodless, metered steps of the waltz or the gavotte never could. Our pet name for such revels — the rave — comes from an archaic definition of that word meaning, "to rush wildly or furiously." Originally, it was no doubt an insult levied by some Ventrue or Toreador, but we adopted it as merrily as we have most of the insults of our pompous blowhard rivals.

To be honest, I don't know whether mortal DJs in Chicago back in the 1980s took the name from one of our dance parties or came up with it independently, but by the mid-1990s, the word rave was synonymous with "underground dance party" around the world. It was a glorious time to be a young Brujah, feeding on the driving pulse of rave music that beat in time with the hearts of a veritable sea of passion-fueled mortals. So of course, the police, conservative politicians, parent groups, and other emanations of the Ventrue mentality had to put a stop to it, using hysterical tales of rampant drug abuse and criminality to suppress the underground party scene. Sure, the Ventrue did not personally *as a Clan* go after raver culture. Probably. They just created a world ruled by boring fuckers who can't stand to see anyone else having fun. Not that it stopped *us*. Brujah raves still happen all over the world, whenever one of us finds a venue big enough and a DJ hot enough and decides it's time for the Rabble and our herds to gather for a good time.

Meanwhile, on the opposite end of the social universe, is the *debate*. There is no music at a debate, and no drugs, unless an Iconoclast observer has taken some tranquilizers from the veins of a blood doll just to get through the gathering. Debates are the purview of elder Brujah, along with a smattering of younger intellectuals who aspire to be as pompous as those elders are, or who *really* need something from an elder and think that participating in a debate is a good way of sucking up. Debates are formal opportunities for old Idealist Brujah to gather and argue about issues they consider important. Unlike the arguments at a rant, however, there are few frenzies (though the ones you *do* see can be particularly explosive), and even fewer occasions when anything is actually decided. In fact, I think the primary purpose of the debate gathering is to encourage attendees to *force* their rage deep down inside and internalize it completely. Yeah, because suppressing your violent tendencies never causes problems later.

Most of the time, debates are not actually opportunities for Brujah in disagreement to come to a consensus. Rather, they represent a chance to argue for argument's sake, to hone one's rhetorical skills, and to bask in the warm sensation of talking endlessly about something rather than actually *doing* anything. Hell, I've attended debates where it was *required* that after three hours of discussion, all participants had to switch sides and argue *against* their own favored opinions. Which, I suppose, is good practice for understanding the nuances of your own position, but it's exasperating when there's actually something important to discuss.

Another form of Brujah gathering that has emerged in recent years is the *bash*, or, in some domains, "fight club," after the film of the same name. Brujah bashes come in two forms. Common bashes include mortal participants (willing or no) who fight one another in unarmed combat for the entertainment of vampires who are there to bet on the outcome or just enjoy a good bloodletting. Often, Brujah attend common bashes when looking for potential prospects for ghouls or servants. Given our revolutionary proclivities, we prize fighting skills among our mortal allies and agents.

Elite bashes, on the other hand, are fights between rival Brujah, between Brujah and members of other Clans who aren't afraid to get beat up, and sometimes, between Brujah and other kinds of supernatural beings. Betting is common, of course, and many Iconoclasts who wouldn't be caught dead at a debate will instead settle their differences with a few rounds at a bash. Surprisingly, Idealists (and especially elder Idealists) also love bashes, though they're more inclined to natter on about Olympian ideals and athletic perfection. I'm surprised they don't show up in togas and insist that all fights be in the nude.

Bashes are more than just a chance to butt heads, however. Many participants have told me that the catharsis of fighting in a bash has made it easier to resist frenzy, at least for a few hours. Naturally, we don't allow kine at elite bashes unless they are already blood bound or otherwise compelled to preserve our secrets.

One last kind of gathering is the *gauntlet*. It's an informal gathering, and we don't always call it that, but everyone

present knows what it is. We call for gauntlets when one of our number has fucked up and it's time for the whole Clan to pass judgment on them. Often gauntlets evolve spontaneously out of rants when the topic of discussion is "what that asshole did to get us all in trouble." Such gauntlets are sometimes referred to as punishment rants, judgment rants, or even spite rants.

Regardless of the preferred local term, the basic principle is the same. The Brujah of the city gather to hear what one of their number has done and why he deserves to get his ass kicked. If the consensus is that he needs to get his ass kicked, then that is what's going to happen. Sometimes, the miscreant gets his ass kicked to Final Death, which requires remarkable dedication if you're assaulting a vampire with a blunt instrument. A Brujah judged guilty of the most serious crimes — breaches of the Masquerade, serious violations of Elysium, Amaranth — is often beaten into torpor and then delivered to the Prince.

Crimes against Clan Brujah — betrayal of Clan members, conspiring with our enemies (whoever that is this week), selling out the revolutionary movement du jour, or just being a dick to too many influential people — are met with less serious punishments. Sometimes, the miscreant really does have to walk a gauntlet, making her way through a path of fellow Rabble who strike at her with tire irons and crowbars as she passes. Sometimes, someone shatters her bones while restrained, forcing her to spend blood to mend the injuries improperly, which means later she will have to break those bones again herself to heal them correctly. Lesser offenses might be met with a red-hot branding iron that leave scars that spell out the Brujah's crimes. In one city I've visited, the Brujah punish minor screw-ups with "the Walk of Shame": They transport the victim fifty kilometers outside the city limits and then abandoned naked to make his own way home. The addition of tar and feathers or embarrassing slogans applied with permanent markers is sometimes a part of that punishment as well.

Another common punishment in some European domains is the Tantalus Box. They stuff the Brujah into a barrel that they then fill with quick-drying concrete up to her neck. She is then tormented with hot wax or other annoyances until she frenzies... to the amusement of the assembled Rabble, since she can't do anything except scream incoherently while immobilized by the concrete. It's not all fun and games, though. The Tantalus Box is also punishment for the most heinous crimes against Clan Brujah, such as diablerie of a respected Clan member, but in those cases, the assembly doesn't just laugh at the guilty vampire's frenzy. Instead, he's nearly drained of blood first, and the moment the frenzy starts, the other Brujah finish filling the barrel up with concrete, and either bury it or drop it into the sea once it's dried, leaving the doomed vampire trapped in a never-ending frenzy of impotent rage and endless hunger.

OTHERS OF THE BLOOD

As one might expect, we Brujah have our share of bloodlines.

The True Brujah are almost certainly extinct. I say "almost certainly" because there has been no hint or sign that they ever existed in our recorded history outside of a few apocryphal tales that predate Carthage. That has not prevented them from being the bogeymen we use to frighten our neonates. "Don't breach the Masquerade or else the True Brujah will show up and erase your from history!" Yeah, the stories are that absurd. The gist of the True Brujah legend is that there is a tiny bloodline of vampires descended from all of Brujah's Fourth Generation progeny who weren't Troile. They're sort of "anti-Brujah" according to the legends. Where we're passionate, they're emotionless. Where we use Celerity to move at superhuman speed, they have some weird, vaguely understood time-control power that lets them slow other people down. Anyway, they have been plotting against us to avenge the death of Brujah for approximately 10,000 years. I'm sure they'll get around to it any day now.

Moving on to actually real vampires, the Osebo are an African bloodline that's part of the Pan-African Cainite society known as the Laibon. I don't really know much about the Laibon or the Osebo (beyond the fact that they're descended from our Clan). I'm told that the Laibon all have weird spiritual affinities and are very different from Western Kindred in important ways that no one has ever explained to me in a way that makes sense. Something to do with local spirits, as I recall. The Osebo, in the unlikely chance you bump into one, is more likely to see well instead of manipulate emotions, but they still have the same violent tendencies as the main Clan.

Finally, the Brujah *antitribu* aren't really a bloodline so much as a dissident group. Like us, they are prone to frenzy. Like us, they favor the same Disciplines. Like us, they *really* hate the Ventrue. The difference between us is philosophical. The *antitribu* have encouraged their passions to overcome their reason, and in doing so, they have let it overcome their heritage as well. The stereotypical *antitribu* is most likely a recently Embraced punk who frenzies on people who look at him wrong. The *dangerous antitribu* are the ones who forge their anger into a tool to advance some higher purpose within the Sabbat, the True Believers

who are so devoted to some facet of their cult that the even Lasombra and Tzimisce will say "Dude! Chill the fuck out!" Regardless, whether he's a mindless thug or a driven fanatic, the *antitribu* is a traitor to the Brujah legacy.

Since Carthage, if not before, we Brujah have strived to find ways to interact with mortals in a way that recognizes their value as something more than a food source. We party with mortals at our raves so that feeling their passion reminds us of the source of our own. The *antitribu* reject that view of humanity and, in doing so, reject their own intrinsic worth. To a Brujah *antitribu* (like all of the Sabbat), a human being really is no different than a cow, except that the human tastes better and is more filling. Having rejected the value of both humanity and *Humanitas*, the *antitribu* lack any bulwark against the fury of their own rage. Thus, there are very few Individualist and Idealist *antitribu* as those terms are understood by Camarilla or Anarch Brujah. Just a sea of Iconoclasts more violent and self-destructive than any Iconoclast of the main Clan could ever be.

Even though we Brujah were the architects and generals of the Anarch Revolt (and remain the leaders of the Anarch Movement today wherever it is found), the *antitribu* play a limited leadership role in the modern Sabbat. Whatever prestige and status the *antitribu* ever had among the so-called Sword of Caine is now reserved for a handful of elders who have little but contempt for the throngs of young *antitribu* shovelheads with whom they have no common heritage except for a once proud name.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Basher Champion

Part of you thinks that you're revitalizing the ancient Greek traditions of personal excellence through athleticism. The other part of you think you just like to hear the roar of the crowd and feel the crack of someone's jaw under your hand in an underground fighting arena. It takes your mind off how Eurotrash bankers have wrecked your homeland with their greed. You spend as much time as your unlife permits training, honing your combat skills, and preparing for your next fight somewhere in the slums of Athens. You've fought bruisers from nearly every Clan and more of your fellow Brujah than you can count, and on some days, you're actually arrogant enough to wonder if you could take on a Lupine with your bare hands.

Branded

You sold out and paid the price. Life in the favelas of São Paulo was too much for you, so you took money from that Ventrue *bicha* in exchange for information on the havens of some other Brujah who had pissed her off. The Brujah ended up dead, and you ended up in front of a gauntlet where the others judged you guilty of betraying the Clan's principles. They beat you for about an hour with iron pipes and then branded you with a red-hot poker they first treated with some weird magical goop. Now, you're banished, homeless, and you have a scar in the shape of a dollar sign on your left hand that won't heal no matter what you do.

Debate Moderator

You were the captain of the school debate team, and you so loved the activity that you got a Classics degree with a specialty in Rhetoric at Cambridge. Funny the things that will attract an elder's attention. The Idealist Brujah of London had found their debates bogged down with irrelevant points and critical fallacies, so they decided they needed a moderator who knew what she was doing, one who could shake up their stodgy debates with new topics and incisive critiques. It is highly unusual for a Brujah of your comparative youth to have the privilege of critiquing the debate styles of centuries-old polemicists. Also highly dangerous, as you learned the first time one of those elders took your comments too personally and had to be restrained from attacking you. You think it should be a rule that frenzying during a debate means automatically losing the argument.

Elysium Gadfly

Everyone expects the Brujah to frenzy in Elysium. Few Kindred expect the Brujah to *cause* frenzies in Elysium. Even fewer suspect that you subtly do so at every opportunity. There is no greater example of Kindred stodginess than the Elysium, which is why you delight in saying just the right thing to piss someone off. Just the right snide remark about the Toreador's new dress. Just the right comment on how the Ventrue's portfolio isn't doing so hot. Just the right gibberish to the Malkavian about how annoying it must be to have spiders infesting your clothes. Then step back out of the way quickly and watch the fun as those stodgy boring vampires flip out in the place they want to least.

Engine of Destruction

They call you Iconoclast. That's stupid. Oh, you want to destroy icons all right. You just don't want to stop there. Smash the Camarilla. Consume the elders. Annihilate the

Antediluvians and their pawns. Burn it, burn it all. In time, even the Sabbat that birthed you will burn at your hand. Why? Because *you* had a life, and *they* took it... on a *whim*. The circumstances of your Embrace—which snatched you from your family and friends and turned you into a blood-crazed animal—has proven conclusively the randomness of existence, an existence you are now committed to destroying. To you, the existence of the Sabbat *proves* that nihilism is the only rational philosophy, and only when there is nothing left to destroy will you smash the final icon: yourself.

Master of Metal

Rave is dead! Metal rules! You never understood how the Brujah became associated with raver culture. As far as you're concerned, the only music for any self-respecting Brujah is metal. Death metal, black metal, Goth metal, *classical* metal, even. But your favorite is speed metal. Your Celerity lets your fingers fly across the strings faster than any mortal eye can follow. Your Presence has the crowd eating out of your hand. Your Potence comes in handy when your more violent songs trigger riots among your fans. You guess you're an Iconoclast, because you love tearing down the conventions of music almost as much as you love driving your audience to violent distraction. But your skill and love of the genre means that you also try to build something new in place of what you've torn down, even if it's something that the Ventrue and Toreador would never recognize as music.

Occupy Elysium

The whole thing is just so... feudal, isn't it? One-Percenters rule over the kine, and elder vampires rule over the Kindred, and all for no good reason except different forms of inherited wealth. You were community organizer in life, back before politicians made that into a dirty word, and you saw no reason not to continue that profession among the community of the undead. You quickly learned that the social conventions of your new society made it difficult to organize protests against the ruling class. However, as you learned about the Masquerade, the Traditions, and the Treaty of Thorns, you found an alternative means of protest. Acting through proxies, you have encouraged mortal protesters to engage in sit-ins at Elysium sites to protest financial corruption among the wealthy elites. The mortals don't know that the people they're protesting aren't just rich bastards but are actually vampires, and those vampires can't respond without breaching the Masquerade. Admittedly, your own actions flirt with breaching the Masquerade as well, but so far, no one has figured out that you're the reason



angry young students and homeless people keep staging loud protest events every time the Prince visits Elysium.

Red Question Hacker

Once you wore a suit you hated every day to work. The pay was good, and the vitae of your Ventrue employer was even better, but you still hated that suit she made you wear. She needed an IT guy for her dot-com startup company and thought you'd make a serviceable blood slave, but she was insistent that you wear a suit when you came to work. It rankled, but you put up with it because you loved her. Then in 1999, something happened that caused her to abruptly skip town, leaving you behind like yesterday's garbage. The dot-com bubble burst and you ended up homeless, heartbroken, and aching for vitae.

Some Brujah hackers found you, cleaned you up, and explained the peculiar twists of the Jyhad that made your former regnant abandon you because she thought that the Y2K bug would cause the Antediluvians to rise. In time, you proved your worth to them—both as a hacker and as someone with a serious grudge against Ventrue idiots—and the same West Coast Anarchs who first asked you "Why do you obey?" Embraced you. Your answer was to take that damned suit and burn it in a trash can. You've been setting both the computer world and Kindred society on fire ever since.

Situationist Graffiti Artist

In life, you were another failed artist hawking your wares along the Champs-Élysées. In death, you found your true inspiration: The recognition of the meaningless absurdity of the life that ended with your Embrace. That realization inspired a new passion, one that found its expression through the intersection of art, politics, and madness: Situationism. Your preferred medium is graffiti, and you like to think of yourself as the Banksy of the Damned. Most people walk by your work without noticing one more splash of color on the wall. Those who *do* notice are transfixed... and then transformed.

Unlife Coach

You'd been a Brujah for decades but had become bored and jaded, with nothing to offer the world but violence and destruction. Then you found your guru (though he hates it when you call him that), an elder Brujah who beat some sense into you and educated you on the value of self-control and having a higher purpose. He got you started on the Path of Entelechy, and now, after several years of study and of physical, mental, and spiritual development, you are out on your own, in search of new recruits. It will be a long struggle to elevate the Rabble back into Philosophers, but it will be done, one Brujah at a time.

Merits and Flaws

Fury's Focus (3pt. Merit. Prerequisite: Path of Entelechy)

Brujah who have devoted themselves to mastering their frenzies through the Path of Entelechy sometimes find tangible benefits resulting from their efforts. A Brujah with this Merit may briefly delay the full onset of frenzy.

System: The player spends a Willpower point at the onset of frenzy and then rolls the Brujah's Entelechy rating. The difficulty is one higher than the original roll to resist frenzy. The Brujah still frenzies, but the player controls her character's actions for one turn per success. Furthermore, when the period of partial control ends and the Brujah loses control, the difficulty of any degeneration rolls triggered by sins committed during the frenzy are reduced by the number of successes rolled, to a minimum difficulty of 4.

Dynamic Personality (5pt. Merit)

Your natural charisma draws mortals to you like groupies to a rock star. Consequently, it is easier for you to acquire certain Backgrounds related to mortals.

System: In addition to any Backgrounds acquired at character creation or through roleplay, you can purchase new Backgrounds with experience points at the end of each story. The available Backgrounds are Allies, Contacts, Herd, Retainers, and each new dot costs the current rating in experience points.

Obvious Predator (2pt. Flaw)

Your innate Brujah rage always percolates below the surface no matter how hard you try to project an image of calm. Mortals find you intrinsically menacing, and instinctively fear you for the violence you promise to unleash.

System: The difficulty of all Social rolls made against mortals other than Intimidation rolls increases by 2.

Discipline Powers

Relentless Pursuit (Potence ••••• •)

This power is an improvement on Leaps and Bounds (p. 49).

System: There is no cost to use this power, which is always active. The Brujah doubles the number of automatic successes granted by Potence when applying them to jump rolls. A Dexterity + Athletics roll is required to make sure the character lands safely.

Combination Disciplines

Burning Wrath (Celerity •••, Potence •••)

Among the purest expressions of Brujah fury, this power lets the vampire focus her anger through her vitae and then through her fists.

System: This power costs 1 blood point and lasts for a scene. Any Brawl attacks augmented with this power inflict aggravated damage.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Command the Wary Beast (Animalism ••, Presence •••)

The Brujah bolsters his influence over animals with his natural charisma to make animals flee in terror or, in the case of animals under his control, remain calm in the face of frightening circumstances.

System: The player spends 1 Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Animal Ken (difficulty 7). Hostile unled animals must flee. Animals under the control of an enemy will not necessarily flee, but the difficulty of all control rolls increases by 3. Conversely, animals that are friendly to the Brujah or his allies will become more compliant, with the difficulty of all control rolls reduced by 2.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

Esprit de Corps (Potence ••••, Presence ••••)

The power of the Brujah to raise a mob or even an army is not to be ignored. Those inspired by the vampire's use of this power fight fearlessly and ferociously.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Leadership (difficulty 7). Any opposing force that attempts to intimidate (whether supernaturally or no) those affected by Esprit de Corps find that the difficulty of such attempts increases by 2. The number of successes determines the maximum size of the crowd to be affected.

Successes	Results
1	One person
2	Two people
3	Six people
4	20 people
5	All allies in the immediate vicinity (whether a battle group or everyone in a large room)

In addition, for every two successes rolled, each affected person acquires the equivalent of one dot of Potence for the duration of the scene, up to a maximum of three dots. This benefit applies regardless of whether the affected person is a mortal, ghoul, or vampire — since mortals cannot spend blood points, they can only use the "passive" effects of Potence (see **V20**, p. 192).

This power costs 24 experience points to learn.

Iron Heart (Potence •••, Presence •••)

Common among Individualists who quest for self-control, Iron Heart fortifies the Brujah against supernatural powers that affect her emotions, her self-control, or her reason (including Dominate, Dementation, and Presence), while also allowing her to inspire others to resist such manipulations themselves.

System: This power has two effects. First, a Brujah who has acquired this power permanently increases the difficulty of all attempts to manipulate her through supernatural means (whether Disciplines or other magic) by 2, to a maximum of 9. Against unrolled supernatural effects (such as Majesty), the Brujah instead reduces the difficulty of any relevant resistance rolls by 2. This aspect of the power is always active.

Second, if the player spends a Willpower point while the character actively persuades another to resist such effects, the difficulty of any such supernatural manipulation increases by 1 (or the difficulty of the character's resistance roll against unrolled effects is reduced by 1).

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Leaps and Bounds (Celerity ••, Potence ••)

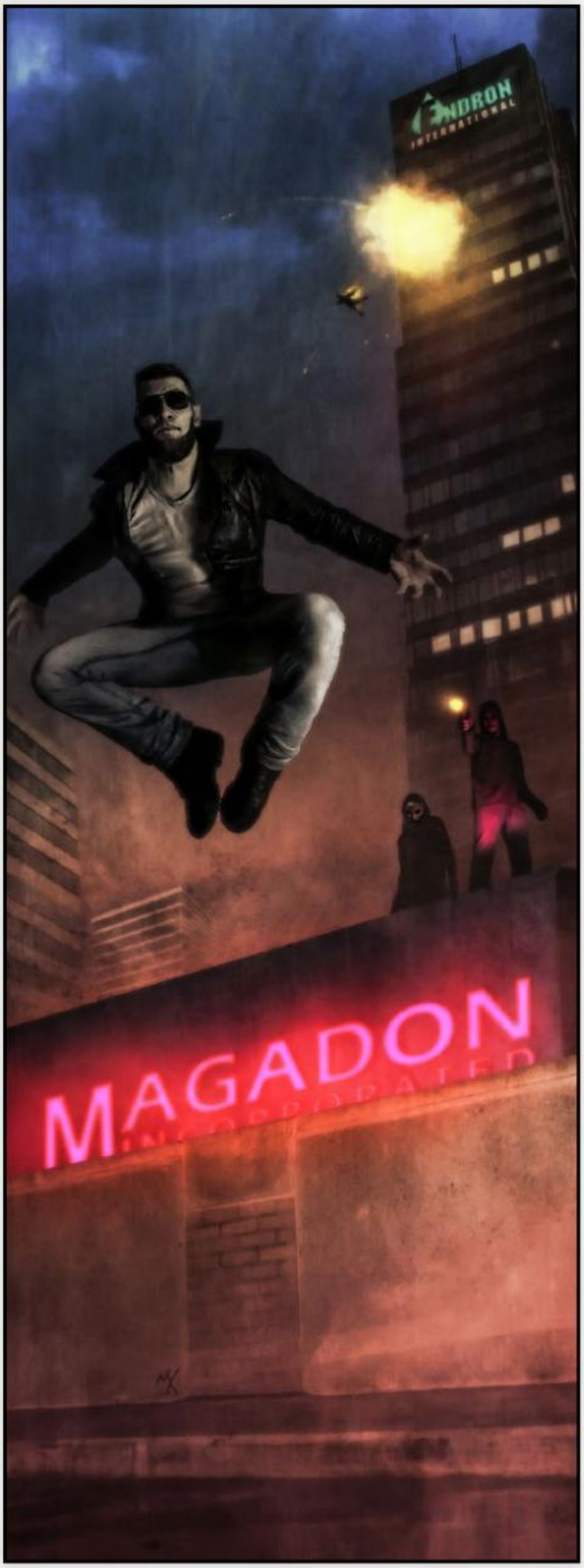
Through this intersection of strength, speed, and will, the Brujah can leap amazing distances, whether to evade foes or flee a burning building.

System: The Brujah multiplies all vertical and horizontal jumping distances by the lesser of her Celerity or Potence (see the rules for jumping in **V20**, p. 260). The player does not need to roll anything to make the jump but, at the Storyteller's discretion, may need to roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 4) to land safely depending on the environment.

This power costs 12 points to learn.

Pulse of Undeath (Auspex •, Potence •)

Canny Brujah with this power can go into fights forewarned about their opponents' capabilities. The Brujah can intuitively sense which, if any, physical Disciplines another vampire possesses.



System: The player rolls Perception + Empathy (difficulty 6). Each success informs the Brujah of one physical Discipline (Celerity, Potence, or Fortitude) possessed by the target observed, as well as that Discipline's approximate level.

This power costs 6 experience points to learn.

Reluctant Performance Artist (Dominate •••, Presence •••)

Popular among the Situationists, this power not only lets the Brujah transform a mortal into an unwilling performer, it transforms other mortals into a captive audience. Other, less artistic Brujah who learn this power find it useful as a distraction to cover for their clandestine activities.

System: The player adds one Willpower point to the cost of using Mesmerize on a mortal who the Brujah the commands to perform some action in a public place. For Situationists, this action is typically something absurd or otherwise bizarre, consistent with modern performance art. Theoretically, however, the Brujah could command the mortal to do anything, such as start an argument with someone else or commit an act of public vandalism.

Other mortals who observe the performer and whose current Willpower ratings do not exceed the successes rolled by the Brujah are powerless to do anything except watch attentively. If the performer does something dangerous or illegal, treat each audience member's Willpower as if it were 1 higher. If the performer attacks anyone in the audience, treat each audience member's Willpower as if it were 3 higher.

If the performance is completed without interruption, affected audience members will move on and either forget about the performer's actions or rationalize the events as being part of an artistic performance (no matter how odd the scene). Whether a particular mortal thinks the performance is any good will probably depend on her appreciation for performance art.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Scourge of Alecto (Celerity ••, Presence ••••)

An obscure power often found among older Idealists, Scourge of Alecto allows the Brujah to chain his own Beast and then, through an act of supreme will, unleash it within the body of someone else nearby. Doing so does not alter the Brujah's own propensity for frenzy, but it can inflict both damage and frenzies upon his enemies.

System: The player must spend a point of Willpower while the character spends a full turn concentrating on a single target (which may be mortal, vampire, or any other type of supernatural character). Then the player rolls the Brujah's permanent Willpower (difficulty equals target's current Willpower). Each success inflicts one level of bashing damage as the Brujah's manifested fury attacks the target from the inside. Additionally, if the target is someone normally susceptible to frenzy, she must immediately roll to resist it at a +2 difficulty.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

The Path of Entelechy

Nickname: Philosophers

Virtues: Self-Control and Conviction

Bearing: Stoicism. The Philosophers bring a pragmatism to undeath that allows them to maintain equanimity in the face of the childish taunts and cruel barbs of their less enlightened Kindred. The bearing modifier adds on all rolls to resist frenzy when provoked by insults or other deliberately provocative actions by others. It does not affect frenzy rolls triggered by other forms of rage-inducing stimuli.

Basic Beliefs: The Path of Entelechy is ancient but was lost for centuries, and only recently recovered for use by modern Brujah. An application of Stoic philosophy to the Brujah condition, the Path of Entelechy focuses on protecting one's Humanity, on searching for truth and purpose, and above all, on mastering the Beast and the fury it provokes within the Brujah. The term *entelechy* comes from Aristotle and, among modern Brujah Philosophers, means "self-actualization." The pursuit of entelechy demands that the Brujah actively develop her mind, her body, and her supernatural abilities. While the Path is consonant with Humanity, it is more proactive in resisting the Beast.

An intellectual approach to unlife, the Path focuses on three fundamental concepts believed to have been essential characteristics sought in potential Brujah progeny in the days of Carthage: enkrateia, reie, and sophrosyne.

Enkrateia refers to inner strength. It is not enough for the Philosopher to passively accept the frustrations that come her way, as the Path of Humanity requires. Instead, she must hone her reason into a sword and her will into a shield against the forces that would cause her to degenerate. In practical terms, this means that Philosophers usually have high Willpower and Self-Control ratings or else aggressively pursue those traits.

The Benefits of Bashing

As discussed on p. 44, Brujah who fight in organized bashes report that it is slightly easier to resist frenzy afterwards. The downside is that you and your opponent have to beat the crap out of each other to gain the benefits.

System: To gain the desired benefits, the Brujah must engage in a hand-to-hand brawl with another combatant in front of a cheering audience during an organized bash. The benefits arise from the psychological effects of fighting in front of a crowd.

The player notes how many levels of lethal damage were inflicted on both the Brujah and her opponent. The lesser number of wounds is the amount by which the difficulty of the Brujah's frenzy rolls is reduced (to a minimum of 3). The greater number of wounds is how many consecutive scenes in which the Brujah benefits from the reduction. Thus, to gain any benefit, the Brujah must both suffer and inflict at least one level of lethal damage. A fight in which the Brujah casually defeats an inferior combatant confers no benefits, nor does one in which the Brujah is humiliated by a beat down from a superior fighter who takes no significant damage himself.

The combatants are limited to brawling attacks that inflict only bashing damage, which means that both participants must suffer bashing damage levels in all of their respective health boxes plus at least one more in order to benefit. If both combatants are Brujah, both gain the benefits of bashing.

Reie refers to moral courage. The Philosopher must not shirk her responsibility to pursue either enlightenment or moral character out of fear of frenzy or other degradations. Instead, she must confront difficult situations with reason and self-discipline, eschewing the impetuosity that

PATH OF ENTELECHY HIERARCHY OF SINS

Rating	Moral Guideline	Rationale
10	Ill-defined or idle thinking	Only rigidity of thought can allow for mastery over the Beast.
9	Refusing to intervene when another vampire is at risk for degeneration	In helping others to control their impulses, you learn more on how to control your own.
8	Acting on impulse	Acting without careful thought leads to a loss of control.
7	Theft, robbery, or vandalism	Acting against others is the path away from Humanity.
6	Refusing to stand up for a moral principle out of fear or cowardice	It is only through the defense of morality that you can understand it.
5	Causing deliberate harm to a mortal, including violent nonconsensual feeding	If you harm a mortal's body, you also harm your own spirituality.
4	Aiding a follower of another Path that does not respect humanity	Aiding those who reject humanity (and Humanity) is as bad as rejecting it yourself.
3	Succumbing to frenzy when wise conduct could have avoided it	Do not give the Beast a chance to flourish.
2	Allowing any violent crime against an innocent to go unpunished	If you allow others to come to harm without punishment, it is as if you committed the harm yourself.
1	The murder of innocents	Taking a life is the worst loss of control one can commit.

defines the modern Brujah. As a practical matter, this means that the Brujah will (or at least should) proactively avoid situations that are likely to provoke frenzy or risk degeneration. At the same time, the Path also encourages Philosophers to show courage in the face of adversity, but only to advance a cause the Brujah considers moral or just.

Sophrosyne means control of the self and represents the idealized goal of all Philosophers: mastery over the Brujah rage. It also means that the Brujah has committed to an eternity of mental, spiritual, and physical development. Philosophers develop sophrosyne by working to improve Physical and Mental Attributes and Abilities, rather than focusing on Disciplines or Social traits.

The Ethics of the Path

- The Beast is weakness. Be strong and command it to be silent.
- Master one's own true potential. Learn all that can be learned about one's self.
- Do not show cowardice when deeply held moral principles are at stake.
- Mortals must not be taken for granted. Feed to live, no more.

History

Despite its ancient origins, the Path of Entelechy is a new phenomenon, driven largely by Brujah elders who despair over the degradation of their once-proud Clan. Those founders look upon the fact that Brujah are called "Rabble" with shame. Accordingly, they recruit younger Brujah who want something more than violence, anarchy, and death out of unlife.

According to some tales, the principles that underlay the Path of Entelechy were espoused by the Brujah of Carthage who supposedly had much greater control over their frenzies before the fall of that city. Others dismiss such claims as wishful thinking, noting that there is no historical support for the idea that ancient Brujah were any more resistant to frenzy than the modern Clan was. While the Methuselahs who drive the expansion of this Path are certainly old enough to remember Carthage, they are also old enough to have had centuries contemplating the Kindred (and particularly the Brujah) condition.

Current Practices

The numbers of Entelechy Philosophers is presently small, though they have ambitions to grow quickly. Most currently reside in Europe, though the Philosophers who have advanced the farthest along the Path have begun "missionary work" in America and especially in the decadent gang-laden enclaves of the Free States. Currently, most organized instruction is offered in Greece and Crete, though the Chicago elder Critias has taken students in North America. Most of the teachers will accept no more than four students at a time, so the growth of the Path has been slow.

Most Philosophers are Anarchs or autarkis. A few may be among the Camarilla, but they are discrete in their beliefs in light of that sect's general hostility towards Paths as opposed to *Humanitas*. It is possible that some Brujah among the Sabbat seek enlightenment along this Path—stranger things have happened—but such Sabbat Philosophers would be fantastically rare, as most of the Sect would consider the Path's pro-Humanity precepts anathema.

Description of Followers

The most important sponsor of the Path of Entelechy is Menele, a Brujah Methuselah who psychically communes with his followers even while his torpid body lies beneath the city of Chicago. The childe of Troile wants to leave a legacy greater than 2,500 years of petty conflict with his old rival, the Toreador Helena. He has reached out to fellow travelers in Greece and Turkey, and guides potential candidates to philosophy teachers in preparation for his own imminent rising. He hopes that when that day comes, he will be met with a Clan of leaders and thinkers rather than thugs.

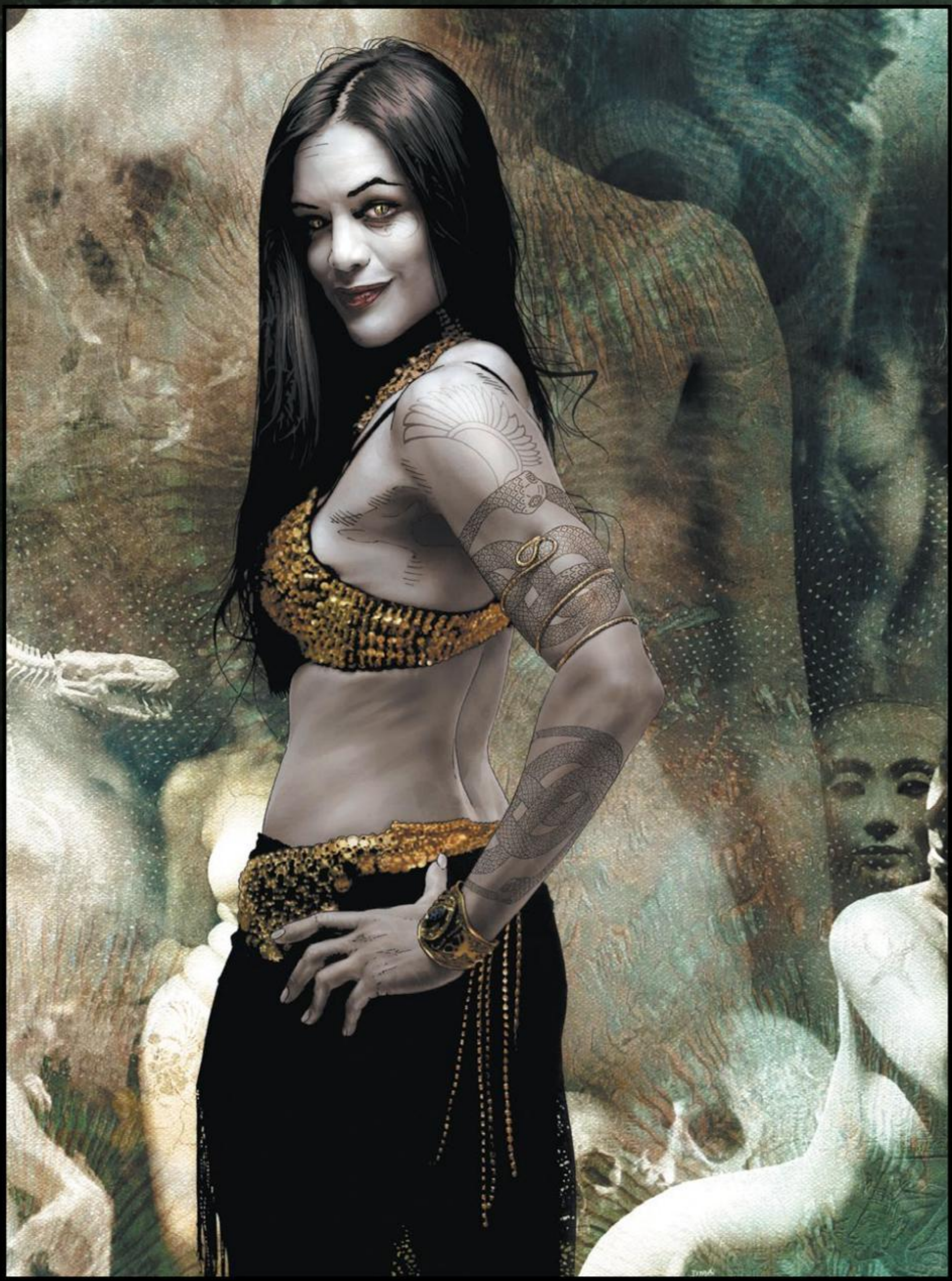
Following the Path

The defining characteristic of the Path is its view of much of the vampiric condition as weaknesses they must purge. The Beast is not a part of one's nature to be parleyed with; it is an external force to be fought at all costs. Lust, frenzy, hunger, and passion must all be resisted and beaten into spiritual submission. The Path leaders constantly challenge adherents to improve themselves in the quest for personal excellence.

Common Abilities: Followers are expected to perfect themselves at Athletics, Alertness, and Expression, as well as in Academics and Science. In addition, the Path's emphasis on broad-based learning generally demands a high degree of multicultural literacy, so it is common for Philosophers to have several versions of the Language Merit. Greek and Latin are most common, but the most respected leaders of the Path are polyglots and are fluent in numerous languages.

Preferred Disciplines: Most Philosophers are drawn to Disciplines that will facilitate control over the Beast. Animalism is surprisingly common for that reason, but the few Philosophers who have initiated themselves into blood magic aggressively pursue study of the Path of the Focused Mind. Many prize Auspex as a sign of strong mental aptitude and Potence is valued above the other Physical Disciplines, due to the perception that it demonstrates physical excellence.





Followers of Set

"Then God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, be accursed beyond all cattle, all wild beasts. You shall crawl on your belly and eat dust every day of your life.'"

— Genesis 3:14

The Poison Tree

I'm rolling down the outer roads, somewhere near the Okefenokee Swamp, edging on the static of "Black Snake Moan," when the phantom signal comes in.

The car radio croons, "Mmm-mmm! Black snake crawlin' in my room." Then it says, "Zzzzzzshhhhhhhhhh!" Then the music. Deep. Bottomless. Filled with the primordial blues of reptile sex. Music that taught people new ways to revel and kill. The music of Haint Blue.

The fuel needle does a heroin shiver over E. Sold my homicide badge to some kids for gas money three truck stops back. It was just the relic of a dead religion. My lost history. The cult killings — the gaudy headlines — crime scene photos — the screaming eyes of cadavers — the dead eyes of interviewees — the tendrils of conspiracy — the warnings from above — my lost vocation — lost marriage — lost. Empty context. An amphetamine stew of memories.

How long had I been chasing Haint Blue?

Static. Lost the music. My knuckles form a row of white tombstones on the wheel. I jerk left. Right. The music crackles back, filling my brainpan with sizzling eel afterbirth. His music.

Haint Blue. The Conjure Man. The walking mythos. Everyone knows somebody who knows somebody who heard his music live. Did a deal with the Devil at a crossroads, they say. His music shows you things, they say. His coffin-shaped guitar case holds secrets. For a trade, he'll show you wonders. When the six-string priest plays, the dead dance.

In all of the twisted paths of the investigation — from prostitutes to deacons, drug dealers to government officials — the one constant was Haint Blue. Georgia truckers will vomit apocrypha about the rogue radio signal that comes in the late hours, Mesozoic lyrics you can't quite make out. The sound virus.

No leads. Nothing left. All I have is the music. I don't know how I know, but I know where to go. All roads lead to Haint Blue.

Just like that, he appears in the cyclopic glare of my last headlight. A dapper holocaust with his coffin guitar case. I'm out of the car, gun drawn. I aim for his heart. Gators bellow and eyes gleam in the dark off the road. Under the brim of his hat, Haint Blue smiles at me the way mushroom clouds smile at the sun. I drop the gun. Bullets are just an unnecessary rudeness.

All the terrible things I saw to find him, the things I did, just rungs down the ladder. Every clue teasing the ultimate secrets of the cosmos, like humming a song you can't quite remember.

"More," I say through the tears, "please show me more."



He nods. His pale blue tie glows in the black, like a river of souls dribbling down his chin to his belt. He offers me a straight razor. I cut along, not across.

Frogs croak prayers to the void. The smell of rotting peat. The feverish crossroad pavement.

When did I lay down? That's when I notice the bottle trees, small, dead trees with blue bottles stuck on the ends of the bare branches. Used to see them in yards, when I was a kid. Mama'd say some hoodoo about the bottles trapping roaming night spirits until the morning light destroyed them. The wind blows piping music through the stained glass branches.

A cold palm presses my mouth. Baptism tastes like unlucky pennies. "See you on the other side of Duat," Haint whispers, like a kindly psychopomp. Then he strangles his six strings down to revenant whale groans. He sings, but I can't catch all the words.

"... I was angry with my foe — I told it not, my wrath did grow — and I watered it in fears — night and morning with my tears — and I sunned it with smiles — and with soft deceitful wiles — and it grew both day and night — till it bore an apple bright..."

The gators become crocodiles. The sky opens wide, showing the convoluted pantheon that is its teeth. The godmonster menagerie — all perched in the branches of the Poison Tree of Souls. Before the river of death carries me away, I hear the breaking of blue glass. Haint cackles, "Come out! Come out! Meet your new sibling." Funny thing, as the bottles break, the mad piping does not quiet. It grows louder.

History is a Twisted Spine

You have track marks on your soul. They form constellations. We know their chthonic names. We can tell you the appellations of the Unseen Ones who coil around this flat circle of time. We know the invisible paths. Second scar to the right and straight on....

The others name us Tempter. That's as useful as calling a horse a horseshoe. We are seekers of hidden knowledge. The other Clans are accidental siblings. We are a faith. The others are the spawn of a mortal turned into monster. We are the children of a god. The others hate us because we can see the glory concealed in the raggedy mundane. We see divinity in a putrid alley, in the hieroglyphs formed by bird flocks in flight, the deities locked beneath the

Y-incision of a cadaver. We know existence is an absurdist party and Last Call is the heat death of the universe.

Ever get to wondering why the Sun has a particular hate on for us? It's not because we are creatures of darkness. We only wrapped ourselves in the dark to weather the powers that persecute us. The Sun loathes us because we illuminate the mysteries it fears to shine upon.

You've taken the sacrament of blood. Now accept the sacrament of secrets. Take these words, devour them with your ears, and know that the voice of the storyteller is your god.

Three Tales of Set

The truth is a flimflammer's game. The cups and balls con. The Romans called it *acetabula et calculi*. Call it thimblerig or the shell game or three-card monte. It dates all the way back to ancient Egypt. Step right up. Try your luck. Lift my broken cup. Consider these tales three.

This is the first story, and the story goes like this.

Fratricide, a brotherly murder, but a tale older than Caine and Abel. The brothers were gods. This is back when deities ruled the people openly. Ra, god of the sun and ruler of all, grew old and decided to retire. In his infinite senility, he chose grandson Osiris as his heir.

This angered Set, mightiest warrior among gods. Every night, Set guarded Ra's sun-barque as it passed under the Earth from the gates of dusk to the gates of dawn. Every night, Set did battle with Apep, the Great Serpent of Darkness. Where was justice? Where was Set's reward?

Jealous and pride-wounded, Set hatched a plot. He offered up a most luxuriant sarcophagus to whosoever it fit. All the gods took a turn. When Osiris lay inside, Set leapt forward with seventy-two assistants and nailed the sarcophagus closed. He threw it into the Nile, drowning Osiris. Isis, Osiris's sister-wife, used her magic to retrieve her husband's corpse. Set would have none of this. He hacked the body to bits, scattering the parts across Egypt.

Once again, Isis called upon her arts and methodically gathered the fragments. She rebuilt the body and conceived a child by her dead husband. Horus the Avenger grew to manhood and did battle with Set. Horus lost an eye. Set was castrated. In the end, nephew thwarted uncle. Osiris became King of the Dead and his son became King of the Living. Set loped into the outskirts. He thundered in the sky and made men afraid.

This is the second story, and the story goes like this.

Set was born between earth and sky and raised on blood and sand. Seven thousand years ago, on the shores of the Nile, he came screaming into the world as all mortals do. A mighty warrior and hunter, Set's skill at arms helped conquer and unite Upper and Lower Egypt.

However, Grandfather Ra was a jealous and fearful ruler, his mind gnawed by the worm of age. He slaughtered his own children in paranoia. Greathearted Set cried out against the filicide and Ra banished him to the burning wastes. Treacherous Osiris remained silent.

There are those who say that the grandson of Ra came upon a bestial figure in the wasteland. This sphinx terror tore from the night on wing and talon and challenged Set to a game of riddles. He lost, and so Ennoia, mother of Gangrel, showed him just what could walk on four legs, two legs, three legs, and no legs at all. She ate up all of Set's insides and filled him with her own howling blood. Set awoke a bestial thing as well. In his desert solitude, he became enamored of reptiles and cradled lonely delusions of godhood. So it is said, but these are nothing but the fictions of the Outlanders, their brains heavy with jackal dung and musk.

This, however, is true: in his exile, Set met his immortal sire, of the Second Generation of Caine. Embraced into undeath, he came to the Second City. As the *Book of Nod* says, the Third Generation rose up and devoured their parents. Fearing their fangs would find him next, Set fled the city, swearing vengeance on his blasphemous siblings. There are those who say that he suffered banishment for eating the heart of a brood mate, but these are the words of liars and rumormongers.

Set returned to Egypt to gather an army, only to find that a Cainite had Embraced treacherous Osiris as well. Fang to fang, brother against brother, that old song. Set dismembered Osiris. Set killed Horus. Isis called up her vile magic piecing together her undead husband and resurrecting her son. Set struck again, slaying Osiris and Isis and maiming his nephew. The dance went on for centuries. The Spell of Life was primordial magic and powerful. Horus could die, but he was only reborn again and again. Eventually, Set found himself cast out of Egypt.

Exiled to the desert, a brother to serpents and a companion to scorpions, Set vowed to become as deadly as the sand. Betrayed by his kin both mortal and immortal, Set vowed to turn treachery and corruption against them. He created his children to carry on his war against the cult of Amon-Ra, the cult of Isis, and the Children of Osiris.

This is the third story, and the story goes like this.

The *Book of Nod* is false. Caine is a lie. The First City was Annu, the city of Ra. Set, Osiris, Isis, and the rest

were gods. This story begins at the end of the first, with the victory of Horus.

Ra cast Set into Duat, the Underworld, the river of death whose waters flow from the Primeval Ocean itself. In the dark, wriggling reek and stinking of blind fish, Set did battle with Apep. He slew the Worm of Darkness and ate its heart. He gained Apep's wisdom, knew things from before the Before. Set at once saw the truth: jealous Ra had lied to his children. He had not created the universe, only shaped a small portion of the Primeval Waters. Souls could differ in kind but not in size. All souls could grow as mighty as their tyrant fathers, could become creators themselves.

In the form of a serpent, Set stealthily returned to the living world to subvert the will of Ra. Hated by his grandfather, Set found he had to hide from the wrath of the Sun. Having swallowed the waters of death, Set found he was not fully alive. Set gathered twelve disciples to share his wisdom and begin his holy war. Through a warrior's rite, he mingled his blood with theirs, and they all shared in great Set's divinity. However, just as they drank, the other gods arrived.

Furious, Ra cursed the twelve. Like Set, they would hide from the Sun and were forsaken the warmth of life. Since they sealed their pact with blood, they would eat only blood. The twelve begged and pleaded with Ra, bore false witness against Set, and in that moment of cowardice, the twelve lesser Clans were born.

The lesser Clans create lies out of their fear and hate of Set. Lies and treachery haunt the history of the Kindred, even in the three stories I share. Care to play my shell game? Can you find the truth? Whether Set was born a mortal or a god — or whether he ate the heart of the Typhon Serpent or it crawled down his mouth and ate his — whatever it was that slithered back out of Duat, it knew a hunger for the deeper mysteries, for the Primeval truths. We carry on that hunger. We are explorers.

The Ancient World

In Pharaonic Egypt, we ruled the night. At least, that's how our crafty tongues will spin it. When the other Clans came to elder Khem, they paid fealty to the Hierophants of Set. Thanks to Egypt's population, the Setites became one of the most numerous Clans of the ancient world. Yet our fortunes rose and fell like the Nile, for our enemies were manifold and multiform.

Let me tell you about the Aeons. They are real. They are not metaphors. They are the crawling metaphors, the nasty abstracts, the living agency. They are the Invisibles, the Mysteries. The demon-gods of the Duat are real. As they are real, so too are the Bau — the divine servitors, messengers, and angels. They wear the faces of the gods from whom they emanate. As the Bau are real, so too are their masters, the Aeons. They are the gods who serve the Sun, who by any name is just as merciless. The lies of the Aeons form links in the chains that fetter the world and all its souls. Our most basic and holy purpose is to corrupt those links, compromise those chains, and, ultimately break them. We will drag every soul screaming into freedom. Few will thank us.

The magician-priests of Egypt's other gods came for us. They served the glory of the Aeons. We battled for the ethereal paradigm. The shapeshifters came for us, those jackal-headed beasts that stride silently, and the were-cats who claimed lineage with Bast. Their claws and teeth tore our eternal flesh. Their power in the spirit world thwarted our esoteric goals. But for all of this, even sorcerers and shapeshifters grow old and die. Not so with our worst enemies.

The Cult of Isis bestowed the Spell of Life on Horus and his kind, the Shemsu-Heru, the Reborn. The very notion of their palpitating immortality is a taunt to Set and his children. They died. They resurrected over and again. They never grew old, and Horus never forgot or forgave. That is, if you believe in living mummies. I have never seen one.

Kindred love to tell stories that make the ancient world into an ornate chessboard. We are no different. Let me tell you of the game board, the multiple capitals of Egypt and the multiple hands vying for power. Hear how wicked Horus betrayed his country by bringing in Libyan invaders, just to take revenge on us. Therefore, the Setites traveled to Nubia and Assyria and brought invaders of our own. Let us not forget the Third Generation of Caine and the holy war Set declared on them. We feared the Roman Empire and its Malkavian and Ventrue manipulators. We turned Rome against the Brujah of Carthage, that they might destroy each other. The plot backfired. With the embers of Carthage cooling, Rome came for Egypt. We countered with our ghoul agent, Cleopatra. Yes! Every story, every increasingly unlikely detail, is truer than the last. Isn't it?

Let the Kindred talk long enough, and they will convince you that every human civilization was a sock puppet filled with a cold, pale hand. Of course, all Cainites are liars. Some parasites like to weave grand mythologies to convince themselves that they control every movement of the gargantuan bovine-entities they latch onto.

Still, Rome got its comeuppance in the end. We engineered the decadence that putrefied its heart. Our forked tongues licked the ears of Tiberius and Caligula. Believe that one

and I'll tell you about the time I ghouled Elvis. Factual or not, our version of Caligula's degradation and fall contains an archetypal truth: decay and entropy is the long game with an inevitability so voracious that it devours empires, the undead, and all manner of immortal things. In time. That is the pattern, the patter, and the mummers play that we performed time and again, on smaller stages, for Kindred and kine. That's our history on a plate.

Heresy among Serpents

There are heretics among snakes. Imagine what it takes to blaspheme a blasphemer — to be the baddest Johnny in the apple cart. It is possible. The Clan lacked experience at purging heresy. We were always on the receiving end of persecution. We can be forgiven for being inefficient with the righteous pyre. For all anyone knows, those heretics might be about their business to this very night.

The Children of Judas

Byzantium was an irresistible light, built on religious mania and the mad dream of a powerful Toreador, Ventrue, and Tzimisce triumvirate. The Followers of Set came to Constantinople to test that dream, to defy the will of the Aeons. Moreover, we were invited! Imagine now, the Toreador Methuselah Michael and the Setite Hierophant Khay'tall making a polite wager of faith, as they looked down upon that wondrous city of domes.

Khay'tall went to work. As Michael had taken on the name of an archangel, Constantinople's Setites called themselves the Children of Judas. In the end, Khay'tall won the wager. However, the victory soured. Someone murdered Khay'tall in some forgotten treachery. Visiting Setites from Egypt discovered the Children of Judas had committed an unforgivable blasphemy, teaching their mortal cultists that Set was not a Dark God but a mere demon in service to Satan. They had forsaken Set for the degeneracy of infernalism. By the time the Hierophants agreed to purge the Children of Judas, the demon-worshipers had already scattered from the broken city, the dust of a dream in their bootprints.

Regarding Dark Gods and Demons

There is a difference between a Dark God and a demon. Enslavement to an evil spirit is a blasphemy to us. We seek to end enslavement of the soul.

In the end, the Aeons want the same thing as any demon. An Aeon might call himself Ra, Jupiter, or Jehovah. Call him hustler. Stand with all the shills, and you'll get taken in by his card prestidigitation. The hustler works miracles... from that angle. Suppose I sneak behind and hamstring you. You fall to the floor. You scream, but from that new angle, you see the hustler's double lifts and sleights. You see the lies of the rigged game. You will know agony. You will know enlightenment.

The pleasure promised by Set is not always distinguishable from pain, but he also promises to make you stronger. We are the horrible irritant that forms a black pearl in the mind. Our ends are holy. Our means are as awful as they need to be. Our methods would make a demon shiver.

The Black Magdalene

We were not the only cadavers interested in religion. During the Dark Ages, some Cainites came to see parallels between undeath and Christian doctrine: the incorruptibility of a saint's flesh after death, for example. They saw Christ as a vampire, the "Second Caine." So the Cainite Heresy came to be.

Most Setites merely studied or mocked the movement. However, a small segment of the Clan, cut off from Egypt, formed their own cult, distinct from the rest of the Cainite Heresy, called the Church of the Black Magdalene. The heretics presented Setite dogma as the "true doctrine" handed down from the mouth of Christ to the ear of his thirteenth apostle, Mary Magdalene. The teachings were thus: Christ had absolved original sin. The deception of the Aeons, however, fooled mortals into taking on further sins. Arch-Aeon Jehovah used the chief deceptions, Guilt and Law, to ensnare souls and hide the truth. The truth was thus: deeds of the body have no impact on salvation, and any act performed with love and joy is holy.

The Magdalene sisters encouraged mortals to act upon desire, so sin and ask Christ's forgiveness, until they could forgive themselves and cast off the shackles of shame forever. They emphasized the role of the female in salvation. They persuaded the pious to break vows of celibacy, the audacity of free love and sexuality in the Middle Ages. They claimed Christ fathered a child with Apostle Mary, and took part in more than one Merovingian conspiracy. They might have radically altered the Catholic Church, by sheer weight of converts, had the fires of the Inquisition not risen.

The Inquisition

This next secret is very naughty. Most Kindred do not know it. Hearken closely.

The Followers of Set encouraged the Inquisition.

It was not so difficult. The stage was already set. The Cainites had overextended and overexposed themselves. They over-abused the herd, and it was only the slightest

of pushes that precipitated the stampede. The fire. The screams. The scorched-saccharine stink of one's enemies permeating the night. We sowed dissent among the kine. We gave the locations of secreted havens to the zealots. We offered safety to the elders, and then delivered their day-sleeping bodies to the witch hunters. We enacted Set's glorious vengeance on the twelve Clans. If we burnt ourselves a little, what of it? It's still fun to play with fire.

The fire changed Kindred forever. Then came the Masquerade, the Anarch Revolt, and the Sabbat. We went through our own growing pains. The Hierophants lost their singular grip over our doctrine. New paths of philosophy took shape. We spawned new mythologies and sub-mythologies, all under the many masks of Set. Did you know that the Camarilla asked us to join? We were the midwives of modern vampire society, and then we refused to join. If you listen carefully, you can still hear their sigh of relief.

Nineteenth Century and Egyptomania

Imagine coming out of the darkness and into the gaudy light. For centuries, Europeans knew next to nothing about Egypt. Then, Champollion deciphered the Rosetta Stone. Howard Carter discovered Tutankhamun's tomb. In a historical instant, our lore no longer belonged solely to us, but to the world. The Egyptian craze flared. Mortals squealed for mock-Egyptian trinkets and decor.

Picture the hilarity. The Setites of that time, used to skulking in the ghettos and crawly cracks, suddenly found themselves impossibly fashionable. Toreador begged them to come to Elysium, in priestly robes and entwined with a ghoul serpent, speaking of the Dreadful Mysteries and the Dark God. Our religion, once considered a sinister threat, was now droll entertainment.

A mockery? A security breach? Some elders found this all very upsetting. I'd like to think we milked it for all it was worth. Our mythos reentered the communal memory. Our language of symbols spread like contagion. Every counter-culture youth wearing a looped cross caries a piece of our glamour. If some pyramid-shaped casino crassly peddles the iconography and mystery of Egypt, well, so do we.

Modern Serpents

Clan of Faith

The Followers of Set are not just a Clan, but also a religion. Just like every other religion, not every Setite has the same attitude towards the faith. Some are devout, some orthodox, and some focus on the metaphysical to the exclusion of all else.

Some are more casual. Pragmatic. They say an occasional prayer. They go to temple on holy days, and that is the extent. They focus more on the worldly affairs of the Clan.

Some consider "Followers of Set" a quaint, even embarrassing, relic of their lineage. They rebel against the faith. Like any fervent atheist in a religious family, their ceaseless rebellion shows how much of a hold the faith still has upon them.

Not every Follower of Set is even from our blood. We take in converts from the other Clans, from mortal and ghoul cultists, even from other supernaturals. Anyone who is ready, or made ready, to see the truth is welcome. We say "holy war," and we say "Jyhad." But our war is spiritual. Not every victory is over an enemy's corpse. How much better when the enemy joins? Why poke out a blind man's already useless eyes, when you can make him see what you see?

We emphasize experience over doctrine, as a general thing. The Embrace is the first miracle. It shatters all preconceptions, a total transfiguration of body and soul. It feeds a deep hunger of the soul. We want more. We seek other intense and terrifying spiritual experiences. We strive to grant others the terrible gift of epiphany. Oh, yes. More than anything, we want to share.

Why downplay doctrine? Isn't that strange? The Followers of Set boast an enormous canon of scripture, chronicles, devotional tracts, liturgies, grimoires, teeming cosmologies, and gospel written by the Dark God himself. We value the act of writing, but we do not worship ink and scrawl. Words only contain the sliver of a truth. You can't find Godhead in commandments and dogmas. You must feel it. Sense it. Be it.

There are no written exams in the house of the Dark God. The tests are more... visceral.

Factions and Cults

The Setite faith is one of slithering plasticity. It bends and reshapes, takes on the traits of local religions just as much as it infects them. It is less a unified doctrine than it is a framework for generating cults, and the Setite emphasis on personal revelation spawns many cults. Some Setites do not even know the name Set; they identify as a Follower of Typhon or Shiva or some other deity. This does not bother the Dark God's chosen. They know that what is important is the essence beneath the trappings, Set



wears many masks; that the important patterns repeat in variation. Every disparate cult is a piece of the whole, like a composite photo — just squint your eyes and a terrible face emerges.

Sisterhood of Sekhmet

Early in the twentieth century, female Kindred in the Camarilla looked around and saw mostly male Princes. The glass ceiling had persisted, even after death. A coterie of female Setites decided to harness that dissatisfaction. They took on the mask of Sekhmet: fierce lioness, goddess of battle, plague, and healing. They preached female empowerment and packaged the Revelations of the Void as a series of ways of getting in touch with an inner "Lioness Power." They began a Gehenna cult in the heart of the Camarilla, undermining the sect from within. They recruit disenchanted mortals and the female Kindred of other Clans.

In recent years, Sisterhood finds itself well entrenched in the Camarilla. Its membership even includes a few Princes. Nearly a century of methodical work is coming to fruition. But to what purpose? The Sisterhood is a mystery to the other cults. Some say they are building power in key Camarilla domains, cities containing places of occult importance. Others say they are building enough allies in the Camarilla so that they can defect without fear of reprisal from us. In addition, why are female Kindred of particular importance to their cause? Are the disenfranchised of the Camarilla easier to recruit, or is there some mystical significance?

The Cohort of Wepwawet

The Setite faith is flexible and ever evolving. Witness the exception that proves the rule, the rare example of fundamentalism. The Cohort of Wepwawet makes grand claims. They say they began as a cult of Warrior Setites devoted to protecting Egypt from southern invaders. They claim their leader is an ancient progeny of Set who slumbers in the Arena of Thunder, their founding temple at Abu Simbel. They claim to follow the "true and ancient Theophidian doctrine." Maybe those so devoted to the desert storm gods blow a lot of hot air.

Bolstered by rumors that Wepwawet had awakened from torpor in the 1960s, the Cohort launched a revival campaign. All through the '70s, they spread their militant orthodoxy. The other cults did not support their open

hostility to the other Clans. The Cohort fostered ill will against "Setite fanatics." They even drove the Serpents of the Light to join the Sabbat. With their credibility in shambles, they shrunk in on themselves.

Wepwawet's chosen are hungry for victories. They attack other supernaturals they deem minions of the Aeons. They nurture a special vendetta against the Society of Leopold, killing and corrupting its latter-day witch-hunters. Rumors of Wepwawet stirring from torpor again spread. Whether this is true, or a stunt to gain traction among the cults, who can say? However, the Cohort is on the move.

Children of Loki

You laugh. Scandinavian Setites? No joke. Them Vikings, they got around. The name we have is Arnulf Seamundsson. It is not a valid Scandinavian name, so it is either a mistranslation or a pseudonym, but it is all we have. Arnulf was a Norse merchant who encountered the Followers of Set in Alexandria. He didn't survive the meeting, but he smiled the whole way home. He renamed himself Arnulf Jörmungandrsson. His attempts at building a doomsday cult around the worship of the Midgard Serpent met little success, so he and his childer fell back on the Scandinavian luxury trade. In Christiania (now Oslo), Arnulf's line grew fat on accrued influence. There is little more interesting to say on the matter... until now. A certain, redheaded childe of Arnulf, one Valdís Hel-Blár, has recently revitalized the cult. Cutting a striking figure, half her face painted corpse-blue, she's proven much more spiritually successful than her sire. She calls her movement the Children of Loki. Valdís claims that she has reconnected with the teachings of a cult that came to Scandinavia long before Arnulf. The cult fills its mythos with a pantheon of Loki's monstrous offspring, including the demon-wolf Fenris, the World Serpent Jörmungandr, and half-skeletal Hel. She invokes Loki as a Mask of Set, focusing on the trickster god's penchant for infiltrating the Aeons, while spreading the seeds of chaos and calling upon chthonic powers to bring about Ragnarök. Her dark zeal makes her materialistic sire uncomfortable, but the Typhonists of the other cults heartily approve.

Cult of Taweret

The Followers of Set are explorers. Some explore forbidden lore that makes occultists quake. Some explore the dark corners of the earth, where the brave fear to tread. Some explore the stygian depths beyond. The cultists of Taweret turn inward, exploring the frontier of sensation — liberation and enlightenment through ecstasy. They read the hieroglyphs written in nerve endings.

This cult claims Set's childe Taweret, goddess of fertility, childbirth, and black magic, as its patron. Their teachings spread from the Palace of Veils, a Founding Temple beneath the El Kharga oasis. Debauchery is their tool to oppose the Aeons. Some Clan mates consider the Taweretans too self-indulgent. They corrupt souls one at a time, but show uncanny skill in picking just the right target that brings ruination to a larger body.

The Taweretans have a light touch, never working in groups larger than three. The Aeons, they argue, taint any bond not based on personal emotions. In these small units, they follow the Revelations of Ecstasy as their winding route to communion with the Dark God.

Cult of Typhon Trismegistus

Listen now. Once upon a time, Gaia desired revenge on her treacherous grandchildren, the Olympians, for usurping her children, the Titans. She lay with Tartarus — Hell — and he filled her many cavernous wombs with his 1,289 members. That terrible coupling that made the gods tremble spawned Typhon. The Olympians fled the serpent-legged monster, hiding in the forms of animals.

Zeus, taking the form of a ram, became Amon; Hermes, in ibis form, became Thoth, and so on. Thus, the ancient Greeks explained the similarities they saw between their gods and the Egyptians'. Typhon himself they identified with Set. When the Setites came to convert the Greeks and Romans, they found their work already begun.

The Followers of Set first expanded into Europe through the Cult of Typhon Trismegistus. The cult began in Alexandria and spread through the Roman Empire. The Typhonists so dominated the Classical era that it changed the terminology of the Clan forever. That is why we say the Path of Typhon and not of Sutekh.

Typhonists employ an elaborate system of cults within cults. New recruits believe that they join a cult devoted to Bacchus, Mars, or Pluto. Each god represents one aspect of Set: the bringer of ecstatic madness, the warrior, and the lord of the dead. Promising initiates eventually learn that all three gods represent Typhon. Only the most dedicated learn that Typhon himself is a mask, and move on to the more spiritual doctrines of gnosis and overcoming desire. Many do not move past the step of physical debauchery and remain tempters. But they have all of eternity to progress. The true doctrine is not forced upon any vampire not ready to accept it.

Children of Damballah

Set was a king who stole divine power by cutting out and eating the heart of Damballah-Wedo, snake-god of

Earth and Darkness. This did not prove fatal to the god, but it angered him and his consort, the Rainbow Serpent Aïda-Wedo. Aïda's curse banished the king from life and the day, while Damballah's curse banished him from the peace of the grave, but the two gods could not take back the stolen magic power. The king, however, could share it with others who accepted the curse as its price.

At least, that is how the Children of Damballah tell it. When the Setites spread through sub-Saharan Africa, they established new cults, reconciling Set with various tribal gods. Yoruban Setites invested Set in the person of Damballah-Wedo. The cult based itself in Nigeria and Benin. The high priests steered Damballah to a more sinister light by emphasizing his connection with the dead. Unfortunately, the cult leaders kept Damballah's connection with Set as a "Great Mystery" that only senior initiates would learn. After centuries of isolation and high priests entering torpor, Yoruba culture washed away most of the Theophidian doctrine. Attempts to bring Damballans back to orthodoxy have failed; they merely take the Egyptian Setite lore and re-work it to fit with their mythology. The parent Clan taught them too well.

Despite the legend of a curse, Damballans revere the Serpent and the Rainbow as the source of their power, with Set forming a junior third in their cult's trinity. They emphasize the liberating madness of ecstatic trance. The gods may possess entranced worshippers, and in time, the cult promises that initiates may gain enough spiritual power to become gods themselves. These Setites have a more natural skill with preternatural senses and can even see the spirits.

Bloodlines

Serpents of the Light

The Cobras resemble the parent Clan in most ways, except the most important. They accept the myth of the Noddists. Where the Theophidians desire their god-king to rise and devour, the Cobras oppose the Antediluvians, including Set. To the orthodox Setites, this is blasphemy.

The Serpents of the Light began as an offshoot of the West African Cult of Damballah, already a distant offshoot of the Typhonist beliefs, before drifting even further away. Rumor says the Cobras share their West African cousins' talent with mystical senses and communing with spirits. Their spirituality is steeped in Voudon, and they borrow from other Afro-Caribbean cults — filching the gods, loa, and saints of other faiths to weave their own complicated mythos. Eventually, that convoluted pantheon eclipsed Set. Only the spirits matter.

Now, the Cobras serve not one central theological figure, but entire courts of loa. Gaining the favor of such a diverse group of beings involves many strange and sometimes contradictory tasks. What do these spirits want? Who can guess? The enigmatic Cobras walk with one foot in this world and one in the next.

Is that all bullshit? I hear tell of strange and unfortunate coincidences befalling those who harass the Cobras. Things go wrong. Odd faces stare back at the offender from the mirror. Something watches over them.

Seeking the spiritual freedom they could not find with the parent Clan, the Serpents of the Light joined the Sabbat. They serve as mystics for the Sword of Caine. Creators of cults and peddlers of mortal desire, the Cobras are often more handy at dealing with the kine than the average Sabbat monster.

Some of the other Setite cults might forgive the Cobras (the Cohort of Wepwawet has lost face since their persecution of the Serpents), but their defection to the Sabbat angered many of the Clan, and the bitterness is still fresh. The Serpents eschew most of the Paths of Enlightenment taught by the parent Clan, though some still practice a version of the Path of Ecstasy.

Daitya

Witness the holy blasphemers. Their origin story comes in a pair. The first says the Followers of Set traveled east in the Hellenistic age, trailing the armies of Alexander. Into their own mythology, they absorbed Shiva the Destroyer, Rudra the god of storms and hunters, and the serpent-demon Vritra. The bloodline evolved. The worship of Set faded away. They called themselves "Daitya" after the legendary race of cosmic demons who fought the Hindu gods.

The second story does not deny that Greco-Egyptian Setites came to India, but insists the Daitya were already stalking the night there millennia before Alexander. It was this vampire Clan who gave their name to the mythical demons. The Daitya concede that the Greco-Egyptian Setites renewed contact between the Clan's eastern and western wings. But who came first?

Regardless of which story is true, the Daitya are one of the most exalted Clans in India. They believe crimes in their past lives preordained their Embrace. They consider themselves demons, but even demons have their castes and caste duties. As demons, they must confound the gods and strive to overthrow the moral order of the world. As Brahmins, they must strive to keep their fellow vampires within their own particular caste duties as murderers,

tricksters, and desecrators of sacred rites. If a vampire suffers Final Death, having fulfilled her demonic caste duty, she might win a higher place in the next life.

The Daitya worship Shiva, whose purviews include sex, death, and madness. When Shiva opens his third eye, he annihilates whatever he sees. When the world reaches an absolute nadir of depravity, Shiva will look upon the whole universe with his third eye.

Tlacique

Witness the servants of the sun. The Conquistador Kindred came to the New World hungry for fresh land and blood. Imagine the surprise that wormed through their moldy hearts when they found vampires there already: Nosferatu, Gangrel, and a bloodline calling itself the Tlacique. Was this last a new Clan? There was no hint of them, not in all of the old writings, and these native vampires were already ancient and powerful.

The Tlacique claimed descent from the Aztec god of night and black magic. The European Kindred assumed this Tezcatlipoca must be a Methuselah parent of a very old bloodline, perhaps of the Gangrel or even the Followers of Set. What impressed the Old World Kindred was how the Tlacique lived. They did not merely *influence* the mortals they found there, but ruled openly as gods, in a manner not heard of since Carthage. The cults of sacrifice. The rivers of ecstatic blood. Imagine!

They are the children of a god, reflections of the Smoking Mirror. They believed this set them above both mortal and vampire. They believed their rituals and consumption of blood kept the sun alive and in motion. They had a place in the cosmic drama. Unlike the Followers of Set, their divine progenitor was never cast out.

These elder blood gods made cautious negotiations with the newcomers. The Camarilla might have gained an eighth Clan except for their greed. We all know what the Conquistadors did to the natives. The Tlacique then got into bed with the Sabbat. Well, that didn't work out. The Sabbat loves blood rituals, but they miss the spiritual meaning. The Tlacique protect a divine order and the Sabbat opposes that very order. The Sword of Caine decimated the children of Tezcatlipoca.

They are scattered, but some few remain. Hidden, they unite and rebuild power. They spread from Central to South and North America. They dig up the sleeping elders not devoured by the Sabbat, and they Embrace new childer. We befriend them when we can. We share a love of dark secrets and primal sorcery. We aid and urge them on to revenge. The Sabbat has something nasty at their throat, and they don't even know it. We certainly won't tell them.

Warrior Setites

We say that the Warriors of Set are descended from Set's childe, Wepwawet. This is not a literal truth, but a statement of ideal. They are not even a true bloodline. A Setite who espouses this ideal, usually through training in the Path of the Warrior, may gain great physical strength at the expense of walking unseen. Their progeny, properly trained, may also receive this strength passed on to them. Supernatural nature, changed purely by intent. Proof that the Dark God gives us the gifts He needs us to have.

The Cohort of Wepwawet once claimed the majority of Warrior Setites, but they have since spread. Some form their own tiny cults. The Cult of Typhon Trismegistus contains an important minority of Warrior Setites who devote their worship of Set to his Mask as the Roman god Mars.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Domesticated Snake

You are a darling of your city's Camarilla. Always entertaining to be around. You always have a useful tidbit of knowledge or service that you are only too happy to give your fellow Kindred. Elysium is always so boring without you.

A master of self-deprecating humor and delightfully secular, you make endless jokes at the expense of your kooky, religious cousins. Serpents? Oh, goodness no. You've never shown as much as a scale or slitted eye. You are acknowledged by the Prince, obey all of the Traditions, and never cause any problems. You look the Nosferatu in the eye without flinching, appreciate the most refined points of Ventrue etiquette, and have fascinating conversation with the Toreador on the nature of passion and beauty. After the laughs, gossip, and deals, the other Licks walk away thinking maybe the Setites aren't so bad. Maybe all of those things they heard were just vicious propaganda.

Girl (or Guy) With the Serpent Tattoo

A descendent of Valdís Hel-Blár, the Children of Loki sent you to North America. You recruit from the biker gangs that dabble at Norse worship, forming a roving road cult. Initiates are marked with your special ink. When

they reach the deepest mysteries, you tattoo their souls.

The wild nights. The primal rites. You drink the drugs from their veins. They taste your Jötunn-blessed blood. Travel is treacherous for your kind, but you baptize yourself in the razor-wire uncertainty of the road. The danger of the road cuts you and your followers off from the influence and traps of the Aeons. The road is the World Serpent, and you ride its black, twisted spine.

Haunted Tour Guide

There are many haunted tours in New Orleans, but yours is a favorite. You show up after sunset, in top hat and coattails, holding a charmingly archaic lantern. You show the tourists all the spots: the haunted houses and pubs, the voodoo sites, the famous graves. You spin ghost stories and share fascinating bits of bizarre history with the enthusiasm of someone who was actually there.

A few tourists always ask for something more. They want to see the real shit. You nod, and when the other tourists depart, you take the chosen few to the secret places. You call down the loa. You show your guests the dark miracles of the Serpents of the Light.

Humanitarian Doctor

A child of poor immigrants, you worked twice as hard as everyone else did in medical school. You did well for yourself. You went back to Mexico, giving medical care and humanitarian aid. Your work took you to dangerous places. One danger too many left you bleeding out in a ditch. That is when your sire came to you, in the form of a jaguar. He made you a Tlacique, a reflection of the Smoking Mirror.

Your sire is ancient and powerful, but defers to your knowledge of modern technology. You connect him with the modern age. He teaches you blood magic. You approach occultism with the pragmatic eye of a medical doctor. There are infections that need to be cut out of the cosmos, like the Sabbat who decimated your sire's people and turned your home country into a howling nightmare. The blood your scalpel spills keeps the sun in motion. You once worried your medical skills gave you a god complex. Now, you are a god.

Raggedy Magus

One part conman, one part occultist, all bastard. You were always in over your head, but with the luck of a scoundrel, you always found a way out. Except that one time you tangled with this Typhonic cult. But hey, any death you can walk away from, right?

You've never been busier. Your new masters made you a deal. You continue on harassing demons, Aeons, death cults, and the Baali. You turn their wicked games in on themselves. You're still in over your head, but in a more profound way. You get to continue playing your favorite part as amoral hero, while getting your fix of adrenaline and esoteric secrets. Your masters get to ruin a lot of competition using an asset they don't mind losing. Your sire and his chums have a Final Death pool going on you. You've got all of eternity to figure an angle on how to screw them over.

Sin Eater

In a hell-on-earth neighborhood, there is an abandoned church haunted by bats and urban myth. Inside is a worm-chewed confessional booth. You are the invisible voice of the booth. The street people know to come to the confessional. When you speak, they know yours is the only voice that can absolve them. Sometimes, you drink the sin right out of them. Sometimes, if their sins are good, they get to taste divine communion. Once, a sinner was brave enough to open the other confessional compartment, but no one was there — or he ran away screaming — depending on who tells the story.

More and more of the vermiculated souls come to the abandoned church. Sometimes they go right back out and sin, just so they can confess again. Sometimes, they confess the sins of others and accept reconciliation by proxy. You know the worst secrets of everyone for miles.

Social Media Consultant

You did not invent the Internet; you just made it better. For decades, you've been the one they ask for, companies large and small. You appear, whispering suggestions. You came up with the concept of receiving notification when a recipient has read one's sent email. You dreamed up that little eraser icon that informs someone that an Instant Messenger friend has just erased something they typed. Has humanity ever known a larger collective outbreak of anxiety?

You are the hierophant of a new spirit world, as abstract as any other is. Mortals make sacrifices of their own lives, as edited sagas, nailed to intangible walls. They infect each other with envy and insecurity. Anonymity is the most degrading drug ever ingested by humanity. They invent new ways to debauch without even touching. They are all alone together. Social media is the purgatory the living consign their souls to before even dying. You make its spiraling labyrinth deeper and darker.

Tomb Raider

Let the theologians stay in their libraries. You want to go to the secret places. You want to see the sites where the gods touched the earth. You want to hold ancient artifacts in your hand. Your faith is tactile and you want to touch mythology. So your Clan sends you to the tombs and ruins. You've been to every occulted corner of this dark world.

Sometimes you raid, but sometimes you protect. You are a guardian of the hidden places. Sometimes you must raid the mortal museums. The kine do not always understand what they've gotten a hold of. The blathering curators prattle on half-truths to the bored visitors as they stare at mummies sleeping behind glass. You know which ones will wake up if fed blood.

Tortured Typhonist

You have a horrible secret. You do not fully embrace the Path as you pretend — your heart was too soft to form the mental discipline — but you absolutely believe in its ultimate goals. You do things; terrible things that need doing, to warp the perceptions of the lost souls of the world, and free them from the grip of the Aeons. You work with enthusiastic zeal, because you know you are helping people, even if you have to do profane things to them. You hate it. Every. Second. Of. It.

How did you make it so far into the mysteries of your cult? Do the others know? Every action tears away your naked humanity with angry fishhooks. Yet you keep going. You cannot keep this up for long. Your own innocence is your sacrifice. If you can stay sane one more night, you might free another soul. Just one more night. Always one more.

Underground Brawler

"The first rule of—" They always start to say that. That's when you throat punch them. You can always tell if someone is cult material two seconds after a throat punch. You can practically read the braille of someone's soul with your fist in their throat. It starts with underground boxing and acts of petty anarchy. Then it goes deeper. Then it goes underworld. All the self-tortures and tearing down of the walls and flesh. You really have to batter and hack yourself up to find the deity coiled in your chest.

The Dark God was a fighter. You bring the Warrior Setite ideal from the ancient river of death to the bleeding edge of now. The Dark God was a corrupter. You defile all those things your converts used to think were important, all the



poisons the Aeons pumped into them to make them weak, stupid, and complacent. The mortal zeitgeist is on your side. Thanks to recent books, movies, and media, a whole generation is aching for your bloody-knuckle revelations.

Merits and Flaws

Drug Resistance (2pt. Merit)

The Setite religion is one fraught with vices, both to compromise enemies and to enlighten initiates. Cultists tend to build up a tolerance to the substances they take directly (if human or ghoul) or through the blood of prey (if Kindred). You are unusually resistant to alcohol, narcotics, and similar addictive substances. You can pretend to be far more under the influence than you are in order to take advantage of an opponent. All rolls to resist the effects of such substances are at -2 difficulty.

Addictive Blood (3pt. Merit)

You don't just peddle narcotics; through the blessings of the Dark God, you are the perfect drug. Your blood is especially delicious to others, Kindred or kine. Whoever tastes your blood must, during any subsequent scenes that they meet you, drink again or spend a Willpower point to avoid the pangs of craving. These cravings add +2 difficulty to any Mental or Social rolls. Setites with this Merit find it much easier to blood bond an opponent, as once they have tasted the tainted vitae, they will do almost anything to drink it again.

Setite Initiate (5pt. Merit)

You were Embraced into a Clan other than the Followers of Set. However, you have accepted the Setite religion, undergone the vetting process and rites, and have been formally inducted into the cult. You have access to Serpentis and Setite Blood Sorcery (though you pay out-of-Clan costs to learn the,). You may even study one of their Paths of Enlightenment.

It is important to note that "Setites" from other Clans or bloodlines are not treated as second-class citizens. You are no longer a dupe they can string along. Once you are in, you are a sibling of faith, which is a much more important distinction than blood. An outsider accepting the Dark God is a joyous event, even to the most conservative elder. There are even rumors of non-Kindred supernatural beings joining the cult.

Scales (1-3pt. Flaw)

Set blessed you upon your Embrace, and you bear his mark. A portion of your skin is covered in scales. As a one-point Flaw, a small, easily hidden area of skin is covered. As a two-point Flaw, a whole limb is covered, while having a scaled, lipless face is a three-point Flaw. Kine are frightened and disturbed by the obviously unnatural scales, and Kindred have their own prejudices against the Setites. All social rolls receive a +2 difficulty when the scales are visible. This penalty does not apply to social interactions with other Setites.

Venomous Bite (2pt. Flaw)

You have developed venom glands in the roof of your mouth. The venom is a virulent neurotoxin, fatal to mortals, although Kindred and other supernatural creatures are unaffected by it. You, of course, are immune. The problem is you have no control over your poison glands. When you bite, you always inject this venom, usually killing your human victims. You must learn to feed in other ways, perhaps drawing the blood you need with a syringe or razor, if you do not wish to kill every time you feed.

Forked Tongue (2pt. Flaw)

Your tongue is forked, flickering, and inhumanly reptilian. Upholding the Masquerade becomes difficult for you. Note that this tongue does not inflict aggravated damage, nor draw blood.

Heartless (4pt. Flaw)

You have lost your heart. Either you removed it via The Heart of Darkness (see **V20**, p. 210), or an elder did it to you, but either way you no longer have easy access to it. The heart might be in the possession of a foe, or simply missing. If it turns out that a Cainite possesses the heart (say a Setite elder, or your sire) you must obey their every command. If it's merely missing, the anxiety and obsession to find it interferes with your nightly existence, and may increase the difficulty of Willpower rolls by +1 at Storyteller discretion.

Aura of the Typhon (5pt. Flaw)

Something slithers beneath your skin, coiled in your very essence — something that causes the Lupines to stalk you for some dread purpose you do not understand. Their howls follow in your wake. You catch glimpses of blurred motion and the gleam of eyes and teeth in the dark. They get closer every night. What do they want from you?

Discipline Powers

Confusion of the Eye (Obfuscate ••••• •)

This power extends the effect of Mask of 1,000 Faces (see **V20**, p. 185) to another person in a specialized way. While under the influence of this power, the victim perceives one other person of the vampire's choosing as someone else. For instance, the victim might see and

hear the city's Sabbat Archbishop as a mortal janitor, or a despised Anarch as a primogen whose favor the victim desires. The victim hears whatever the "masked" person says, but unconsciously explains away any inconsistencies in the person's responses. If the "masked" person directly tries to persuade the victim of his true identity, the victim will prove hard to convince and may become angry.

System: This power costs one Willpower point to use. The vampire's player makes a Willpower roll (difficulty of the target's current Willpower). If the roll succeeds, the victim sees one person of the character's choosing as one other person, also of the character's choosing. The effect lasts up to 24 hours.

The victim will rationalize or ignore most evidence that the "masked" person is not who he believes. If the "masked" person tries to convince the victim of her true identity, the "masked" person makes a Charisma + Subterfuge roll, while the victim makes a Willpower roll (both difficulty 7). If the victim gets more successes than the "masked" person does, she is convinced. Otherwise, she isn't, and must make a Self-Control roll to keep her calm.

Mental Maze (Obfuscate ••••• •)

This power removes a victim's sense of direction, forcing him to move in circles and binding him to an area of the vampire's choosing. The vampire can trap a person in his own home. To the victim's point of view, the house folds back on itself, and all the exits lead back inside.

System: The vampire's player must make a Charisma + Intimidation roll (difficulty of the target's current Willpower). The difficulty increases by 2 if the character cannot speak to her chosen victims, telling them they cannot escape. For each success, the character may affect one victim. The effects last a full scene.

Normally, the power is used in a multi-room structure such as a house, or an outside area about the same size. A much larger area (anything from an office tower to a neighborhood) reduces the difficulty by 1 and increases the duration to a full day. If the vampire wants to trap a victim within a single room, the character must expend a point of Willpower. A character must also expend a Willpower point to use the Mental Maze upon supernatural victims such as werewolves, mages, other vampires, or ghouls.

Temptation (Presence ••••• •)

This power lets a Setite tempt the victim into some action that she normally wouldn't do. This is usually some sinful action, but Temptation works just as well to provoke unwanted generosity as greed, or chastity as well as lust. The Setite must talk to the victim for at least a minute and allude to the action she wants the victim to perform.

System: To goad the victim, the character must make a successful Manipulation + Leadership roll (difficulty of the target's Humanity or Path of Enlightenment rating). A simple success results in a change to the victim's personality and goals for a scene. If the number of successes exceeds the victim's Conscience or Conviction rating, the change lasts indefinitely (although the victim may overcome it with time and expenditure of Willpower, like a Derangement).

The Setites have created many variations on this power. The player chooses which variation at the time of purchasing this power. Sample variations include:

Obsession: The victim suffers an overpowering lust for a certain substance, action, or condition. She may fly into a rage (the victim receives a frenzy check) if she cannot possess or experience the object of her desire before her next sleep.

True Will: This persuades the victim, for a time, to act on any passing desire, or according to his Nature, without self-restraint.

Phobia (Presence ••••• ••)

By talking to her victim, the Setite can instill an irrational fear of a certain object, substance, person, or condition. The object of the phobia can be broad (cars) or very specific (pink '79 Fords), although the victim must be able to recognize and distinguish what the vampire wants him to fear. The latter example, for instance, would not work on a person who was colorblind.

System: Implanting the Phobia requires success on a Manipulation + Intimidation roll (difficulty of the target's Courage + 3). A simple success confers a Phobia that lasts a single scene. Rolling more successes than the victim's Courage results in a Phobia that lasts indefinitely, although the victim may overcome the Phobia as if it were a Derangement.

The Decaying Orbit (Presence ••••• •••)

This terrible power enables a Setite to break down the mental barriers between the target's Beast and libido. As a result, the victim becomes addicted to sadism as he takes pleasure in rage and aggression. The Setite can also reverse the connection, so that pleasure might rouse the Beast to frenzy. These two effects produce a spiral of desire, the decaying orbit to madness.

Once started, the decay cannot be stopped. The Inconnu might know how to remove a Corruption, as might a member of the Cult of Ra or Isis. The esoteric knowledge might be found in the writings of a dead Child of Osiris. However, killing the Setite in question certainly will.



System: To corrupt a victim, the player must pit the vampire's Manipulation + Empathy vs. the victim's Humanity (or Path of Enlightenment) in an extended roll. If the vampire can accumulate net successes equal to the victim's Humanity or Path rating, the victim suffers the Decaying Orbit effect. A character with a Humanity greater than 3 will automatically lose a point of Humanity for using this power.

A corrupted victim must receive a frenzy check for anything that gives her pleasure, from sex to her favorite food. Like a frenzying vampire seeking blood, the victim will try to indulge her lust in the most brutal and immediate way. Conversely, a frenzying vampire might seek out more than blood in her rage. This may result in bizarre situations such as a maddened vampire smashing into a record store to hear his favorite music and killing anyone who tries to stop him.

The victim cannot overcome this corruption by expending Willpower (unlike most Presence powers – see **V20**, p. 193). The Decaying Orbit is no mere induced derangement, but a fundamental alteration to the Curse of Caine. Killing the Setite who laid the Corruption will immediately end its effects. The Setite who laid the Corruption could remove it at will, but the Setites would probably urge the victim to view the Corruption as an opportunity for self-discovery.

Combination Disciplines

True Love's Face (Obfuscate •••, Presence •••)

Through perfect combination of Mask of 1,000 Faces and Entrancement, the Setite can appear to another person as someone he already loves. If she does not know of such a person, she can let the victim define his own "true love" and let the power do the rest. In that case, however, the Setite will have to use her wits to discover who the victim thinks she is.

System: The vampire receives a roll of Charisma + Empathy (difficulty 6). Success means that the chosen victim sees the vampire as a loved one for as long as the vampire remains in her presence.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Typhonic Beast (Potence •••, Serpentis ••••)

The Setite calls upon the primordial chaos of the Duat, expressing it through his own flesh. The vampire takes on the form of the mysterious Typhonic animal.

System: This power requires the expenditure of three blood points; the transformation takes three turns to complete. The transformed vampire gains one dot each of Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina, as well as the benefits of Potence. The Typhonic form gains the soak benefits of Skin of the Adder (see **V20**, p. 210): dropping the soak difficulty to 5; and the vampire can use her Stamina to soak aggravated damage from claws and fangs, but not from fire, sunlight, or magic. The Setite also gains the venomous bite of Form of the Cobra, doubles her running speed, and gains +2 dice on all Perception rolls related to smell or hearing.

The vampire remains in bestial form until the next sunrise, or until she voluntarily changes back. Clothing and other small personal items transform along with the vampire.

This power costs 21 experience points to learn.

Weigh the Heart (Auspex •••, Serpentis •••••)

The ancient Egyptians believed that conscience and judgment resided in the heart. In the afterlife, the gods weighed a person's heart, the record of his deeds, against the feather of truth. A Setite who has learned The Heart of Darkness (see **V20**, p. 210) not only can remove a vampire's heart to keep it safe, he gains a potential insight into the consciences of others. He can develop that potential through Auspex. Like the god Anubis, a vampire with this power can "weigh" another person's heart to read his character and sins. Such knowledge of another person's character makes tempting, corrupting, or teaching him much easier.

System: This power calls for a Perception + Empathy roll (difficulty 8). Each success reveals one truth about the target's character, with particular emphasis on the person's weaknesses, passions, and guilts. The first truth is always the target's Nature. Subsequent truths might include any Derangements or mental Flaws, strong passions, or deep-laid fears and guilts (although never specific details about specific crimes).

This power costs 24 experience points to learn.

The Path of Ecstasy

Nickname: Ecstatics (sometimes known as Maenads or collectively as the Thiasus)

Virtues: Conscience and Self-Control

Bearing: Rapture. Ecstatics know how to use earthly sensations and passions to transcend the mundane. Their bearing modifier affects rolls to excite extreme and transformative emotional responses in themselves and others.

Basic Beliefs: Conventional morality is a rigged game set by the Aeons. All those rules, taboos, and obligations shackling all the world's souls. Shame is a thorny chain. To escape, the Ecstatics grease the spiritual fetters and writhe and writhe.

For initiates on the Path of Ecstasy, the act of reveling is holy. They seek elation beyond mortal limits — bacchanalian euphoria — pleasure so pure and passion so dire, the gods above quake. Ecstatics glut the beast with sensation until it is sluggish and pliable. Although this path shares certain precepts and mythology with the Path of Typhon, its practitioners reject the base cruelties of the Theophidians. Corruption is incidental. The pleasure's the thing.

For these serpents of mania, the pleasure has a higher function. In a world hopelessly ensnared in materialism, the Ecstatics push that materialism to such extremes that they crash through the other side into a religious experience. Ecstatics reserve a special contempt for secular sensualists. Hedonism without a spiritual dimension is one of the few profanities they recognize.

Alternative Children of Damballah

To better facilitate their mystical senses and dealings with the spirits, the Children of Damballah (and the Serpents of the Light, who are their offshoot) may take this alternative Discipline spread: Auspex, Presence, and Serpentis.

They also gain the following Weakness: The Children of Damballah have dealings with the spirit world, and such contact requires nightly offerings to avoid offending the spirits. The offering requires a ten-minute ritual and a Charisma + Occult roll (difficulty 8). Should the player fail the roll or refuse to make the offering, the character suffers from the Haunted Flaw (see **V20**, p. 495) for the rest of the evening.

Path of Ecstasy Hierarchy of Sins

Rating	Moral Guideline	Rationale
10	Suffering an innocent to live	A soul unwilling to touch the beyond, via sensation, should be sent by a more direct route.
9	Not wallowing in absolute decadence	Always, always drown the Beast.
8	Refusing to break a taboo	Transgressing any sacred border deteriorates the paradigm of the Aeons.
7	Allowing an infector of impurity (i.e. priest, nun, etc.) to live without good reason	Unless they can be compromised, the hypocrites will continue serving the purpose of the Aeons.
6	Failing to create a beautiful moment	In a world choked in nihilism, it is a sin to not open a window to the divine when inspiration strikes.
5	Not attempting to corrupt an innocent	Free the shackled sheep when you can.
4	Not taking at least one drug regularly	A malleable mind is more open to the supernal.
3	Restraining your natural impulses unnecessarily	The compulsion of repression is a useless artifact, implanted by the Aeons, and must be cut out.
2	Refusing to subvert the chains of the Aeons	Without our glorious purpose, we are naught but shabby hedonists.
1	Destroying something of beauty, even an innocent	We refuse to make the world any less interesting.

The Ethics of the Path

- Pursuit of pleasure is a spiritual obligation. Those who adhere to the hypocritical moralities seek to befoul the spirit.
- Ignite rapture in yourself and others. Spread holy delirium.
- To resist temptation is a great wrong.
- It is not a crime to kill, as long as the killing is committed beautifully.
- Erode the imprisoning paradigms of the Aeons whenever possible. Crossing taboos weakens them.
- Moments of transcendental rapture open a window to the beyond. Create these "beautiful moments" whenever possible.

History

The Path of Ecstasy began as scattered seeds of spiritual philosophy, back in the earliest nights of the Theophidian cults. It was not until after the fall of Egypt that the Followers of Set dwelling in Constantinople wove the disparate threads into a cohesive whole. In that voluptuous scene of Byzantine decadence, the path founders reached such levels of feverish mania, their supernal senses dilated. In that beautiful moment, the vistas of the true spiritual war and their invisible enemies took on terrible clarity. Since then, the Ecstatics have waged that war, cloaked in their guise as debaucherous sense junkies.

Current Practices

The modern world teems with so many more traps that drain the soul down to a dull, sepia husk, and yet so many new ways to explore sensation. The Ecstatics exalt in the new challenges and possibilities. Theirs is a path that benefits from an emotional feedback loop – ecstasy shared is ecstasy multiplied – so they work well with mortal cultists. Ecstatics sprinkle themselves throughout the Setite cults and factions, with a large portion of their number joining the Cult of Taweret. Ecstatics rarely get along with practitioners of the Path of the Warrior, but the Typhonists tend to understand their worth. The Ecstatics make good ambassadors to the other Clans and an excellent gateway to the larger Setite religion. Want the local Prince to underestimate your chthonic cult? Let the Ecstatics be your face.

Description of Followers

Ecstasy takes on many forms, as do its practitioners. The drug pusher leads you away from the troglodytes of the cocaine circle and rubs the semi-toxic extract of some extinct amphibian on your wrist. The meditation guru's voice, accompanied by the reversed recording of whales in distress, guides you to a screaming catharsis. The extreme sports enthusiast shows you an all-new adrenaline high, before you have to flee the approaching red and blue lights. The dominatrix invokes god through your nerve endings. The snake-handling preacher brings you to a frothing rapture, as you writhe on the floor. Your eyes tear

up at the beauty blessing your taste buds, as the epicurean feeds you your ex-spouse.

While the Path of Ecstasy may appear outwardly similar to the Path of Cathari, they diverge in key points. The Ecstatics are less concerned about corrupting the physical world, than they are about achieving preternatural ecstasy to transcend it. Where the Albigensians see themselves as barred from the spiritual world, the Ecstatics see it as their right and create windows to it through beautiful moments. Sin is not the end goal, but a potential tool in crossing the tyrannous taboos of the moralists. The Ecstatics do not serve the cosmic Punch and Judy show of dualism, but seek to break the paradigms entrapping the world.

Following the Path

Ecstasy is the art of extremes. Ecstasy produces a trancelike state in which one loses consciousness of one's surroundings, breaking down the hypocritical illusions that that bind one's animus. This philosophy may seem gentler than the other Setite Paths—and it often is—but it contains more frightening dimensions beneath. To achieve the supernal, the Ecstatic must reach past the limits of human experience. They will go to any lengths to achieve these beautiful moments. Any sensation that unlocks this is valid, any extreme emotion. Some do so through beauty and pleasure, and some through the repulsive glamour of transcendent horror. Ecstatics often lose themselves to their passion, rage with the terrible joy of the Maenads, and not everyone survives their Bacchanalian orgies. Ecstatics often awaken wearing the parts of the one they loved the night before. Sparagmos is a holy rite.

Common Abilities: Ecstatics prize any aptitude that helps them inspire extremes in sensation and experience in themselves and others. Useful Abilities include Crafts, Empathy, Expression, Medicine, Performance, Streetwise, and Subterfuge.

Preferred Disciplines: As harbingers of rapture, an Ecstatic's most prized discipline is Presence. They also find Fortitude useful in allowing themselves to break thresholds of physical experience far beyond what a mortal could endure. Auspex is particularly cherished by those on the Path.

The Path of the Warrior

Nickname: Wraths (also known as the Warrior Setite bloodline nickname, Horned Vipers)

Virtues: Conviction and Self-Control

Bearing: Fury. The Wraths burn with divine rage. Their bearing modifier applies to cowing others (Intimidation rolls) and even their own Beasts (rolls to resist both Frenzy and Rötschreck).

Basic Beliefs: Those who follow this path believe they honor the true ideal of Set—not a skulking corruptor, but a warrior and hunter, a god of war and storms. They are the Wraths of Set. They know that words like "masochist" and "fanatic" are synonymous with "worthy." To be worthy, they must hone themselves, body and soul. The testing of martial prowess is a holy sacrament, and every kill is a prayer sent floating down the River of Duat.

The Wraths fight a war both external and internal. They believe that the Beast is a creation of the mind, and that by training the body until it is stronger than the mind, they can subjugate the Beast. They purify their sinful flesh with pain and punishment. Agony is a sacrament. Scars are the illumined text written upon the holy book of the warrior's body. With every self-flagellation, the Wrath chants the mantra, "Until my Beast is afraid of me."

The Wraths of Set are his shock troops in the Jyhad. Kine, Kindred, Lupines, and demons, all serve as prey; all serve as tests. The warriors must be prepared for the night Set rises to gather his army. Every Wrath greets another by praying, "And the storm shall be His hands."

The Ethics of the Path

- The mind is subservient to the body, and so is the Beast. Although the body is bestial in nature, it can be refined. The Embrace begins this process of transmogrification, but even afterwards, the warrior must be vigilant in disciplining the Beast.
- You are a killer. Do not hesitate to kill. We are the holy plague of Set's wrath made manifest.
- Scourge yourself, hurt yourself, push yourself to your limits, and know that by doing so, you hurt the Beast.
- Every moment is an opportunity to hone the self. Your mastery of vampire Disciplines is the measure of your body and soul.
- Final Death is better than weakness. Like Set, we must be implacable and unyielding in the Jyhad waged against his enemies.
- You must be ready for the resurrection of Set and the final battle.

History

After the Roman Empire crushed Egypt, disillusion took root among the Followers of Set. In the still hearts of the truly devout, that disillusion transformed into righteous rage. These wrathful Setites believed that the

Path of the Warrior Hierarchy of Sins

Rating	Moral Guideline	Rationale
10	Not subjecting yourself to the most painful tortures	Your flesh must be purified for its holy purpose.
9	Failing any test set you, physical or mental	Failure is unworthy of the dark god.
8	Not developing your body to its fullest potential	You are a weapon wielded by Set, and you must be sharp.
7	Spending blood points to heal your wounds the same night they are inflicted	Pain is a teacher. Do not skirt your lessons.
6	Not developing your Disciplines to their fullest potential	Divinity is wasted on those who do not unlock its gifts.
5	Killing swiftly and mercifully	A dying enemy must know despair if Set is to hear your offering.
4	Showing any sign of pain	Your pain belongs to you and to no one else whom you do not give it to.
3	Succumbing to Frenzy or Rötschreck	If you have all the power in the world, and the Beast controls you, you have nothing.
2	Thinking too long before acting	Hesitation is a mortal failing and unworthy of you.
1	Refusing to aid in Set's resurrection	The final battle cannot begin until the god of storm and sky returns.

personal weakness of the Theophidian priests was the direct cause of Egypt's downfall. Never again, vowed the wrathful. Never again would they be so unworthy of Set's favor. Never again would their enemies know a peaceful night. The wrathful developed a path that would remake them into that terrible promise.

Current Practices

The Path of the Warrior has seen a resurgence in recent decades. Something in the mortal zeitgeist has formed a generation eager for what the Wraths have to offer. Perhaps Set is stirring and calling out to the dreams of the worthy. Practitioners of the Path, the world over, are reinvigorated. Their razor tongues taste something on the wind. Their actions grow bolder. Many Wraths join the Cohort of Wepwawet, though most of the factions have use for them, particularly the Cult of Typhon Trismegistus. The Wraths tend to despise the languid indulgence of the Ecstatics. They would have set about purging them from the Setite religion if the Theophidians had not intervened.

Description of Followers

Wraths are disciplined, zealous, and vicious. They take holy joy in the suffering of an enemy. The singular focus of their unlives is on becoming the ultimate urban predators. They often sport wounds that they refuse to heal for several nights as a test of will. Though they focus on a martial interpretation of Set, followers of the Path are not necessarily dull or inarticulate. Their power inspires awe in their cultists, and the terrible piety of their words inspires devotion.

Following the Path

The Path of the Warrior is not an idle one. When not doing, a Wrath is preparing. The warrior must constantly test herself. A warrior conditions her body and hones her combat skills. A warrior masters her vampire nature. Self-mutilation and torture tempers the Beast and strips away any useable fear a would-be enemy could make use of. What can anyone else do to you if you have already put yourself through hell? A Wrath must test herself constantly. A follower of the Path may be called on to serve as protection (or retribution) for a local temple, or she may start her own devoted solely to the warrior ideal.

Common Abilities: A Wrath constantly hones those skills useful to serving as one of Set's elite killers. Useful abilities include Alertness, Athletics, Brawl, Firearms, Intimidation, Melee, and Stealth. Those who lead a cult or combat unit will also focus on Leadership.

Preferred Disciplines: Wraths consider the three physical Disciplines (Celerity, Fortitude, and Potence) to be sacred. They believe that the punishment they inflict on themselves purifies their undead bodies, and mastery of the physical Disciplines denotes purity. Presence and Serpentis are also important, as the former marks them as children of a god, and the later marks them as favored by Set.



Gangrel

"Nature never makes excellent things for mean or no uses."
— John Locke, "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding"

NOT A WHISPER

The wind ruffles my hair as I stand upon the roof of the 99th Street Theatre. Far away, I can hear the screeching of sky-lost bats and the catcalls of women walking the pavement, both looking for prey. The night stretches out around me, red and white city lights blending in my mind with blue-hued gas lamps, warm torches, and yellowed caravan wagon lanterns of the past. Was there a difference? Did it matter?

Stretching my fingers on arms spread wide, I leap from the rooftop and swing wide, arcing toward the ground that I would never meet. With the flicker-flash of blood through my cold veins, my arms grow lighter. My legs shrink beneath me, and the weight of my entire body changes. My skin prickles and peels, feathers sprouting from every pore, my face rippling the way a page of newspaper tugged by the wind takes new shape. I am borne aloft, no longer human. As if I ever was.

This is life — unlife, I suppose. This is what "freedom" means.

There are no Kindred courts nor vampiric Traditions when you're soaring above skyscrapers: no politics, nor boons, nor station. I pity the others, who cannot so easily escape the chains wrapped about them by centuries of custom and greed. Street by street, I search the city, my hawk's eyes catching sight of things my human glance would miss.

There, in the shadows. I stoop, wings tilting into the wind as my body twists and angles down. My instincts sharpen. Claws extend.

A man is attacking a woman, his hand lifted to give her another blow. She cowers, shoving her purse toward him, begging the mugger to take her belongings and be gone. Just before they see me, outside the curved arc of the streetlight, I shift back into my human form. I am 145 pounds of tough muscle mass, rocketing down from above, claws sharp, driving into the man's collarbone, breaking it in an instant. Before he can scream, my feet hit the ground and I coil, using the grip I've gained to slam the man into the earth. He collapses into unconsciousness without even knowing what struck him.

The woman stares at me, handbag hanging limp from her fingers. She begins to stammer a thank you. Then she catches sight of my yellow eyes, the feathers along my forearms, the fangs sliding down between my teeth. Maybe she'd assumed I was some kind of superhero. When I tore out the man's throat and began to feed, she quickly changed her mind. The woman's eyes widen, her lips part in the beginnings of a choked scream. Swifter than her human responses, I leap to her side and clench my hand around her neck, my face inches from her own. "Not a word. Not a whisper." I smiled, raising a finger to my bloodstained lips. I point slyly toward the sky and give her a grin. "I'll be watching.

"Go on, now." Clutching her handbag and her screams close to her chest, she staggers out of the alley and flees.

This is immortality. This is power. No one could ever give you more.

Oral History

It's been a long time since I wrote anything down. Traveling a lot can do that to you. A person can lose track of the date, the time, even where they are in the world, and grow inured to a constant flow of stimuli. New places, new people, new adventures. You'd have to move slower. Take a moment to stop and write in a journal, and while you were doing that, you could miss something. Maybe that's why my Clan's history is mostly oral, even though half of us carry cellphones and use computers.

A lot of our history is common knowledge. Clan Gangrel. Proud, wild masters of the steppes and Nordic lands. The other vampire Clans look at us and think we sit around reciting eddas or emulating Native American shamans. Yeah, sure, the stereotype is occasionally true. Still, like any wild animal, if you judge us by our fur and feathers, you'll end up disemboweled by the claws underneath.

What You Think You Know

Everybody's heard the legend of Caine and Abel. You know, the first vampire, cursed by a divine force because he killed his brother over sacrificing some fruit. That's the tale most of us are told, especially in the western world where Christianization is common. It's a myth, yes, but it's not the only one. Most of the oldest Gangrel tell different stories, tales as separate as their histories. Legends of Lamashtu, the daughter of the sky god Anu, who stole children to raise as her own and Embraced them into immortality upon their twentieth year. Tales of Lilith, the first-created woman, who defied Yahweh and refused to be subservient. Cast out of the garden long before Eve bore Adam sons. Rome had the striges; Greek myth goes out the window with Hecate and the Empusa. The list goes on and on.

For the most part, the oldest Gangrel willing to speak to me about the origins of our Clan referred to our Eldest, our Antediluvian, as female. Since their heyday, "modern" societal conventions like Catholicism and the rise of the Camarilla convinced many Gangrel to adopt the belief that Caine created the vampire race, and Ennoia was one of his grandchilder, an Antediluvian, meaning "before the flood." Maybe that's true, or maybe that's a bunch of patriarchal bullshit. Even as the old ones nod and mouth platitudes about Caine when they are talking to the Camarilla, when they're speaking to the Clan the ancient ones praise Ennoia as though she were an independent creatrix.

Ennoia. That's the name they use. That's the one we're taught. In Gnostic mythology, the name represents the female half of God. Some of the older non-Christian vampires argue that it's a feminization of "Enoch," the ancient city of vampires named in the *Book of Nod*. There are so many myths and legends surrounding our progenitor that it's shocking we have any sense of continuity as a Clan.

Seriously, there's no way to tell where the whole thing started. Well, there's one way, I suppose. Follow the trail of blood to the oldest vampire you can find — the legendary Antediluvians, maybe — and ask.

Good luck with that.

Really Old Tales

Enoch, Mesopotamia, the first emergence of "civilized" human society. We were there, of course. The Gangrel go everywhere. You'd be hard-pressed to find a country, or even a continent, where the Gangrel haven't wandered. The three most important places? I'd have to say that's Alexandria, the Steppes of Central Asia, and Scandinavia.

Alexandria

The Gangrel were more involved in the golden days of ancient cultures than you might expect, given our bestial reputation. We were there to witness the rise of Greek society. We were part of Alexandria, the Berber kingdom of Almoravid, and a lot of the viciousness on the Barbary Coast.

Plenty of people will tell you about the education and culture of the ancient days of Greece. If you look closely, you can see they had a special relationship with the wilderness, too. Hunters, farmers, vines, and seasons were integral to Greek culture, too. Some of that was our influence. The Byzantine era of Greece was one of the few times that my Clan actually tried to cut its teeth on "civilization." Of course, after the Ottoman conquest that all fell apart, and we scattered again.

With the decline of the Berber dynasties in the fifteenth century C.E. came the fall of more than a few civilized territories. Gangrel flocked to Morocco and North Africa. We fought in the conflicts between the Spanish Habsburgs and the Ottoman Empire, and when that ended, we fled to the sea. I'll admit, I'm told that piracy was a popular occupation for our Clan. There's one legend about this hoary old Portuguese elder named Benigno. His ship, the *Gallantry*, sunk somewhere between Lisbon and Tunisia with a belly-full of artifacts. The legend's grown so many times over the centuries that the last time I heard it, the gold was said to have been salvaged from Enoch itself.

Another thing, the vampires of Africa — including our so-called brethren, the mysterious Akunanse — aren't like us. The stories aren't even entirely sure we share a common ancestor, much less that they descend from our line. Because it's so dangerous, the Gangrel consider travelling to the depths of Africa a badge of honor. Even though we are keepers of the land, the spirit of that beautiful continent is a powerful, wild, and fierce thing. I'm even told that Clans thought to be dead are hiding there, thriving.

Once you get through the gatekeepers in Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia, you'll find the vampires of Africa live in a chaotic mishmash of independent domains. Some of them are intelligent, educated, and well read, while others are little more than militant warlords. I guess that's what you get anywhere in the world. It's not about the primitivism of some cultures resident in Africa. Gangrel certainly have no room to talk about the primitivist lifestyle, and we know well that "uneducated" definitely doesn't mean "lesser." It's the rules. In Africa, they have a political system much like the Camarilla and its Traditions, but with very different rules and expectations. I'm warning you; don't go there unless you've taken the time to study their Tenets. The Laibon expect you to live — or die — by those rules, no matter where you originate.

One of the most influential Gangrel, and one of the oldest among us, is a woman who calls herself Hypatia. I'm not sure if she actually was the librarian at the school in Alexandria, or if she just took the name of that famous martyr because it meant something to her. I can tell you that the Hypatia I met has marks across her honey-colored skin, with slashes and scars on every inch of her flesh. Maybe that Christian mob really did flay her with oyster shells. Who knows? In any case, Hypatia's the link between the modern world and the wilderness of sub-Saharan Africa. If you're a Gangrel and you plan to do anything in the area, you'd best talk to her.

They say that Hypatia is a leader in a Gangrel Sect known as the Disciples of Anubis. They trace their origins back to a really old vampire named Anpu, cast out of Egypt by the priests of Isis for some ancient sin. Since then, I guess they've been trying to go back. At least, they've done a lot of fighting to keep vampires out of Egypt, utilizing some ritual they called the Rite of the Sun-King. I'm not trying to be deliberately vague. It was hard enough to figure out that this group existed; I couldn't get much more on their history or purposes. It's not something I recommend you talk to Hypatia about. Not if you want to keep talking.

Hypatia and her brood form a vital link that keeps the continent open so Gangrel can wander. There's a price for passage, though, and it's usually paid in ashes. Hypatia's particularly fond of people who murder the Followers of Set. There's been a feud on between the Greek Gangrel and the mistress of Mombasa's illegal underworld, a Setite named Zhenga. There's a lot of bad blood between the two, and Gangrel that want to wander across Africa's wide plains had best be ready to avoid landmines — both political and literal.

Arnulf and the Gargoyles

There were Gangrel among the Golden Horde of the Khans, destroying the civilizations of Asia and Russia. Dobrul the Brave — founder of the Anda, a bloodline of Gangrel that swore never to settle in on place for a very long time — led many of them. The Mongols were heaven and home to the Anda. Some of us rode with them for the thrill of battle. Others were invested in destroying Ventrue and Tremere enclaves throughout Europe. We rode with the Cimmerians and the Scythians around the time the "new Clan" of Tremere were capturing our young childer, twisting them in dark rituals and using them as Gargoyle slaves. I'd better explain that before we go on to the real story.



The Nosferatu first told us what was happening. Gangrel Embrace hardy childer, and to prove their worth, the new Embraces are left alone for months — even years — forced to prove that they can survive. The Sire might check in from time to time, but if the childe vanishes, it's typical just to assume hunters, or its own stupidity, brought about its own destruction. Nosferatu take better care of their neonates than we do. They notice when a few here and there go missing, and they investigate where we would just shrug. In time, one of their elders (a sodden-looking thing named Marienna) asked Dobrul to go with the Nos to find one of their lost childer. She had to use a boon to do it, but he went.

A few months later, Dobrul showed up at one of the Gangrel gatherings, and his anger could have scorched the plains. They'd discovered what the Tremere were doing, not just to young Nosferatu, but to captured Gangrel and Tzimisce as well. The experiments. The monstrosities. When he was finished talking, the Gangrel Clan went to war.

The elders of other Clans didn't listen when we brought these violations forward. Some ignored us, wanting to avoid war with the powerful magicians. Others, I'm told, were deliberately assisting the Tremere in their pogrom against the Salubri, hewing those vampires to meat and not caring who got fed. Hell, it even took the Tzimisce a while to come around. Then again, they're a hard, cruel bunch. I'm surprised they cared about their children being tortured, except that the Tremere were guilty of taking away their toys.

Dobrul wasn't the only leader in our revenge against the new Clan. Another was a powerful Gangrel warrior named Arnulf. Arnulf rode with the Mongols when they destroyed Hungary and Poland, and he devastated every enclave of Tremere he found, even after the Mongol raiders disbanded. For centuries, he and his lineage hunted the Tremere. His name was a curse to those bastard mages, and more than one Gangrel — and Nosferatu — owe him their unlives. A lot of Gargoyles, too. Even in modern days, descending from Arnulf's lineage is considered both a curse and a blessing. It comes with allies and enemies, and it comes with expectations. Sure, Arnulf went crazy at the end, throwing his immortality away when he fought Vlad Tepes years later. Arnulf was never the same after his last assault on Vienna.

Even after the Camarilla "forgave them," Arnulf never stopped hating the Tremere.

Scandinavia

Most people associate the Gangrel with Vikings, barbarian raids, Valkyries, the futhark, Radbod's rejection of Christianity and the building of the Danevirke. Those stereotypes aren't wrong. We call our gathers "Althings" and standing in the Clan rises and falls by the stories you tell by the fire, just like in ye olden Norseman days, or so I'm told. Gangrel who harm other members of the Clan outside of fair combat or the hunt, or who show cowardice, are outcast according to ancient traditions of the Danelaw.

The first legends of our Clan center on the snowy climes of the Nordic lands. Even though we travel around the world, many Gangrel think of those lands as home. These hardy people made up the bulk of our Embraces, and even now, a majority of our Clan's elders has names like Asbjörn, Volker, and Signy. The Ventrue make claims on the Holy German Empire, but the people — the land, and those who work it — have always been ours.

From early history, the All-High, the Jarl of the North, has been the nominal leader of these lands. His vargr roam the icy halls across Europe, insisting that they are still at the height of their power. The upheavals of two world wars and the rise of technology have not changed the vargr's claim on the majority of the northern lands. "Modernism" aside, they have no intention of releasing control.

Sometimes, modern Gangrel can join this ancient group, if they earn the vargr's respect. When someone has reached this pinnacle, the vargr invite him or her into the order (it is exceptionally bad form for a non-initiate to ask to join). The vargr prize valor, individual acts of heroism and courage, and personal strength or cunning in a warrior far more than they do "handicaps" such as weapons, technology, or group tactics.

The vargr are single-minded, and mostly fanatic. Even the younger Gangrel in this faction tend to be hardcore— they have been taught that the world is not a gentle place, and they believe that the Gangrel Clan must be strong in order to survive and prosper. Even young members of the vargr disdain modern weaponry in favor of claws and cunning. This is not because they do not see the worth in such technology. It is because they feel they are above it, and that such items as GPS, rifles, explosives, or other aids make a hunter weak and soft.

Convention of Thorns

Most vampires know something about the famous Convention of Thorns and the creation of the Camarilla in the fifteenth century C.E. You've heard the tales about how a bunch of Ventrue, Tremere, and Toreador elders dragged everybody together and convinced them that it was better to work together than let the Inquisition tear them apart. Well, convinced everyone except the proto-Sabbat, who followed some woman out the door screaming for blood and ravaged the town of Silchester in the bloodiest massacre before Nanking.

What were the Gangrel doing there? Good question. We're an independent Clan, unwilling to trust others or join the crowd. Half of our Clanmates spend their unlives tearing down civilization, so why would the Gangrel be part of the founding of vampire society? Of all the Clans, we have the best ability to avoid hunters. We sleep beneath the earth, or anywhere we choose. We turn into animals, we fly, and we can become untouchable pockets of mist. Yes, the Beast marks our faces and our bodies with fur, scales, fangs, claws, and other curses, but we're still the most likely to survive any kind of hunter attack. Tying ourselves down to the other Clans and promising to be part of some unified effort just hurts us. In the eyes of some of our elders, it allows the weak — the other Clans — to survive. The elders say that's against the laws of nature. But we did it anyway.

They say that we're a cold, hard lot. We abandon our childer and let them live or die on their own. It's true, to a point. There's also no mother like a Gangrel, and once the child has successfully survived the fall from the nest, a Gangrel sire can be like a lioness. The Tremere had been kidnapping our childer, twisting them into abominations. We were promised this was a way to stop that from happening — a way to force the Tremere to give it up and seek peace. The elders of the Camarilla created the Montmartre Pact, and our Clan was convinced to sign on, but only just. The Camarilla insisted we give up our Paths of Enlightenment and return to *Humanitas*. That caused even more problems. However, there were some in the Clan who agreed. The philosophical movement of ethical humanity was picked up by our ancillae, and pushed forward until it became a major proponent of the Clan in the modern age.

Still, Gangrel are pragmatists and survivors. Our elders knew that the Clan would be stronger if they allied with others. The Nosferatu and the Brujah had already shown us the virtues of alliance; the fall of the Salubri was a constant reminder of what happens when a Clan stands entirely alone. The Camarilla provides soldiers to fight against larger threats, and plenty of non-Gangrel vampires to sacrifice if we needed to save our own hides. Like I said, pragmatists. What, did you think everyone joined the Camarilla to play at being friends?

The Althing that year was a bloody one, with plenty of scraps and arguments. Three elders died resisting the idea. More left, choosing to remain independent rather than make peace with the Tremere. Nevertheless, in the end, we accepted a place in the Camarilla. It was a narrow thing, and even generations later, still argued at Althings the way your grandparents argue about where they went on their first date.

Gargoyles

Gargoyles. That's a hard one. Twisted little Frankenstein creations that the Tremere made out of baby Gangrel, Nosferatu, and Tzimisce. They kept crafting them — right up until 1489, when the Montmartre Pact forbade them from continuing. After that, the Camarilla went and released all they could find. A lot of Gargoyles spent years making sure their brethren were free. They knew where the Tremere hid the birthing laboratories, knew which Tremere had mastered the spells of patchwork creation. Even with all that information, everyone knew that a few had escaped. Three, in particular — massive, legendary creatures: Chaundice, Saxim, and Ublo-Satha. All three are blood-bound to Tremere elders of the highest rank and order. One, Chaundice, vanished long before the revolution, and is rumored to be serving as guard and protector over the torpored form of Tremere himself. One of the other two, Saxim, served Etrius. The third, Ublo-Satha, was seen in Chicago, defending the chantry during the last major Sabbat attack. If we'd been able to prove that rumor, we might have been able to finally throw those dirty wizards out of the club.

The fire of our hatred toward the Tremere never died. Gangrel teach their neonates about the Gargoyles from the moment they're taken in, after they survive the Embrace and prove themselves worthy of survival. Tremere are a sort of natural enemy; not a predator, like a wolf or a shark, but an opportunist, like a spider or an earwig. Give them an inch of trust, and they'll chop you apart. It's to our benefit to make sure none forget the stories about Gargoyles. We keep an eye on them, and ensure that they can't keep that kind of activity hidden. One mistake, just one mistake. One Gargoyle still enslaved, one asshole that starts bioengineering neonates into stony, brainless cannon fodder, and we have what we need to force the Inner Circle to throw them out.

We wouldn't be alone, either. The Nosferatu are right beside us. It's one of those things our Clans completely agree on. Once the Tremere no longer enjoy the Camarilla's protection, they have plenty of enemies who will gladly put a fang to their throat. Hell, half the Clans of the Sabbat are only there because it gives them a chance to kill Tremere.

One error. One provable mistake. That's all we need to destroy them.

Modern Myths

The world is updating faster than the rapid breath of fleeing prey, faster than the moon chasing the sun. Wild places are fewer, and cellphones reach everywhere but the deepest parts of the jungle or the most desolate ice plains of the Antarctic. There are very few frontiers left. Still, like most animals, we Gangrel are adaptable. It's part of being able to survive. If you can't change with the seasons, you'll die when winter comes.

As the world's become more technological, our childer have brought new knowledge and an understanding of urban survival into the Clan. It's hard for us to adapt, but not hard to see the need. Gangs on the street have become our new "packs." Some measure territory in city blocks and their borders by paved roads instead of rivers and forests. The modern world changed us, true, but it's also made us stronger.

Computer messages are swift, but hacking and online crime makes them unstable and untrustworthy. We serve as messengers, flying on our own wings and finding it easy to slip aboard airplanes and other transportation as clouds of mist. We move silently, and we can't be traced or hacked. Primitivism is experiencing a resurgence, from tribal tattoos to hitchhiking college students wandering through Europe. Greenpeace makes war on whaleboats. Environmentalism is a big deal, and urban decay is giving us back areas of wildness in the heart of once-major cities. Hippies aren't dead; they've just gone viral. There are still plenty of opportunities for "traditional" Gangrel to be useful.

More than that, our adaptable blood has proven itself again within the modern milieu. The Lycaon, also known as the Greek Gangrel, were once a group of philosophers of our Clan. They studied the changeability of the blood, and they kept the lore of all the bloodlines that had spawned from our seed. Since the Industrial Revolution, the Lycaon struggled to keep up with the political changes and technological advancements sweeping that area of the world. It was from their evolving blood that the first City Gangrel or Coyotes sprang. I'm not sure how the Lycaon did it, but in doing so, they destroyed their own lineage. No more Lycaon have been Embraced; all of their childer,

and their childer's childer, have turned out to be Coyotes. The Lycaon line is dying. The Coyotes are the new blood, and while they used to be primarily members of the Sabbat, the proliferation of the bloodline has increased. They've become more common in the last decades. A few have even tried to join the Camarilla.

It's happened before. Shifters by nature, the Gangrel have a proclivity for changing their form on a constant basis, turning from human to wolf, to bat, to any of a number of other animals. They turn to mist, or sink into the earth to sleep days and even years. With such constant physical alteration, and the Clan's proclivity for survival encouraging a Darwinian evolution, it's no wonder the Clan's blood continues to alter itself on an intrinsic level. The known bloodlines of the Gangrel include: Mariners, Noiad, Anda, Coyotes (City Gangrel), Lycaon (Greek Gangrel), Lhiannan, Ahrimanes, and Akunanse. I know there were more, but they've died out as the world advanced over the centuries. Those mutations that cannot prove themselves quickly die off. Those who evolve traits that help them survive will endure.

That's not the only part of the modern world that affects the Gangrel. Our predatory instincts translate to a lot more than bows, arrows, and tracking buffalo. As the modern world becomes more cutthroat, we grow more comfortable in the boardrooms and business offices. The Coyotes are right; there's a lot of bloodletting going on, and the unflinching predatory instinct to tear out a throat helps us fit in on Wall Street. We're not as out of place among the 1% as you might think.

Animalistic and Bestial

Being a Gangrel isn't like being a member of any other Clan. We're not Clan-first, like the Brujah or the Nosferatu. We're not trying to leave a lingering impression on the world, like the Toreador. We don't seize power like the Lasombra or the Ventrue. For the most part, being a Gangrel means not giving a fuck about the other Clans or their machinations. It means concentrating on your own personal power, your individuality, and your capacity to survive anything the world throws at you. We're animalistic and feral, we're cold-blooded killers of every stripe, and we don't care about honor or duty — we care about survival. Survival over the corpses of allies if necessary, and certainly when it means crushing the ashes of your enemies beneath your boots.

I know you're thinking about your friend, the noble and kind Gangrel. That guy in the Camarilla court who's always talking about his time in the military and the ideals of honor and duty he learned as a mortal. Sure, I bet he's a great guy. I'll bet he's young, too, and hates the feeling of his Beast moving hungrily inside his spirit. The image of the "Tarzan" Gangrel — the "noble savage" of Edwardian dime novels — has a few adherents. But the more we indulge the ravaging anger of our Beast, the flow of blood between our teeth or the feel of flesh tearing beneath our claws, the less you're likely to ever find that "noble" again.

Believe me when I tell you that everything for our Clan comes down to survival. Everything. I can't stress it enough. Anything else we do, from politics to humanity, is just passing time. You know those zombie movies that are so popular right now? The ones where two men who have been friends since childhood betray one another out of desperation to get away from the undead horde and leave the other man to be eaten? "I don't have to run faster than the zombies, I just have to run faster than you."

That's Clan Gangrel. Every member, every drop of our blood has that absolute calling. We cover it, fight it, deny it, but when it comes down to the wire, our most primitive instinct is to survive, and you'd sure as hell better not get in the way.

Survival is the reason we Embrace and abandon. It's a dichotomy; a Sire has an instinct to protect her childe, but no Gangrel wants a weak brat clinging to her for all eternity. Weakness is the one thing our Beasts can't abide. So we Embrace those who seem the strongest, the toughest, and the apex predator of their pyramid. Then we leave them to see if they'll survive on their own. Some Sires stay nearby and watch; others leave entirely, allowing their childer to risk the Masquerade, be destroyed by hunters, or any other fate. When we do return and find a childe has survived, there are few Sires as proud and committed as a Gangrel. We're just not willing to become attached if the fledgling is defective, weak, or stupid. Better we let you die than bring you into the brood and weaken us all when the survival of the group is at stake.

Mark of the Beast

Other Clans have easy-to-ignore flaws. Sure, the Ventrue are picky eaters, and the Toreador have attention-span issues in museums. But do you think that counts for anything to the guy whose face just morphed into spider eyes, or the girl with breasts like a wolf's eight teats? Give me a break. Every time a Gangrel's Beast gets away from her, whenever she enters a frenzy, the Beast leaves a mark on her flesh. Most of the time they're temporary — the fleeting cost of becoming closer to one's inner demons.

You sleep it off or wait a few days, and usually the visible appearance of humanity returns. But not always.

A lot of our elders, the really old ones, barely look human anymore. Sometimes they can go into torpor for a few hundred years, and the animal parts slowly revert — for the most part — but it's unusual to meet one that's not carrying more than a few marks. It's why a lot of our elders left their Humanity behind in the first place. Frenzies are our bane. Frenzies literally tear up our bodies, rip into our spirits, and make us less human, every time. Permanent or not, when you undergo that kind of change, you can't avoid the fact that you're living with a demon inside you just itching to get out. You're an animal, whether you like it or not.

There used to be a group of Gangrel called the Knights of Avalon, who saw the animal markings as a sign of shame. Back in the Dark Ages, the stigma of god-cursed was even stronger than it is today, and these vampires took the religious implications of "turning into a beast" to heart. They tried seriously hard never to frenzy, never to gain animal features, or at least to hide them when they did. The philosophy has had something of a resurgence in the last century. Since the advent of photography, as well as analog and digital recordings, bestial features have become even more of a danger. The new Knights of Avalon not only specialize in keeping themselves from gaining such features, they also teach the rest of us techniques to help hide ours.

Anarch, Autark, and Independent

I've mentioned how difficult it was to get the Gangrel Clan to join the Camarilla. We got a lot of promises that they'd keep the Tremere in line. The other Clans called in a lot of boons over our elders and their broods, too, and those were important. Survival was another reason, but that didn't convince everyone. Plenty of Gangrel refused the Camarilla's call because they knew we didn't need the Camarilla to survive, and they saw no reason to weaken the Gangrel Clan by tying our broods to the defense of mewling Toreador or pretentious Ventrue.

A lot of young Gangrel see the Anarch Movement as a "halfway house." It's social enough that they're involved in things, but it doesn't have the fundamentalism or strict rules that you find in the Sabbat and the Camarilla. They stay in the Movement for a while, then eventually "grow up" and pick a place either in one of the Sects or as a legitimate independent. To me, that seems like just more vampire bullshit. Dedicate yourself to something, and stop mewling about "freedom." Nobody's really free. You were never really "free" as a mortal, and you sure as hell will never be "free" as a vampire. You do the best you can to stay independent, and that's the best you're going to get.

Unlike the other pillars of the Camarilla, a large portion of our Clan remained Independent. Hell, the word "Autark" is a German word, first used by our Clan. It means "self-sufficient," or "self-governed" in some translations. Using it was sort of a sneaky method for our elders to answer a question in a half-ass way. Are you Camarilla or Sabbat? Autark. Most Gangrel are Sect-agnostic, and that's the way they like it.

See what I mean about survival? Our elders didn't want to piss anyone off or become a target of either Sect. They wanted to remain free, but also ensure they still had the opportunity to join a Sect later, *if* they wanted to do so. "Autark" initially meant "I'm still considering whether I want to join a Sect, but for now, I'm getting along just fine on my own, thanks."

It wasn't intended to last forever. It was only an answer to put off questions until we could see that the Camarilla was more than a flash in the pan. Like Embracing a childe, and waiting to see if it would survive on its own, the Gangrel Clan needed to know that the Camarilla wasn't going to be a burden on the Clan. When it proved stable, more of our elders joined, and our ranks swelled. Hey, a wolf will eat from a bowl when the meat's fresh and the gate's still open, right?

Even now, there are a lot more Gangrel independents and Autarks than any other "Camarilla pillar Clan." The Camarilla puts up with it, because they know our broods are strong and our youth aren't idiots. We don't break the Masquerade, we don't risk our unlives for stupid reasons. Survival runs strong in our veins. You can always count on that.

Althings

For a Clan of individualist loners, we sure love to talk. Stories, eddas, epic poems, and all manner of chatter. We have an oral history, for the sake of Fenris, and once you get us started, you can't shut us up.

The Gangrel once considered themselves lore masters. Not the book-reading, scientific, hoary old leather-faced scholar type, but the masters of living history. The taletellers, who kept the past alive. Of course, that was before the Camarilla banned a lot of information about vampiric history. They got really fussy about a text called the *Book of Nod*, along with the research a Gangrel named Beckett put into translating and compiling it. I read a little

of the *Book of Nod*, and it was interesting in the same way reading any religious text can be interesting. It's full of tales of a vampiric city called Enoch and legends about various Antediluvians, a lot of parables, some snippets of random poetry, and a bunch of obscure warnings about the End of Times.

However, the Camarilla doesn't like young Kindred learning that kind of mythical history. Some of the elders think it foments occult conspiracies, or encourages neonates to over-romanticize the vampiric state. Persecution of the Gangrel followed, though quietly, through politics and subterfuge. A lot of our skalds and memory-keepers died. Sometimes the death was blamed on an accident, or on the Sabbat. We knew the real reason, though. It was just another political twist of the Jyhad.

Losing our Clan's greatest treasures, our oral historians, changed the Gangrel dynamic. Instead of teaching one another about history and tradition, those who know our secrets don't talk about them. Our scholars protect themselves and the lore they know by keeping it quiet — except at our Clan gatherings. Gangrel share with Gangrel, and we don't trust anyone else. That's why we don't allow non-Gangrel to come to these Althings. It's not a matter of trust. It's a matter of survival. Maybe that's a mistake, but it's hard to give up tradition.

Althings are the main social structure of the Clan. It's where we meet, socialize, and discuss the Clan's past, present, and future. We don't gather to organize or to act like a unified group. We gather to share information for information, a survivalist's tradeoff. Want to learn about the place where you're headed next? Better talk to someone who's been there. Want to know what big threats are looming around the corner, and whether to hide, fight, or flee? That's the kind of talk we have at the Althings. That's what our Clan's oral history is, too, when it comes right down to it. A list of the things we've had to survive, how we did it, and the lessons we learned that might help us survive the next awful thing on the horizon.

Althings are relatively simple; word spreads that on a certain full moon, the Clan will gather in one of a few well-known sites, meaning locations we've used for hundreds of years. The rules at an Althing are easy: The strong get to speak, and the weak listen. If you don't know which one you are, then you're weak. There, we tell tales, proclaim an individual's most recent victories or deeds, and remind ourselves of the past. We learn lessons. We pass things



on, and then we leave. If you learned well, then you'll be around to show up at the next Althing and share a few lessons of your own.

Camarilla Gangrel will come together on the full moon before most significant Sect gatherings (conclaves and the like), in order to share stories and earn one another's respect. The Gangrel who has performed the most courageous deeds, accomplished significant tasks, or who has done well in informal combats or trials held at the Althing is often chosen to be the Clan's Warden: a speaker and point-of-contact between the Gangrel and the Sect leaders. After the conclave is over, the individual's "rank" fades away, until the next Althing determines a new speaker for the assembled Clan. Like I said, we aren't big on unity.

Not all of our Althings are friendly. Sometimes the Gather is an excuse to draw in a Gangrel that has become prey. If they are strong enough to attend, say their peace, and survive, then the Clan will overlook any sin. If they are not, then... problem solved.

The Ravnos and the Rroma

You could say there's a lot of history between the Gangrel and the Ravnos. Bad history, bad blood. We don't need "gods" to justify the feud between our Clans, and we don't need the Camarilla to back us up when we fight our enemies. From the oldest legends that depict our Antediluvians as rivals, fighting out of rejected love or a territorial instinct, our two Clans have hated one another for a very long time. There are plenty of murders in that history. I don't think I know a Gangrel who hasn't heard the old stories about Ravnos killing Gangrel.

The earliest fights between the two Clans (at least, the earliest that I can confirm) happened over territory. They started around the time that the Ravnos claimed India and parts of the Middle East. I'm embarrassed to say that despite old tales painting us as heroes, it's most likely that the Gangrel were raiders: vicious, cruel, and seriously thugging the Ravnos lands. Driven out of the Middle East, we headed north toward Germany and Scandinavia to find lands of our own. We were better off there, anyway.

The rivalry didn't stop when we left, though. Spats between the Ravnos and the Gangrel continue everywhere we find each other. There's a deep philosophical difference, for one. Frenzies turn us into animals, so many of us are humanist, trying to avoid the scourge of our vampiric condition. The Ravnos, on the other hand, embrace the fact that they're undead. They feel that being a vampire is part of their karma or dharma or something. It's fate. It was meant to be, and they don't fight against it or try to find a way to evade their vampiric state. Even our elders, the ones on Paths of Enlightenment, can't stand the way the Ravnos parade around prattling about the "karmic cycle," acting proud of the fact that they're dead men walking. Hell, they sound like the Sabbat. Ravnos don't fit into the natural world, and we don't fit into their crazy reverence about being a monstrosity. Those philosophies are just never going to mix.

Beyond that, they're tricksters, constantly getting into trouble, making everyone look at them. They're showmen. They like the attention. We're survivalists, and we don't want people to see what we're doing or remember us too well. They're liars, while we know truth is necessary to stay alive. Anyone who looks at the Gangrel and the Ravnos and says we should be buddy-buddy just because both Clans wander the wilderness probably can't tell a Toreador from a Ventrue either.

Since the days of ancient history, our Clans have been bitter enemies. We fight over the animals we control, we fight over land, and we even fight over people. Ghouls, yes, but larger groups than that: the travelers, loners, and wanderers. Including, but not limited to, the Rroma. History certainly gives us plenty of reason to have grudges against individual Ravnos, but that's just an allegory to cover a darker tale. One that has little to do with vampire rivalries, and a lot to do with vampire fear. Stark, cold, ravening fear, the kind that turns to lead in your belly.

There's a medieval legend about the "fourth nail." Tales say that when Jesus was to be nailed to the cross, Roman soldiers commissioned four nails to hang the Savior: one for each of his hands and feet. According to the Manoush people of Alsace, one of their ancestors would gladly have saved Jesus from death. When he failed to rescue Jesus, he did the best he could to stop the crucifixion by stealing the nails. Even there, he didn't manage to stop Christ's death entirely, making off with only one of the four nails. God, it's said, smiled on those who tried to keep his son from pain and anguish, and placed a blessing upon them.

Whether the details are true or not, a Lithuanian Gangrel elder named Intam believed the story enough to spend most of his unlife searching through the Rroma tribes, looking for some sign of God's grace. When he found it in one kumpaniya—or at least, claimed he'd found it—he claimed that tribe as his own and took them under his proverbial wing. Beckett told me that Intam thought he could parlay the tribe's connection with God into a way out from under the vampiric curse.

If there's one thing you should know about the Ravnos Clan's system of enlightenment, it's that they hate anyone who tries to skip out of the system. When some of their most rabid spiritualists found out what Intam was doing and what he was protecting, they came like smoke and storm. Our elder's ashes were found among the bodies of the mortals he'd sought to protect. The Ravnos claimed credit for the slaughter, actually taking pride in what they'd done. Instead of telling the real reason for it though, they spun stories based on the legends of the Antediluvians, blaming the fight on ancient grudges and feuding mythical figures. They didn't want anyone to follow up on Intam's research, or look to see any member of that particular kumpaniya was still alive.

Anyway, Intam's death really set off the hatred between the two Clans. Things exploded quickly, stories spread, and just as quickly got stamped out as revenge followed revenge. The reason was fear. Fear, whether Intam was right or wrong. Intam was looking for hope. That kind of story could spread, and make a lot of idiot vampires interested. Some of them want to destroy any Rroma that might be part of the legend, and others are trying to enslave or use those poor people. All of them acting out of some kind of belief, some kind of hope — hope that there might be a God, after all — and He might be paying attention.

Trust me on this. Hope can be an amazing source of fear.

Lupines

By now, you've probably heard all sorts of stories about how we Gangrel are related to lupines, or how we're half werewolf, or werewolves are half-vampire. All Gangrel are some kind of crazy half-unicorn fae mage bullshit, right?

Let me tell you this straight up: It's not true.

Werewolves are dangerous. They're not our friends, they're not our brothers, and we don't go to their birthday parties or hang out at their coffeehouses. They'll kill a Gangrel just as quickly as they'll kill any other vampire, and they'll grin the whole time they're doing it. We're probably the ones they want to kill most, in fact. We wander "their" woodlands, and we bump into them the most. They don't come into the cities, so they don't have a lot of chances to slaughter the other vampire Clans. No, it's Gangrel they find, and it's Gangrel they kill. Just like that.

Yeah, the Gangrel know a lot about the werewolves, because we're the ones that keep bumping into them, out in the wilderness. Werewolves have some crazy belief that the whole world is alive, like a great cosmic spirit, and vampires are a plague. Our very existence is a blight on the earth, and it's their entire goal and purpose to wipe us out. There's no arguing or compromising. You might as well debate your purpose in life with a wood-chipper. Now, I've heard tales that a few Gangrel managed to figure out a way to trick the werewolves for a night or two; cover their scent, hide themselves like animals in the forest, and spy on those big furry killing machines. Terrible idea, really, but neonates can be stupid. They came back telling stories about shifter politics that sounded just as convoluted as the Jyhad and twice as hopeless.

Werewolves make terrible servants; neither blood nor mental domination controls them for long. They're far too dangerous and unpredictable to be allies; they'll kill any vampire the first chance they get. They frenzy more than we do, so neither blackmail nor hostages can ensure their loyalty even for a short time. Seriously, there's nothing to gain by dealing with the moon-beasts. Just point them at someone else, and stay the holy fuck out of their way.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Auction Shark

Money's like blood; it flows, it swells, and it's the reason to stay alive. You follow its tracks, seeking out antique paintings owned by senile old ladies and Revolutionary War memorabilia in the hands of heirs who think their grandfather's hobby was a waste of time. Then, you strike, and once there's blood in the water, you don't stop until your belly's full.

Burning Man

You're a wild child, a rambunctious thing, a worker of metal and a survivalist on the desert playa. Every year, you roamed out to Burning Man and several other festivals, indulging yourself in drugs, alcohol, camaraderie, art, and the joy of utter wildness. Surviving as a vampire was easy — you knew where the orgy tent was, and you were more than capable of convincing a few friends to give in to your new "blood fetish." When your Sire showed up again the next year, you were the one with things to offer: a herd of your own, and a new art project centered on the hides of the animals you hunted to survive.

Executive Headhunter

Cold-blooded, type-A, and ruthless, you've transferred your predatory instinct to the business world. When people

think "Gangrel," they think barking and rolling in the dirt, and they couldn't be more wrong. Your claws are just as sharp, and your business acumen is the equal of the greatest trackers in the world. You love to find weakness and exploit it, and you're not afraid to shoot to kill.

Grease Monkey

Your Sire Embraced you because he couldn't figure out these "new-fangled machines," and you ran with it. Despite a few years that've passed, you've kept up with engines, cars, and motorcycles. It's a passion. You don't mind being covered in dirt — literal or metaphorical. If they want to keep things running in this city, they'll have to come to you.

Hostel Hitchhiker

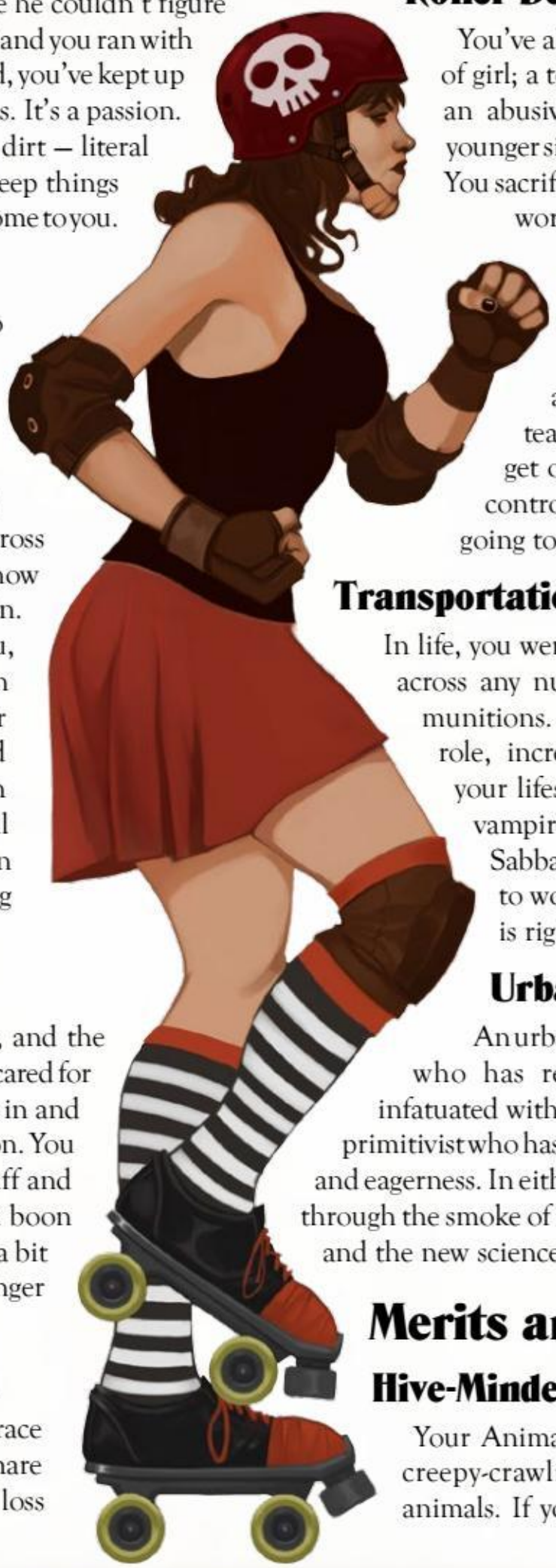
Your father pushed you to go to university, but your mother's gift was a bank account with enough Euros to spend a year wandering Europe. You packed a backpack, downloaded a list of hostels, and bought a map of the train lines across the continent. Little did you know you'd never be coming home again. The Embrace was difficult for you, and hiding from Interpol was even worse, but after a few months, your Sire took pity on you and showed up again. You've done better with a little education, but you're still comfortable only when you're on the road. Settling down is just asking for trouble.

Mother Bear

Your brood's one of the largest, and the strongest. You've taught them well, cared for them, and you know when to step in and when to let the childe learn his lesson. You have a bad habit of adopting Caitiff and other lost cubs, which has been a boon and a bane. You're protective and a bit feral, and everyone knows not to anger the mother bear.

Nature Documentarian

Gentle and peaceful, the Embrace has been something of a nightmare for you. You struggle against the loss of Humanity, fearing that you'll become an animal if you lose control. When you were alive, you appreciated the beauty of nature — a sunrise you'll never see again. You struggle to make something of your afterlife, but all too often, you sink into depression, drinking blood from sold-storage bags and ruminating on the way things were.



Roller Derby Girl

You've always been a "fight to survive" sort of girl; a tough cookie who made it through an abusive childhood and supported her younger siblings after both parents were gone. You sacrificed your own education for theirs, worked in a coffee shop until late hours just to keep food on the table, and the only fun you managed to have were the nights when you got to be a derby girl and take your anger and resentment out on the opposing team. Now you're a vampire, and you get off on the power. You're finally in control of your life, and nobody's ever going to take that from you again.

Transportation Specialist

In life, you were the guy who could sneak things across any number of borders: people, drugs, munitions. In death, you've maintained that role, increasing your prices and inflating your lifestyle. Now, in addition, you move vampires and information central to the Sabbat-Camarilla war. You aren't afraid to work both sides, so long as the price is right.

Urban Shaman

An urban shaman may be an older vampire who has recently awakened and become infatuated with the world, or it may be a younger primitivist who has accepted the Embrace with vitality and eagerness. In either case, she sees the modern world through the smoke of the past, realizing that the old ways and the new sciences aren't so very different.

Merits and Flaws

Hive-Minded (1 or 2pt. Merit)

Your Animalism works on insects and other creepy-crawlies in addition to mammalian animals. If you select the two-point version of

this merit, your Protean forms may take the form of an insectoid swarm rather than a single creature (though the swarm must be of a size equivalent to a wolf or a bat, as appropriate).

Skald (2pt. Merit)

Anytime you make an Occult roll to know a fact about vampiric history, you may add a die to your dice pool. Further, you have exceptional memory for oral histories, and you are a quick study when it comes to memorizing large amounts of rote information. This is not true eidetic memory, but constitutes the ability to memorize poetic eddas, codes, or complex messages with only a few hours of study.

Lesser Mark of the Beast (4pt. Merit)

Common to the Gangrel known as the Knights of Avalon, you are able to control how your Beast manifests more than others do. Whenever you would gain an animalistic feature (V20, p. 55), roll your current Willpower (difficulty 12 - Humanity rating, maximum 9). If successful, you manage to channel your humanity to avoid gaining an animalistic feature. However, your Beast is further from you, making you at +2 difficulty to rolls involving Animalism or Protean (or combo Disciplines involving those powers) for the rest of the evening. Vampires on a Path of Enlightenment lose all access to this Merit.

Totemic Change (5pt. Merit)

Your Protean forms are flexible; you may choose a different animal form each time you change shape. The form you choose each time must follow all the conventions and rules of standard Protean animal shapes (see p. 91); you simply may choose to appear as a different animal each time you take Beast Form.

Member of the Pack (2pt. Flaw)

You can only summon, speak to, and command a specific type of animal — ravens, rats, and so forth — with Animalism. Your Storyteller is the best adjudicator of what types of animal are appropriate for this Flaw, but the choice should be fairly limiting. Other animals do not respond to your uses of Animalism at all.

Rat in a Cage (2pt. Flaw)

Anytime you are penned in or physically restrained (such as by a cage, or with handcuffs), you suffer acute anxiety. The difficulties of any rolls made under such circumstances are increased by two.

Discipline Powers

Blissful Summer (Protean Level ••••• •)

Although most vampires must return to their normal physical form when they sleep, Gangrel who have mastered Protean to this extent may remain in Mist Form even while comatose during the day. This power offers great protection, though it is not invulnerable, and fire and sunlight can still injure the vampire. Further, a vampire sleeping in Blissful Summer is not roused by noise or activity in her area.

System: No roll is required to activate Blissful Summer, but the transformation requires the expenditure of five blood points. Once activated, the user remains in Mist Form (V20, p. 200) until the next dawn, whereupon the vampire resumes physical form. Physical attacks cannot affect a vampire sleeping in Mist Form, though fire and sunlight can still harm her. The vampire cannot awaken before dusk unless her Mist Form is injured.

Shape Mastery (Protean Level ••••• •)

It is one thing to master your own flesh and shape your form, but it's something else to force your will upon another, demanding that his or her physical form take the shape you command. Certain exceptional elder Gangrel have mastered this ability, and can use his or her blood to overcome another individual's native command of shapeshifting. For this power to function, some portion of the Gangrel's blood must have been ingested by or otherwise be in contact with the target's flesh or worn clothing, whether unwillingly or willingly.

System: The Gangrel must first place her blood on the target. If the target has successfully attacked the Gangrel with natural weapons, or with a short weapon like a knife, it fulfills this requirement. Otherwise, the Gangrel must smear at least one blood point worth of her vitae on the target by making a successful attack or by making a small blood mark on an unsuspecting target. This may be done in advance, but the blood must still be wet (within a few minutes), and the subject must be in line of sight in order for this power to be viable. Thereafter, the Gangrel activates this power by spending an additional blood point and making a Perception + Survival roll (difficulty 7). Two successes are required to force the target out of his shape-shifted form and into her native (original) shape.

While this power is active, the individual cannot assume any other form. This power persists for a full scene, or until the target removes the Gangrel's vitae from his body (or

clothing), whichever is sooner. The process of cleansing oneself of the Gangrel's blood takes at least one full turn of action. If the target has actually consumed the Gangrel's blood, then she cannot remove the blood so easily.

Use of this power will persist for the full scene, and Shape Mastery may be attempted again thereafter (this power does not consume the blood with its use), so long as the Gangrel still has line of sight. If the target chooses to resume his adapted form after this power ends, she must reactivate that power, incurring any associated costs, and performing any appropriate rolls.

This power is effective on the shapeshifted forms of Obtenebration, Protean, Serpentis, Thaumaturgy, and Vicissitude at levels equal to or lower than the vampire's Protean. Further, it also confounds the native shapechanging abilities of other supernatural creatures, such as Lupines and Fae.

Smoke and Mirrors (Protean Level ••••• •)

One of the most notable and fascinating powers of the Gangrel is the ability to turn to mist. Some elder Gangrel have found a way to harness this power and use it on instinct, converting themselves to mist in order to avoid the most threatening blows.

System: When attacked, you may spend four blood points to turn instantly to mist, as per Mist Form (**V20**, p. 200). The attack automatically misses you, and you revert to your physical form once the immediate danger is past. You may activate this power reflexively once damage is determined, but as soon as damage is marked down or the scene has moved on from damage determination, you may no longer use this power on that damage.

Animal Swarm (Protean Level ••••• ••)

Upon activating this power, the Gangrel dissolves into a swarm of small creatures, such as rats, crows, or scorpions. The creatures remain under the Gangrel's control, and he may direct them in unison or as individuals.

System: The Gangrel may disperse into as many creatures as he has blood points, with each creature carrying that one blood point; he may choose to form fewer creatures, in which case the blood points are divided as evenly as possible among them. The creatures may act in concert, or individually follow a simple plan such as "scatter and hide." The Gangrel may pay close attention to only one component creature at a time. For example, he may listen in on a conversation using the body of one rat, while directing the dozen others to keep moving and avoid detection.

While using this power, each creature within the swarm of animals must remain within 300 yards/meters of one another; any animal that leaves this radius immediately dissolves into ash, and the vampire forfeits the blood carried by that creature. The vampire may reform from any of the creatures in the swarm, but when she reforms, all animals within 10 yards/meters are drawn back into her physical substance. Other animals (those who are too far away) dissolve into ash, and the vampire forfeits their blood.

This power takes one turn to take effect, and lasts until sunrise or until the Gangrel chooses to retake his humanoid form. At that time, all of the component creatures present are re-absorbed into the Gangrel's body, along with the blood points that animal carried. If this leaves the vampire with less than three blood points, she must immediately check for frenzy. Creatures who do not rejoin the Gangrel's body may be reabsorbed at any time, though if there is only one creature left in her swarm, the Gangrel immediately reverts to her natural physical form.

The vampire must reform at sunrise. She may choose which creature out of the swarm in which to re-incorporate. Any creatures not reabsorbed dissolve into small piles of ash and blood at dawn.

The vampire may use the following Disciplines while in Animal Swarm: Auspex, Celerity, Fortitude, Obfuscate, and Potence. The individual creature that is the tangible source of the power must fuel any Disciplines that require the expenditure of blood. Creatures reduced to zero blood points are immediately destroyed.

Mythic Form (Protean Level ••••• •••)

Some Gangrel have so mastered the powers of Protean that they can shapeshift into creatures of legend — massive beasts whose existence is known only in myth. This mythical beast is usually something important to the individual Gangrel's culture or psyche, and must be non-human. A griffin, sphinx, dragon, thunderbird, or kirin would be appropriate manifestations of this power for more ancient Gangrel; younger vampires who achieve this level of Protean mastery might choose similar creatures, or more modern legends such as the Loch Ness monster, a chupacabra, or the jersey devil.

In addition to the great size and terrifying form of these creatures, a Gangrel who takes Mythic Form also acquires some of the special abilities commonly attributed to the beast; a griffin, for example, would have the ability to fly and a devastating claw attack. Once a character's mythic form has been chosen, it is set for the character's existence.

Sample Mythic Form: Dragon

+3 Strength, +2 Dexterity, +4 Stamina.

Defensive Bonus: Armor Plating

Offensive Bonus: Deadly

Movement Bonus: Flight

Special Power: As per Thaumaturgy: Lure of Flames (5)

System: A character must spend three blood points to transform into Mythic Form. The transformation requires three turns (spending additional blood will not speed the change, but the Gangrel may continue to act normally as the transformation occurs). Mythic Form lasts until the next sunrise, or until the vampire returns to her natural form. The type of creature, and its specific mechanics, must be determined when the vampire first learns this ability, and may not be changed thereafter.

When you purchase this power, divide 9 points as bonuses to Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina. In addition, choose one defensive bonus, one offensive bonus, one movement bonus, and one special power (listed below). Non-standard bonuses are possible, but require Storyteller approval.

Defensive Bonus (Choose 1)

- **Armor Plating:** You have 4 points of armor while in this form.
- **Invulnerability:** You are invulnerable to (take no damage from) one of the following sources: fire, acid, electricity, or poison.
- **Quick:** Your dodge based defense pools increase by +2.

Offensive Bonus (Choose 1)

- **Deadly:** Your bite and/or claw attacks receive a +3 bonus.
- **Grappling:** When you hit a target with a normal attack, you are also considered to have grappled her. Attempts to break your grapples suffer a -2 penalty.
- **Multi-Attack:** When making brawling attacks, you receive two dice that can only be used when you split your attacks (the dice apply to each attack).

Movement Bonus (Choose 1)

- **Aquatic:** You can swim at twice your normal movement speed.
- **Fast:** On the ground, you can move at twice your normal movement speed.
- **Flight:** You can fly at your normal movement speed.

Special Power

Choose any Discipline power at 5 dots or lower. While in Mythic Form, you may use that power as though you had purchased it. You are not required to purchase the power's prerequisites (i.e., the lower level powers in that Discipline tree). If your chosen power is based on Thaumaturgy or Necromancy, you do not need to speak or gesture to activate the power while in this form.

Combination Disciplines

Blood Thorns (Protean ••, Potence ••)

This power allows the user to expend the force of her blood in order to make a ranged attack with her natural weaponry. With this ability, the Gangrel shoots a barb or claw at her target, potentially injuring them as though she had struck them with her Feral Claws. It takes three rounds for a claw expended in this manner to grow back. Claws or barbs expelled by use of Blood Thorns turn to dust within ten minutes of leaving the Gangrel's body.

System: The character spends a blood to perform a ranged attack against one character within 10 yards/meters. If successful, this attack inflicts Strength +1 aggravated damage.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Claw Immunity (Animalism ••, Fortitude ••••)

Quite a number of high-Generation Gangrel have developed the ability to shrug off claw and bite attacks of normal animals, hardening their flesh against non-supernatural threats. This talent is extremely useful in areas where dangerous predators roam, and particularly when one must fight against animals whom an enemy commands... such as the Ravnos. This power does not work against Feral Claws or supernatural attacks such as werewolf claws and fangs.

System: The player spends two blood points to activate this power. For the remainder of the scene, the Gangrel receives extra soak dice equal to his Animalism + Fortitude to resist damage from any non-supernatural animal attack

(claws, fangs, or other natural weaponry). These dice are in addition to the vampire's usual Stamina + Fortitude, i.e. Fortitude is counted twice.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Flesh Wound (Fortitude ••, Obfuscate •••)

True predators know when to rely on cunning and trickery to defeat enemies. Using this power, the Gangrel gives the appearance of taking no damage from attacks. In reality, the attacks hurt like hell, but the Gangrel maintains a facade of invulnerability in order to unnerve opponents. Particularly canny vampires may convince foes that they are, in fact, immune to assault.

System: The player spends one blood point to activate this power. For the duration of the scene, the Gangrel appears as she did upon activation of this power; any wounds or scars already present will remain visible. Further damage does not show on the Gangrel's form, nor do any logical results, such limping or leaking blood. This power ends if the Gangrel reaches the incapacitated health level or is staked. Under no circumstances can the wounds be discerned by an outside source before the power ends.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

King of the Beasts (Fortitude ••, Animalism ••••)

The vampire who masters this power has the ability to extend the auspices of her Fortitude to those animals who are summoned by her blood, ensuring that they are protected. This power requires no further expenditure on the user's part; her very nature steels and fortifies her minion against damage.

System: Creatures you summon with Animalism gain one dot of Fortitude so long as they stay within your line of sight.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

See the Reflected Form (Auspex ••, Protean ••••)

Using this power, the Gangrel may use Aura Perception to pull detailed information from his subject's aura. In that aura, he can see the beast forms of Gangrel or other vampires possessing Protean; the forms of the Lupines and other shape-changing beasts; the half-real dream forms of fairies; and the shadows of vampiric forms from disciplines such as Obtenebration, Protean, Serpentis, and Vicissitude. Further, the user of this power can tell which form is "native" or original to the subject.

System: The player rolls Perception + Awareness (difficulty 6). One success gives the character knowledge of the individual's native form, regardless of the form that the user inhabits at the time. Three successes allow the user to see all forms that the individual in question may assume, and know the Disciplines used to achieve those forms. With five successes, the user may see the images of all forms assumed by non-vampires (such as Lupines or Fae), though the user may not understand the powers used to transform into those shapes. This ability does not reveal the visual changes of Obfuscate, as those are not truly transformative powers.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Shatterproof (Protean •••, Fortitude ••••)

A Gangrel with this power toughens his flesh and allows her body to absorb damage, spreading a blow's impact throughout her entire form to avoid significant injury.

System: The Gangrel may roll both Fortitude and Stamina together to soak aggravated damage. This does not include automatic soaks with stamina versus regular damage. Each use of this ability requires the expenditure of one Willpower.

This power costs 21 experience points to learn.

Spirit Tracking (Protean ••, Animalism ••)

Your beast is an exceptional tracker, sensing the lingering trails of another beast through the spiritual ether rather than relying on physical senses alone. Indeed, your Beast can sense and follow the path of another vampire's Beast, tracking it even when the prey takes physical precautions against being followed or found. Your inner senses are so keen, in fact, that it is difficult to fool you with mirages or false trails, making it more difficult for the powers of the Ravnos to trick you.

System: When tracking a vampire, you may roll Perception + Survival (difficulty 7) in order to track the individual so long as they are within 10 yards/meters. With three or more successes, you may continue to track the individual so long as they are within 100 yards/meters. With five successes, you may sense specific individuals who have been in a location within the last three days, though you may not track them unless they are still currently within 100 yards/meters. Further, you are not fooled by illusions created using the power Ignis Fatuus (**V20**, p. 144). Unless the Ravnos creates an illusion that appeals to all of the senses (i.e., uses Fata Morgana or some greater

power), your animalistic nature can instinctively tell the mirage is false.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Animal Forms

When a player makes a Gangrel character and purchases the Protean power Shape of the Beast, she should choose her animal forms. One of those forms should be that of a large predator (such as a wolf), and the other should be that of a smaller, flying or swimming predator (such as a bat or a fish). Once those forms have been chosen, they are set for the character's existence. She will always change into that specific wolf, and that specific bat, with individual markings and appearance. Note that non-Gangrel characters always turn into a wolf and bat, unless they select the Totemic Change Merit.

Furthermore, assuming an animal's form gives the character certain abilities based on that creature. In wolf form, the vampire's teeth and claws inflict Strength +1 aggravated damage, he can run at double speed, and the difficulties of all Perception rolls are reduced by two. In bat form, the vampire's Strength is reduced to 1, but he can fly at speeds of up to 20 miles per hour/30 kph, difficulties for all hearing-based Perception rolls are reduced by three, and attacks made against him are at +2 difficulty due to his small size.

The Storyteller may allow Gangrel to choose a different animal shape when they purchase this dot of Protean. If the player does so, then the player and Storyteller should establish what natural abilities that form grants the character, based on the mechanics of the standard wolf and bat forms. Remember that animals which are too "humanesque" (such as monkeys) and animals that are not predators or scavengers (such as horses or other herbivores) are not appropriate for Protean forms. Here are a few examples of alternate Protean forms that a player may choose:

Fight Forms

- **Bear**: In bear form, the vampire's teeth and claws inflict Strength +2 aggravated damage, he can run at double speed, and the difficulties of all Perception rolls are reduced by one.
- **Hyena:** In hyena form, the vampire's teeth and claws inflict Strength +1 aggravated damage, she can leap twice as high as a normal human, and the difficulties of all Perception rolls are reduced by two.
- **Lynx:** In lynx form, the vampire's teeth and claws inflict Strength +1 aggravated damage, he can run at double speed and halves all damage from falling, and the difficulties of all Perception rolls are reduced by one.

Flight Forms

- **Barracuda:** In barracuda form, the vampire's Strength is reduced to 1, but she can swim speeds of up to 20 miles per hour/30 kph. Difficulties for all sight-based Perception rolls are reduced by three, and attacks made against her are at +3 difficulty due to her small size and agility.
- **Hawk:** In hawk form, the vampire's Strength is reduced to 1, but he can fly at speeds of up to 25 miles per hour/40 kph. Difficulties for all hearing-based Perception rolls are reduced by two, and attacks made against him are at +1 difficulty due to his small size.
- **Vulture:** In vulture form, the vampire's Strength is reduced to 2, but she can fly at speeds of up to 20 miles per hour/30 kph. Difficulties for all hearing-based Perception rolls are reduced by three, and attacks made against her are at +1 difficulty due to her smaller size.


Vera Triumpho

Giovanni

"Behold the beast who bears the pointed tail, who crosses mountains, shatters weapons, walls! Behold the one whose stench fills all the world!"

— Dante Alighieri, The Inferno (Canto XVII)

The Noose

The house hunches at the top of the hill, leaning forward in the moonlight. It watches Harper as he moves slowly up the walkway. He can feel other eyes on him. It's just the topiary, he thinks. Someone has cut the hedges into fanciful animal shapes. He doesn't look at them. He's afraid they turn their heads to watch as he goes past. He knows they're staring at the box he carries.

Leaves rustle in the bushes, but there is no wind. Harper hurries, wishing Chiara had met him at the gate. He's never been to the house itself before. Someone is sitting in a chair on the porch. Harper calls for Chiara, but she doesn't answer.

When he reaches the porch, the chair is empty. The door creaks and opens. A chill runs up the boy's spine. They're fucking with me. Chiara's uncle Vittorio already asked for this weird thing just to creep him out. He clutches the box tighter. "You're not going to scare me off!" He still doesn't see anyone.

Harper steps across the threshold into the house. It's so cold. The door closes behind him with a thud. The butler standing behind the door holds his hand up, and Harper nearly jumps out of his skin. Light glows through the old man's hand. He looks like he was drawn on wax paper.

"Please, come this way." The old butler leads Harper through halls lined with stoic portraits of people obviously related to Chiara. They have her hair, and the glimmering dark eyes that make him so stupid. Stupid enough to steal the box from his internship at the museum for a date. The rest of the house looks like a yard sale at a mausoleum.

The man who introduces himself as Chiara's uncle Vittorio is too young. He can't be more than a few years older than Harper. He looks amused as he motions to a chair. "Sit down, boy."

"Where's Chiara?" Harper doesn't sit. Vittorio shrugs, and takes his own seat.

"She'll be along soon. What makes you think you deserve my niece, Harper?"



"I brought what you asked for, Mr. Giovanni. I've proven myself."

"Yes, it appears you did. Let's see it, shall we?"

Harper puts the box on the table pulls a limp length of rope from within. A smile shimmers across Vittorio's lips as he takes the noose. Harper swears he shudders. He's probably hard, Harper thinks.

"This noose hanged the first American serial killer, Harper."

"Holmes, I know. I work at the museum. Where's Chiara?"

"He choked for fifteen minutes. Surely you can wait for her to make herself presentable."

"I–" Harper stops when the door opens. Chiara looks luminous. Her dark eyes draw him in, but something is off. She stares at the noose.

"Are you okay, Chiara?" Harper takes her hand, and she looks back at him.

"Yes, Harper. I feel better than ever. Thank you for bringing it." She kisses his cheek, then walks to Vittorio and hugs him too tightly for Harper's taste. "I'll be back soon."

As Harper leads Chiara out of the house, Vittorio calls out, "Make sure you get enough to eat."

Family History

The Cappadocians

We weren't always the Giovanni. Before the rise of the Roman Empire, there was the Ioveanus or Jovian family, and even then, they were merchants and moneylenders. However, behind closed doors they practiced black magic, communing with their forebears and making deals with the spirits on the other side of the *sudario*, the veil between our world and the lands of the dead. A significant amount of

the wealth in the Empire belonged to the Jovians, and in the natural progression, they extended their influence from commerce to politics. Even then, the Jovians had dealings with the Kindred. Deep in the Giovanni archives, ancient manifests imply that the family transported a number of Cainites to and fro across the continent.

To understand what happened, you have to understand the vampires who took us in. The Cappadocian founder was, as the stories go, either a holy man or slave (or both) in Enoch, the near-mythical First City. Whatever he was, he drew the attention of Caine. Many assume that he came from the region that would eventually become Kapadokya in Turkey, but nobody but the Antediluvian himself knows for sure, and there are no records of his actual name. Based on the stories I've heard, I wouldn't bet that he knew it himself, near the end. Cainite records and histories never refer to him as anything but Cappadocius, but since Enoch was thousands of years before anyone called Cappadocia anything like that, who knows when he started going by Cappadocius.

The Cappadocians were scholar monks who looked for wisdom in crumbled tombs, picking over the bones of the past. Their experiments and studies taught them a lot about the physical nature of death and how to conquer it, but Cappadocius' aim was never *just* to conquer physical death.

By the time Augustus was Embraced, some Cainites were already whispering that the Graverobbers' High Priest was mad. Among his followers, there were whispers of a grand plan, some goal that Cappadocius sought but could not reach. His lieutenants, Japheth and Constancia, shielded him from the greater Cainite community, kept him locked away in Mount Erciyes where he looked for answers to his great question. He was sure he'd reached the limit of the insight he could get from the study of physical death. The Cappadocians could animate corpses. They could control disease and putrefaction. But Augustus Giovanni and his family could drive death before them. Our necromancers could reach across the Shroud and compel shades directly, touch and even devour the souls of the dead. It was the key to his plan, the last stepping-stone Cappadocius needed.

See, this group of Cappadocians had somehow worked themselves into believing that the best way to atone for the Curse of Caine was to remove the source of the infection. Nothing as prosaic as wiping out all Kindred from Caine on down the line. No, that wasn't the plan. Cappadocius and his secret little cabal thought that the best path was also the next step in their own undead evolution. They wanted to ascend to the heavens and *commit diablerie upon God himself.*

Yes. He was that crazy.

The Becoming

Augustus Giovanni was taken to Mount Erciyes, and against the better judgment of Japheth and Constancia, he was Embraced. It's strange how easy it is to boil it down like that. "He was Embraced" is just three words, but the event itself was so much bigger than that. That moment doomed the Cappadocians; that moment inexorably bound our entire family line into our patriarch's deal with the Devil.

I know what you're thinking. You're thinking "golly, it seems like the Cappadocians just Embraced Augustus to learn the secrets of our necromancy, so what did Augustus get out of it?" and that's the thing. They told Augustus all manner of wonderful stories. He was *chosen*, of course, by the High Priest, the Deathly Saint of the afterlife, and so on. That by joining him as one of his closest advisors, he would be rewarded with eternal life, with enormous power, and he would never have to worry about the family's legacy because he would personally be able to oversee the business forever and ever, amen. They just didn't mention the whole dependency on blood, or that we'd never see the sun without combusting, or that the only way to join up was to die.

Augustus didn't walk blindly into the Embrace like an idiot. They lied, but our boy did all his research. The family knew about vampires, to a point. There were records of Jovian dealings with various creatures over the years, and dealing with ghosts means sooner or later you're going to hear about them. So the family learned what it could. He looked around, and he had offers from other Cainites to bring him into their Clans. Based on business acumen alone, you know the Ventrue were hot for Uncle Auggie. Somehow, Augustus worked up a full-scale bidding war for the right to give him immortality. Augustus didn't actually have any interest in the Ventrue and Toreador games of prestation and politics, but the Cappadocians were the perfect marks, and the leverage put Augustus in an even stronger position. They were bookish monks in threadbare robes playing at deception and intrigue. In their desire to get what they wanted from us, they happily gave the game away. They offered the thing that the Toreador and the Ventrue never could: Augustus was to be Embraced directly by one of the most powerful Cainites on the planet. He could have the power of a Methuselah, and be put into position to turn the entire thing around and pull off the biggest coup the vampire world had seen since the Antediluvians slaughtered their sires in the year mumblety-thousand before Christ.

The heads of the various branches of the Giovanni family actively debated the Embrace for the better part of a year. This sounds strange to you, but this was the

eleventh century. Maps still had "here be monsters" on them, and the capital-c Church warned against real demons made of flesh and blood, not parables. The Giovanni were already neck-deep in black magic, and they had been enslaving ghosts for nearly a thousand years. It would have been stranger if they *hadn't* discussed making a deal for immortality with blood-sucking vampires at their family meetings under the heading of "new business." The family consulted with *Dis Pater* and the other spirits, and they approved of the merger. I assume they planned for the continuation of the line, negotiated who would be turned and who would not, and so on. Given the ancestor worship and their belief in the power of family, there's no way they would have fully converted the Giovanni line. The line had to continue, so it could provide trustworthy agents and potential recruits for the nascent bloodline.

Back to the story at Mount Erciyes: Augustus in the temple with Cappadocius and his bitter little cronies. The Embrace didn't go the way it usually does. I'm not sure if it was the elder's need for pomp and circumstance or his fear of Augustus clamping down and draining him right there, drunk on the power of Antediluvian blood flowing through his veins. Cappadocius drained Augustus, and then he bled into a vessel. He passed that vessel to Japheth and Constancia, who fed it to Augustus and turned him into a Cainite. But even here, there was a bit of betrayal and mistrust. Those two little conspirators *saved* some of the blood from the vessel. They secreted it away as a kind of security deposit. See, the blood gave them a sorcerous connection to both Cappadocius and Augustus, so if something were to go wrong, they could take action against either of them.

Constancia prepared a clay jar and sealed the stolen vitae inside with beeswax while Japheth lay a curse over the jar. The jar became known as the True Vessel. Some Cainite historians think that curse is why our Clan's bite doesn't have the same soporific effect as other Kindred. They believe the curse on the True Vessel doomed mortals to feel the same agony that the Cappadocians felt from our betrayal. While that's poetic, I suppose, it's also fucking stupid. Shouldn't they have aimed it so that *we* were the ones who got hurt when we fed? Of course, they were the Clan that fell for Augustus' "naïve" ruse, so who knows, maybe they *were* that stupid.

After we joined the Clan, Augustus wasted no time in convincing the Cappadocians that they were on the wrong path. Their Necromancy was shocking limited. No wonder they wanted Augustus so badly. Of course, after the Bite, I'm sure they regretted it. But not for long, because Augustus and his cronies spent the next two centuries hunting the remnants of the Cappadocians down and executing them, because.... Look, if you don't get why, then you *deserve* to get stabbed in the back by the enemy you let go, you idiot.

The Premascínes

The Giovanni separates history into two eras: before and after "the Bite," which is our lovely, understated euphemism for the betrayal of Cappadocius and his childer. But that's not something we should dwell on. Point is, Cainites from before are Premascines, which is a fancy word that means exactly that: "before the Bite." This includes Augustus himself, as well as any Giovanni brought over in the years between Augustus' Embrace and the fifteenth century, but it also includes any theoretical Kindred from whatever remnants of the Cappadocians or their pet Lamia bloodline who may have somehow survived the purges. So, this isn't necessarily great-great-great-whatever grandpa Gino we're talking about. These are ancient bogeymen, seven hundred years old if they're a night. At that age, I'm not even sure human blood would do it for them anymore.

What's worse, not every Premascine from the family agreed with Augustus' decision to take the mantle of Clan status upon himself. Indeed, some Giovanni Cappadocians were true believers in Cappadocius and his plans for dark apotheosis. Even now, rumors exist that they are out there, whispered stories to scare young Giovanni — mortal and neonate alike — as they are tucked into bed. Some are rumored to have taken refuge under the canals of Venice, bloated aquatic monsters sliding among the gondolas. Other stories tell of desiccated creatures haunting ancient tombs in search of books and grimoires as faded and dusty as they are themselves. It's possible the Samedi are descended from Cappadocians who escaped notice. Worse is word out of Mexico, talking about a cabal of angry, vengeful Giovanni corpses calling themselves the Harbingers of Skulls. The Pisanob say they've been taking losses, and they're worried. Now, paranoia is healthy, but every time some Cainite with a bit of panache pops up, Licks start talking. And they always go down the same list of rumors: they're instruments of one of the Antediluvians (which is always funny, because we *know* our Antediluvian and, *yes*), or they're the last of the "original" Cappadocians, or they've hooked up with those Caine-loving psychos in the Sabbat. Whether it *is* true that, whether they are Cappadocians who survived locked away in some dusty cavern or not, the family has a fucking problem.

Even loyal Giovanni Premascines — if they exist — would be alien, broken things, with parchment skin and rictus smiles, as dry as grave flowers. To them, the rest of us, the

*post*mascines if you will, would be myopic, unenlightened, lesser things trapped closer to mortality and eventually destined to be lost in the Endless Night. Regardless, don't plan on having a coherent conversation with anyone over seven hundred years old. Don't try to get something out of them, and *definitely* don't try to play them. Some of them probably hate you just because you're a Giovanni. Just take my advice and stay the fuck away.

The Crusades

A few decades after Augustus was Embraced, the Crusades began when Pope Urban II responded to a plea for help from Alexios I Komnenos, emperor of Byzantium. The Giovanni joined in, of course, and not simply as war profiteers. The Crusades were also an opportunity to openly prove they were good Catholics and to keep people from getting suspicious. Don't get me wrong; it was mostly war profiteering, and there was quite a lot of relic hunting. As the family became acclimated to their new status, we sought sources of necromantic power wherever we could.

Certain objects fairly seethe with deathly energy. Their presence is enough to thin and warp the *sudario* near them. I've heard stories of Giovanni who collect those items and ascribe them an almost religious significance. There are death cultists in a family of necromancers. *Shocking*, I know. Well, in the very early thirteenth century, they learned that their *prima potente* relic had been found: the jawbone Caine used to kill his brother was in Constantinople.

See, when Caine murdered Abel, he unleashed something beyond the curse of vampirism. As far as we know, Abel was the first person who died. I'm not spouting some Sabbat Caine-worship bullshit at you. Caine was just the sap who triggered things. The fratricide that created vampires was far more important than that. The jawbone Caine used to murder Abel was the flint that lit the spark that created the underworld. Imagine the potential energy held in that relic. The raw power that bled through the first murder. If memory feeds the dead, imagine how much they could leech off the candlestick in the world's very first game of *Cluedo*?

The Giovanni immediately called in favors. The Doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo, had already been taking our money for years. Told that he would be brought into the family if he got us into Constantinople, he selflessly offered to fund a Fourth Crusade to the Holy Land, providing ships and troops to the Catholic Church. When the gates fell, he led the charge, despite being 90 years old and blind. I don't think he ever did get Embraced.

The Endless Night

Things were easier, once. The *sudario* used to be a flimsy thing, more a veil than a curtain. Over time, it got harder to cross over. The sheer fabric thickened, congealing from gauze into Kevlar. It's harder to reach the other side, and it's been getting harder. Sure, there are places where it's thinner than others are. There have been wondrous times when the thickening has reversed itself — the world wars, the beginning of this century — because of the weight of violence and death, of mourning in the world.

But wouldn't it be nice if we didn't have to fight it all the time?

Some say that Augustus has a book called the Khazar's Diary, rumored to contain a ritual that will allow the boundaries between the physical world and the Underworld to be erased. The ritual, according to those with knowledge, requires the souls of one hundred million departed individuals to enact. That's a lot of souls, but if the *sudario* was torn down, imagine how much more powerful we'd become. We'd be the top dogs in a world where death was just another demographic.

Entropy and Rot

When things get too comfortable, empires crumble. The Giovanni had everything that mattered in the physical world, and it became far too easy to just enjoy the fruits of their privilege. That led, as it does, to desensitization and ennui. It took more and more to excite them, and that led to many Giovanni becoming sensual spelunkers, digging into the esoteric and the taboo for diversion. And when your "traditional" lifestyle includes summoning ghosts and ritual necrophilia, let's just say some of the family went pretty far afield.

On top of that, the Giovanni family was, like many wealthy and noble families, extremely selective about who got to join. The purity and prestige of the blood was a matter of great pride to the family. Cousins married cousins to avoid diluting the blood, which was actually shockingly normal at the time. The Giovanni went beyond even that. The mix of jaded perversion and the obsession with the family begat an unhealthy eye for incest. Now, not all Giovanni are incestuous — that would have destroyed the family centuries ago. However, it's hardly frowned upon, either. In fact, the Giovanni award a certain perverse esteem to those who don't stray from family lines. You'll hear talk of "single-blooded" Giovanni and their superiority over the rest of the world, including "double-blooded" members of the family.

The Promise of 1528

In the decades following the fall of the Cappadocians, the Giovanni were the subject of a great deal of gossip and rumor in the nascent community of the Camarilla. The other Kindred called the Giovanni the "Devil Clan," based on their betrayal and diablerie of Cappadocius as well as the darker proclivities of the family. The Camarilla had only recently experienced the Anarch Revolt, and they were desperate to nip another possible threat in the bud before the Giovanni incited another revolt or, worse — from their point of view — joined with Sascha Vykos and its crazed cohorts in the Caine cult that became the Sabbat. Starting a war with us would have been a problem as well, because where the Sabbat were largely made up of the groundlings, we had footholds in the same halls of power as the Ventrue and the Toreador. It would have been starting a war on a second front. They didn't want to condemn us for the Great Betrayal, because that would set things off. They didn't want us shamelessly sauntering around their parties either, because *that* would make them uncomfortable.

I wasn't there. I don't know what the treaty actually says, and neither does anyone else I know. The meetings were secret, and the outcome was just as secret. Maybe there are provisions in the Promise the Camarilla don't want their own Antediluvians to know about. Maybe Augustus has a ripcord, in case some of us decide to take *him* out. Who knows? I assume Augustus has a copy, and the Camarilla must have a copy, but it's not as if we can check the Library of Congress, right? As far as night-to-night existence in the here and now, they stay out of our affairs, and we stay out of theirs. We own Venice, as is only right and fucking proper, but their Inner Circle gets to hold annual meetings there, on "neutral" ground. The fun question is: What else did Augustus agree to on our behalf? He's not talking, and who knows if one of the Camarilla's going to show up at our doorstep one night calling in some ancient marker?

Growth and Expansion

With the Camarilla and the Sabbat ignoring us, we were able to focus on the family. As the world built toward the Industrial Revolution, we shored up our resources and started to expand. They continued to fight their precious Jyhad — as if they even know where the battlefield is — and play their games of prestation and influence. Meanwhile, we were amassing soldiers for the real war, and when they *did* deign to notice us, they helped us on toward the finish line. Every member of the family is chosen for the Embrace for a reason. While the other Clans "grow" organically because of chance and happenstance, the Giovanni have a goal. In everything we do, we build toward that goal with ruthless efficiency.

So, as we expanded and learned more about the world, we did what comes naturally. We married our way in.

Modern Necromancer

The Giovanni are unique among the Kindred in many ways. I mean, the vast majority of the Clan is related before the Embrace. A significant number of our *anziani* — elders, for the rubes — know our Clan's patriarch and have talked to him fairly recently. This is a strength and, let's be honest here, a little restrictive. Most Camarilla sires get more freedom to choose their childe. They have to pay their dues and kiss the right asses to get permission from the Prince before they do the deed, but once they have permission, it's up to them to find the person they want to drag into eternity. Then they squander it on silly things like "love" or money. The Sabbat chooses their culty little friends or — maybe more accurately — choose *not* to choose. Of course, most of the ones chosen at random as cannon fodder are just that. The ones who stick around tend to be the ones who were chosen with a little more thought, but the Sabbat are still not strong on what you might call "long-term thinking."

In the family, it's a lot more complicated. For one thing, the pool of possibility is much smaller. It doesn't matter how talented or useful a random mortal is, if she isn't one of the family bloodlines, her chances of getting the Embrace are incredibly slim. It's happened before, and it'll happen again, but it's kind of like a favor with no strings attached: lots of people talk about it, but you've never seen it in real life.

People outside the Clan think we groom our kids up from birth to be brought into the "family business." That's true, but just because they're being taught and tested doesn't mean most of them make the cut, much less *know* what they're being tested for. Most of the family never even gets the Proxy Kiss. What's the saying? "99% of everything is crap." Only the cream of the crop gets to come behind the curtain.

Many of the Giovanni know *something* is going on, but have no idea what. Gossip and rumor spreads through a



family like wildfire. I mean, even a normal *mostly ignorant* Giovanni household is morbid and a little necromantic. They revere ancestors, make offerings to spirits and all that, so that does make it a little easier when we draw the curtain back. Things tend to click into place when the hermit great uncle everyone is always going on about with such reverence invites you to visit and he looks younger than your father does. But even if the families don't *know*, they suspect. They know something is going on, and that whatever it is makes you rich. Makes you powerful. They know you get to look good, dress well, and that some of the family always has a smug, irritating grin. It's irritating because *they want to be in on the joke, too*. They want to earn the right to it, even if they don't know what *it* is.

The *anziani* have created this ultra-competitive environment around the Curse of Caine without ever telling anyone what it is. It's like the briefcase in *Pulp Fiction*. You just *know* your cousin has seen the glowing thing, and it pisses you off because you didn't get to see it too.

Basically, the *anziani* are like hands-off tiger moms. They've worked it out so that the entire family is full of neurotic overachievers. The thing is, there's no list of requirements. Nobody knows what the secret is, so nobody knows what to actually be good at! So while one Giovanni concentrates on getting perfect grades, another collects every sports trophy she can, and another builds up a high school drug empire on the off chance that the family *is* into *La Cosa Nostra*. All of them hoping that they're impressing the right people with the right choices so they can get the reward, whatever that happens to be.

The thing about Embracing among the Giovanni, it's actually far more complicated than the Camarilla or Sabbat ways of doing things. See, a group of *anziani* get together and decide who gets to Embrace whom. For example, Diego Giovanni's grandchilde (and great-granddaughter) Patrizia has wanted to bestow an Embrace for some time, but it's not her decision. Diego and other members of the low-Generation *anziani* will have a heavy stake in deciding who and when Patrizia Embraces. She might suggest that one of her mortal children is worthy of the Embrace, but Diego might instead have her do a Milliner or Pisanob. She can propose all she wants; it's her childe, after all. But the *anziani* can ignore her, because when all is said

and done, it's their blood — two times over. It's all about balance and control. You're actually less likely to get to Embrace the protégé you want just because you want them. Quite often, the sire and the childe come from opposing factions within the family, because it keeps any one family member from building up too much of a power base and deciding it's *her* turn for a Great Betrayal.

Keeping Up Appearances

When the Giovanni absolutely have to deal with the other Clans, for example as an emissary to the Prince and Primogen in a city where Camarilla and family interests overlap, appearances are paramount. To the Camarilla the Giovanni are often seen as, essentially, somber Ventrue. And if a few idiot Kindred have seen *The Godfather* a few too many times, the family doesn't bother to correct them. The Mafia has a certain *alone di mistero* that can be useful when making deals with impressionable neonates. Truthfully, our agents spread many of the rumors regarding the family's darker practices.

This isn't to say that our intra-Clan ambassadors are all boring yuppies. There's value to playing into the stereotypes. Sometimes it's better to send the guy in the sharkskin suit with the thick Jersey accent, or the somber Italian in the coal black suit with the eyes to match. They create a certain effect. Of course, that Jersey boy's got an Ivy League MBA, but we don't have to tell them that. We're "exotic" to the Camarilla stooges, and you'd be surprised how many of their neonates will try to make stupid little deals with us or even just want to hang out with the Giovanni to piss of their sires and prove to their friends how edgy they are.

On the other hand, everything changes when the family is involved. There are family gatherings, and there are *family gatherings*. Among the necromancers, power and prestige go hand-in-hand. Conspicuous consumption and being seen with the right people is just as important at a Giovanni party as it is to the Ventrue and the Toreador; it's just that the right people are often no longer corporeal. Wraith servants flit through the party, bound to their masters by lavish and ornate jewelry that incorporates pieces of the shade's mortal remains. These artifacts act as anchor and reliquary, helping to maintain the shade and giving the Giovanni power over it. It is a point of pride for the necromancers to show off how many wraiths they control at family gatherings, and they often show up laden with as much death bling as they can wear. Necklaces strung with finger bones, rings with molar fittings, and other, more elaborate fare are a common sight among the Clan.

All in the Family

You know how things are. Your cousin may be an annoying prick, but he's still your cousin, and if someone else messes with him, you'll tear her face off. That's why we only pick our own. Blood is blood, and we've known for millennia that the only people we can count on when the chips are down are family. Here's a little secret that those idiots in the Camarilla *don't* know: not everybody who makes it into the family is named Giovanni. We're not stupid, you know. I mean, if we were as incestuous as the rumors say, we'd all have three eyes and an extra hip. Just like every other family dynasty in history, we marry for love, and we marry for strategy. We adopt, sometimes. All over the world, there are families bound to us. I'll be honest; a lot of them have vowels at the end of their names, if you get my drift, because there are a lot of racist old bastards calling the shots who have been around for centuries. But not all of the families are Italian. It works in our favor to encourage a little diversity in the ranks, because a lot of Camarilla Licks have become incredibly hurtful in their mistrust of Italian Kindred. However, for some reason they never expect the Latino gentleman to have wraith spies on his payroll. Always keep 'em guessing, that's my motto.

The Giovanni Family

Like I said, not every member of the Giovanni Clan is a member of the Giovanni family. But let's be honest: the hierarchy definitely favors the original core bloodline. The most effective Pisanob elder is still going to have to defer to a Giovanni *anziani*. Hell, if eight Dunsirn elders vote no, and a single-blood *anziano* votes yes, the answer is yes. I'm not saying it's fair or right, or that it hasn't ruffled a ton of feathers among the "extended family." It's not, and believe me when I say it has. But it's how it is, and given the vast bulk of the family's power rests in Giovanni hands on both sides of the *sudario*, that's how it will be for the foreseeable future.

The smaller families ostensibly have free rein over their own operations, in return for funneling resources back to the Old Country. The various families provide different things depending on their capabilities. Generally, it comes down to souls or money. Souls are the preferred currency, but those families who don't focus so much on the necromantic side still provide valuable services and fiscal contributions.

The Dunsirn

The first major family the Giovanni coopted was the Dunsirn. In the 1700s, the family was looking for inroads

into the rapidly growing markets of the New World. Every avenue they tried, the Dunsirn blocked. A Scottish family of bankers who held controlling interest in a number of shipping ventures creating lines to the English colonies of North America, Augustus was intrigued and impressed by their acumen. But I'm not sure we would have brought them into the fold if we hadn't discovered that in addition to being bankers with vast amounts of influence throughout Great Britain, the Dunsirn were also cannibals.

It's easy to say Augustus just thought they'd fit in because they were our sort of pervert, but the truth is, he appreciates people who know how to keep a secret *and* they're our sort of perverts. Turns out that several centuries before, one of the Dunsirn picked up a taste for human flesh and was summarily kicked out of the family, like you do. After being disowned, he found himself a wife and made a ton of little bog rats. Eventually, they got tired of living in the bogs, and well, they killed and ate the more squeamish side of the family and moved into their digs.

The Dunsirn are now one of the chief sources of financial income for the family. The mortal side still loves that long pig, but the Kindred show almost no interest in necromancy as a family. Maybe they just don't feel a need to talk to someone they last saw as a sandwich. For the last few years, they've been forced through a kind of black magic night school, from the youngest neonates all the way up through the elder ranks. Being treated like children by the Powers That Be in Venice would chafe no matter what, but the Dunsirn are a stubborn and proud family, and I expect it's only a matter of time before that becomes complicated.

The Milliners

If you really hate someone, convince him or her to offend the Milliners. They hold grudges like you wouldn't *believe*, and they use those grudges to motivate themselves into making tons of cash. We brought the family in back in the '50s, and they've been bringing in money ever since.

By all accounts, the Milliners have been incredibly effective. They maintain powerful financial and criminal empires while holding their own against the Camarilla *and* the Sabbat in America. They adapted when the power in organized crime shifted away from Italian families to the Russians and the Armenians. They work as fixers and activists for hire, creating straw-man Astroturf movements to distract from real problems. They don't set policy, but they do a great job of executing it in very profitable ways. They invested heavily in privatized prisons that bring in a constant source of income and cheap labor, while also placing our people in management positions to ensure that Giovanni can slip into prison to feed safely and out of prison when our secret is at risk. Their operatives in Homeland Security flag known vampire hunters as "persons of interest" or domestic terrorists. Seriously, they have their hand in everything that has turned America into a perfect hunting ground for our kind.

They even gift-wrapped Boston for the Giovanni to step into control. The Camarilla actually recognizes our control over the city as legitimate. That's a big fucking deal, because while that sounds condescending as hell — and it *is*, because they're pretentious bastards — it also keeps them from overtly screwing with us. Not that they won't do it in secret, but it takes more effort and resources to do things covertly, and our pact means that they have to help if the Sabbat come calling.

What have they gotten in return? Absolutely fuck all. The bigwigs back in the Old Country demand more and more from the Milliners. More money. More territory. More souls. And they give them less. Less freedom to Embrace. Less control as Giovanni lieutenants arrive to take command of their operations. You'd almost think the Old Family was afraid of their competence, wouldn't you?

The Pisanob

In the early sixteenth century, the Giovanni found the Aztecs as part of the Cortes expeditions. In Tenochtitlan, they uncovered a massive, formalized necromantic tradition. The Spaniards, of course, were good God-fearing Christians, so they killed, enslaved, and converted the heathens. On the other side of the *sudario*, European spirits followed the trail of the expedition and did the same thing as their living brethren in the Shadowlands. The war on both sides of the Shroud stirred up a maelstrom, and pretty much fucked up everyone's night.

The Giovanni did what they could to help the Aztecs as both a professional courtesy and a little opportunism, I guess. They approached them and made a deal to bring them into the fold. They formed a family and took the name *pisanob*, which is a Mayan term that translates as something like "ghosts of the dead that walk the earth" (yeah yeah, I know the Mayans and the Aztecs aren't the same, but I bet those old Giovanni didn't give too much of a fuck). Their leader, Pochtli, is still in charge of that branch of the family today. The Giovanni learned a lot from their Latin American brethren, but you'll never hear them admit it.

Last I heard, the Pisanob have been dealing with a shit storm, begging for reinforcements as their turf gets attacked by a bunch of tattered old vamps calling themselves the

Harbingers of Skulls, which is a name so pretentious you'd think the Tremere came up with it. I don't know if they're Giovanni who've gone off their rockers, Samedi with delusions of grandeur, or honest-to-Augustus Premascines, but based on the stories, they've got it out for us something *fierce*.

The Minor Families

There are a number of other families we've brought in over the years, but the truth is, they're small time compared to those three. They do help map where the family has been over the years, though. Like the della Passaglia, in the 1400s, who the Giovanni used to build inroads into Asia and the opium trade. The Ghiberti, picked up in the seventeenth century to facilitate our interests Giovanni interests in Africa. Our hustlers, the Puttanesca from Sicily, acquired in the 1660s due to their talent at the street level. Other families, including Rossellini, Dondolo, St. John, Rothstein, Weng, Leuchter, Koenig, Beryn, Hidalgo, and more, have married into the blood over the years, but none of them has been absorbed to the same extent as the others.

Tradition

The Giovanni love our traditions. Almost every event in our existence has a ceremony or a party associated with it. The big ones, of course, are the Proxy Kiss and the Last Night.

The Proxy Kiss

There are nearly as many ways of giving the Proxy Kiss — the ceremonial feeding of Giovanni vitae to create a ghoul from a family member — as there are Giovanni. In many places, the Catholic roots of the family are twisted into a kind of "black mass" where only the most loyal and zealous volunteer to receive the "communion wine" and become ghouls. In some cases, an elaborate ceremony is performed and the vitae itself is hidden, masked behind the initiation to mislead prying eyes. In others, the vitae is simply mixed into the prospective ghoul's food, the better to addict them and force their compliance. The latter option takes much longer, and isn't as effective, but it's most often used for mortals whose abilities or connections make them indispensable, or those who have a habit of rebelling. Ostensibly, the blood will make them pliant before they discover the ruse, and they will be loyal servitors regardless of their original inclination. The Giovanni rarely take no for an answer once they've made their selection.

An increasing number of families, particularly in America, have begun to eschew the Kiss altogether. Family honor should be enough to inspire loyalty, without the enforced hold of a blood bond.

The Last Night

The actual Embrace itself varies from family group to family group, but there's one tradition I can almost guarantee you'll find no matter what part of the world you're in or what family you've come to visit: the Last Night. If there's one thing I dearly miss about being mortal, it's the food. *Mia mamma* was a hell of a cook, let me tell you. Almost every Giovanni has a big celebration sending him off into the "other half." A feast like you wouldn't *believe*. A party to make a bachelor's party look like a baptism. Food, sex, drugs, and all the sins that are so much better on the other side. If there's something you've always wanted to try, but have never done, request it for your Last Night. The name's a bit of a misnomer, though. Depending on the family or the recruit, it can last anywhere from a night to a week. One of my uncles actually had a heart attack during his Last Night from overdoing everything, and had to be Embraced in the middle.

Some of the European branches believe that there's a chance, in the crossing over, that *il Diavolo* can snatch you up during the Embrace and replace you with a demon. You know how devout the *anziani* can be. In those families, the final step of the Last Night is purification. They bathe the prospect and baptize him again, followed by confession. Then, when he has unburdened his soul, the process of Embrace begins. The sire-to-be acts as a sort of sin-eater. She drains the blood from her prospect, taking any remaining sin into herself, to burn away in the crucible of the Beast. Then, only when he is purely, utterly hollow, she gives him the blood from her veins.

Family Structure

Generally, the pecking order of a Giovanni household is pretty straightforward. The main philosophy you should keep in mind is "shit rolls downhill." In most cases, the family's still pretty patriarchal, at least in theory. In practice, I can name almost as many households ruled by a powerful *nonna* as I could houses run by *nonno*.

Titles

Anziano/Anziana: The catchall term for elders. The *anziani* vote to steer the family when Augustus doesn't set down specific direction. An elder may *also* be a *padrone* or *nonna*, but if you don't know a member of the family and she seems powerful, *anziana* is the safe way to go.

Capo/Capa: The boss most Giovanni see. This is the local guy on the street, checking in with your household, making sure things are running smoothly and giving marching orders.

Don/Donna: Traditionally, this is actually a noble title, but you'll find it used for leaders and people with loads of money, too. So yeah, you'll sometimes hear us referring to important members of the family this way. But this honorific doesn't work the way most Americans think it does, with their shitty Hollywood gangsters. You wouldn't call someone "Don Giovanni," unless his given name was Giovanni. Antonia Giovanni would be Donna Antonia. It's mostly gone out of fashion among the younger members of the family, who tend to use it satirically for pretentious douchebags.

Nonno/Nonna: Grandparents. The eldest members of the family generally carry the most power in a specific household, even if they aren't technically *anziani*. If any visiting *anziani* are about, of course, they get their way, but even then, in most cases, it's considered polite to *appear* to defer to the *nonni*.

Padrone/Padrona: Every region has a *padrone*, coordinating the various *capi* and households, and taking tribute from the households to pass up the chain.

Maestro/Maestra: Each continent has a master, who reports back to Venice. He controls the *padroni*, and takes the credit or blame for local failures.

Secrets

If anyone tells you families don't keep secrets from each other, they must be an orphan, or their family's been dead for centuries. The Giovanni are secretive as only a secret necromantic cabal that hid under the Vatican's nose for centuries can be. Once you get into the habit of keeping secrets from your friends, it's not much of a stretch to start conspiring against the cousins and siblings you're supposed to be honest with. It can begin without you even realizing it's happening.

So let's talk about Ambrogino. Imagine the sheep that is black enough for the black sheep to avoid. When the family took over from Cappadocius, Augustus trusted Ambrogino to point out the other points of view. He was truly the Devil's advocate. He had the job of poking holes in Augustus' plans and that spread, over time, to pointing out the flaws in *everybody's* plans. As you might imagine, that didn't make Ambrogino the most popular cousin at family gatherings.

Ambrogino doesn't care. He's focused his existence on hunting down fragments of occult significance, and expanding on the family's knowledge of necromancy. He's done it, too. He found the *Anexhexaton*, a folio that describes Cappadocius' goal of Apotheosis, among other things. He's been scouring the Shadowlands for the *Sargon Fragment*, part of a missive written by Cappadocius in his mortal years, said to contain "The Anointing," a ritual that would complete Cappadocius' goal of replacing God.

Anyone who makes that many people in the family uncomfortable and doesn't give a shit about it? He can't be all bad. And you have to admire his dedication.

I've heard some folks in the family whisper about a cult who venerate Abel's murder. They aren't Caine-worshippers. They believe in the power of the act itself. Killing as creation. Caine created an entire world with a jawbone, and if the right people are pulling the strings, maybe the Giovanni can do more than simply take their place as the rulers of the Endless Night. I've heard they even have the jawbone.

If the rumors are true, they believe Augustus is *not* the right person. Wouldn't it be interesting if the Great Betrayal happened again? Who would be the best person to take over as head of the family? The logical choice might be Ambrogino, don't you think? He's spent so much time on the other side of the *sudario* looking for the *Anexhexaton* that he certainly has the chops.

Mortuari

Most Giovanni are recruited from the existing stock of ghouls, whether from the main bloodline or from one of the various ghoul families. In fact, some of the Rossellini have managed to use ghouls and Necromancy to make revenant families — something the Tzimisce say only they can do. I don't know *how* they did it, and the results are *strange* even by our family's standards, but they're out there.

Anyhow, I got off topic. Most of us come from ghouls, but in some unfortunate cases, some bright young thing will die early, her light snuffed before she could be chosen for the Proxy Kiss or given the Last Night. Most of the time that's it. It's a shame, but you know the saying about omelets, right? They get written off, and another prospect takes their place. But sometimes, that bright young thing is *really* bright. She's just too smart to let go, or he's been more effective than five of his peers have. Now, this is friend-of-a-friend rumor, so it might be completely bullshit, but I've heard that if they're *that* useful, there might be something that can be done. If the right *anziano* pulls the right strings, and calls in the right favors, maybe there's a way.

You've heard stories of what the "old Clan" folks looked like, right? Fucking Crypt Keepers. I've dealt with a cousin back in the old country, and he wasn't that old, but I'm telling you, he looked like a damned mummy. He was more than a little touched in the head, if you know what I mean. To hear him tell it, he was dead for a week before they brought his withered ass back. I don't know if he was just nuts or what, and if they *did* do that, I have no idea *how*.

Valentinism

Sometime between the World Wars, there was this ghoul named Valentina della Passaglia who died protecting her mistress. Bring her up some time if you want to see how fast your cousins can fall over each other calling her a traitor. How fast and how loud, how *creative* they get in bragging about what they'd do to her. It's a good test of who's the biggest kiss-ass in the room.

See, Valentina came back. She returned as a *spirit* and warned us that the Endless Night wasn't going to shake down the way we want it to. She insisted that destroying the *sudario* would leave us powerless; we would be at the mercy of the ghosts we've been dominating for centuries.

As you can imagine, that didn't go over well with the family. But I know it got to some members of the family. It's under their skin and they can't help but wonder if she's right. I mean, they aren't going to jump up and outright defy the *anziani*, but what did I *just* say about secrets and conspiracies within the family?

Nobody's seen Valentina's ghost in decades. I don't know if she's been dealt with or moved on, or maybe she just knows better than to contact us, given the reaction she got last time.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Antiquarian

When a family member dies and the family wants to divest themselves of the estate, you are there to help them. You know that antiques have far more value as links to the dead than they ever did as baubles and tchotchkes. You carefully examine every watch, every lamp, and every book of poetry, looking for the chains that bind spirits to this world. When you've found a powerful old soul, you have a network of *Anziani* who collect the fruits of your labor, and they pay well for your trouble.

Candidate

You weren't born into the Giovanni family. You understand the information economy in ways that baffle the Necromancers, and they've made you an offer. The company you founded—your "family"—might be the next one brought into the fold. You're not stupid. Far from it, you get things a kid your age shouldn't understand. You see patterns in big data, ways to exploit and aggregate suffering to help bring about the Endless Night. You also see that you're a trial run, and you know that you have to be *exceptional*, or else the family will turn on you before you can build an exit strategy.

Enforcer

When outsiders think of the Giovanni, they imagine a Mafioso necromancer, Tony Soprano with ghostly button men. You're half the equation, at least. You've never been good at Necromancy, much to your sire's disappointment, but you're damned good at busting kneecaps and making the living do what you need them to. You may not get the calls for subtle work, but when a message needs to be delivered loudly, you're on speed dial.

Exile

You were powerful once. The Ghiberti family treated you like a golden child, even if the Giovanni made snide remarks about your "double blood." When was the last time they engineered a military coup? You built an army off of blood diamonds and human trafficking before you were even Embraced. After you became a vampire, you ruled a small region of South Africa with an iron fist.

You were invincible, until you weren't. You still don't know who betrayed you; who made it possible for the people to rise up and cast you out. You barely escaped in one piece, and are now exiled from your country. The Giovanni elders think it's best if you regroup as far away from your empire as possible. You're better than the menial work they have you doing now, but it's only a matter of time.

Grave Robber

You were disappointed when you learned how dry and academic the life of an archaeologist really was, before you were initiated into the family secret. Now, you work archaeology like a detective works cases. You question (dead) witnesses, follow leads, and discover long forgotten tombs full of treasures acting as fetters for ancient spirits of great power. You're loyal to your Pisanob cousins first, and with the threat of the Harbingers of Skulls looming over the family, you've begun to hoard the souls you enslave rather than turning them over to the Giovanni.



Imposter

Nobody ever really paid any attention to you growing up. You were two-blooded, and passed over at almost every instance, but all that did was fuel your ambition. The "family secret" wasn't even that hard for you to figure out. You basically forced your way over to the adult table, and excelled so much that they *had* to pay attention to you. Now that you have what you wanted, though, you're convinced that you don't deserve to be there. You work harder than every single-blooded asshole cousin you have, and get better results. Inside though, you're afraid that you're an imposter, and you're just waiting for everyone to notice.

Normal Envoy

You never really fit into the family when you were young. They've always seemed so odd and morbid, even before they brought you in and told you about the whole vampire thing. Your idea of teenage rebellion was to become incredibly, Stepford-class normal. Even now, you put on the most painfully boring front. Underneath it all, though, you're afraid of how much you enjoy the dark things your family does. The temptation of it scares you, so you put up this facade as much for your benefit as anyone else's. You never curse, and you favor polos and khakis from Land's End and Eddie Bauer. "Normal" people like you. They find you unthreatening. So of course, you're the favorite when the Giovanni need to deal with the Camarilla. Nobody knows how close you are to completely snapping.

Pure Necromancer

It's true that the family was born of merchants, and you recognize that the criminal and financial pursuits of the Giovanni are necessary to keep things going, but you have absolutely no interest in it. The shocking, dilapidated beauty of the Shadowlands has obsessed you since you were a child. You first glimpsed the other side in first grade, when you watched your teacher die of a heart attack. His spirit didn't leave school for weeks, and you learned more from his ghost than you did when he was alive. You've never been much for socializing with the living, even with the Goths in high school who mistook your obsessive morbidity as familiar. The Endless Night isn't just lip service for you — it's *necessity*. Nobody understands the other side like you do. Not even your own family.

Shroud-Breaker

Once a Milliner signs on to destroy something, they don't stop, no matter how long it takes. You're a saboteur, a demolition specialist who wants to tear down the *sudario*. A gas leak here, a little creative arson there, and *oh, how tragic!* Thankfully, the nice people at Milliner Realty can get a quick sale to help pay for the funeral arrangements. You profit off your victims' suffering, and then you enslave their spirits, chipping away at the Shroud. It's a win-win, really.

Sophisticate

Raised among the elite, you went to the best schools, made all the right friends, and learned to appreciate culture in all its forms. You were also initiated early into the Dunsirn tradition of cannibalizing your enemies, and you refined it into an art form. You appreciate the finer things in life, and can hold your own at a dinner party with the most arrogant Ventrue or the haughtiest Toreador. Your dinner parties are the talk of the town. If only the guests knew what they were eating.

Merits and Flaws

Cannibal (1pt. Merit)

Most vampires can't eat food, and even those who can force it down, don't gain sustenance from it. Like them, you still can't stomach the crap most mortals eat. Human meat, on the other hand, brings you great joy. It can be baked, fried, or even raw, and you can tuck right in, and even gain sustenance. Even other vampires look askance at Kindred who devour their prey, though the Dunsirn applaud your respect for tradition.

In addition to the blood points every human can provide, you can cannibalize a mortal and gain even more. An average human can provide up to seven helpings of meat (one per health level). Each helping provides you with one blood point.

Consanguineous Resistance (1pt. Merit)

Your character cannot be blood bound by anyone who shares his mortal bloodline. That is, if you were born into the Giovanni family, you cannot be bound by anyone else who was born a Giovanni, though you can still be bound by, say, a Pisanob of the Giovanni Clan, or by Kindred of any other Clan. Similarly, a Dunsirn with Consanguineous Resistance could not be bound by others who were born into the mortal Dunsirn family, but could be bound by a Milliner of the Giovanni Clan.

The Giovanni are extremely suspicious of anyone known to manifest this quirk. Although this blood-borne aberration hasn't been documented, a few savvy Giovanni have a rough idea of what it is and does. It's generally associated with being a rebellious young smartass who needs to be put down. This is not as unfair as it sounds; by the time a bond resistance is really obvious, it's likely because a punishment isn't working. A character who is discovered to have this trait probably earns her sire's hostility at the very least.

Mortuario (2 or 4pt. Merit)

You died. Perhaps you were murdered, or simply had a car accident. Whatever the cause, you were gone. But your sire found you too useful, or couldn't let you go. You were Embraced using the Ferryman's Recall ritual (see p. 109). The Embrace left you with the scars of your death, eternal tracework reminders of your trip to the other side. It also left you with the taut, pallid complexion of the dead.

In addition to the traditional weakness of your Clan, you also suffer disfigurement from your time as a true corpse. While you are able to heal yourself just like any other vampire, the wounds do not heal cleanly. You retain the scars of every experience. Depending on the nature of the damage, this can make social dealings exceedingly difficult, and may decrease your Appearance dots over time (even to 0). However, your time across the Shroud also gave you a natural feel for necromantic blood magic. The difficulties of all Necromancy rolls are reduced by two. This trait costs 4 points for characters who already have an appearance of 0 (such as Samedi and the Harbingers of Skulls), or 2 points for any other Kindred. It is an incredibly rare condition even among the Giovanni, and essentially unknown outside the Clan.

Giovanni with this Merit generally arouse the superstition of their Clan, and are treated with a definite wariness, particularly by *Anziani*. Characters with the Mortuario Merit may not also possess the Sanguine Incongruity Merit or similar flaws such as Monstrous.

Sanguine Incongruity (5pt. Merit)

Giovanni with this atavism are few and far between. Kindred possessing it do not bear the traditional Giovanni Clan weakness, the so-called Curse of Lamia; their Kiss causes no more damage than the blood loss itself. These vampires acquire a peculiar pallor upon their Embrace, however—they look like corpses, and no amount of blood ingestion can flush their features (as other vampires are able to do). Indeed, the bearer of this Merit more closely resembles the Clan's Cappadocian ancestors, and they have a slightly unnerving air about them. As a result, all rolls involving a Social attribute (Charisma, Manipulation, or Appearance) are at +1 difficulty.

Giovanni with this Merit are afforded wide berth, as the Giovanni tend to be quite superstitious about it. Characters with the Sanguine Incongruity Merit may not also possess the Mortuario Merit.

Inbred (1-5pt. Flaw)

Inbreeding, a common occurrence among the incestuous Giovanni Clan, can take many forms. The Inbred Flaw covers all manner of physical, mental, and emotional defects. A one-point Inbreeding is something simple and unobtrusive, such as eyes too close together or an underbite (+1 difficulty on Appearance rolls). A three-point Inbreeding is more severe: a congenital health condition (for mortals) or a crippling physical deformity (+2 difficulty on appropriate Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina rolls). Five-point Inbreedings are grossly disabling or emotionally crippling — everything from uselessly atrophied legs to a permanent Derangement — decided on mutually by the player and Storyteller. Inbred conditions may or may not be immediately discernible, though their point cost should be relative to their magnitude, as decided by the Storyteller.

Shadow Walker (6pt. Flaw)

The Giovanni Clan is by its nature inexorably tied to the realm beyond the *sudario*. Giovanni suffering from this Flaw are so tied to the Shadowlands that even in the lands of the living they must interact with the world of the dead on a nightly basis. To shadow walkers, objects in the Underworld are as real as anything found in the physical world. Such vampires find that the ghosts of walls may impeded their flight, ghostly objects may strike them, and wraiths' powers work as if the Kindred were on the far side of the Shroud. This Flaw is similar to the Ash Path power Dead Hand (**V20**, p. 163), except that Shadow Walker is always on and it in no way allows the character possessing it to perceive beyond the Shroud.

The Storyteller may determine that certain Shadowlands topography interferes with you. Unless you have some ability to do so, you can't see into the Shadowlands, so you have to be careful in feeling your way about — essentially, a blind man subject to the Underworld landscape. At the Storyteller's discretion, immaterial walls or environmental effects may restrict you.

Combination Disciplines

Eyes of a Thousand Shades (Auspex •, Necromancy •••)

While not everyone who has died went on to become a ghost, the dead are legion. They stand in your room while you sleep, and walk the halls when you work late. This power allows the necromancer to harness the ghosts in a given area to act as a kind of phantom clairvoyance. Some younger members of the clan refer to this power as "spook surveillance."

System: The player spends one blood point and rolls Perception + Occult. Each success widens the effect by 25 yards/meters, giving the necromancer a wider variety of ghosts to pull from in a broader area. While this power is active, the necromancer can see through the eyes of all the ghosts within the area of effect. He can flip from one ghost's perception to another's at will. However, the ghost's vision is filmy, colored by the *sudario*. The detritus of memory is strewn about, and can cause confusion or obscure fine details of the living world.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Sharing the Master's Vigor (Dominate •••••, Necromancy •••)

Those who walk the Bone Path of Necromancy can summon grotesque zombie hordes to perform their will. For those few who have learned the secret of this power, those deathless guardians may be imbued with extra speed, strength, or toughness.

System: The player spends one blood point and rolls Wits + Occult. Each success allows him to imbue one zombie summoned through the Necromancy power Shambling Hordes (**V20**, p. 165) with a dot of a physical Discipline (Celerity, Fortitude, or Potence) that the necromancer possesses. For example, he may choose to spend two successes on the same zombie by giving him 1 Celerity and 1 Fortitude or 2 Celerity. However, the necromancer cannot share a Discipline rating higher than his own. For example, if Beniamino has Potence 2, but achieves three successes on his activation roll, he cannot give a zombie Potence 3. The zombie retains these abilities as long as it is animate.

This power costs 24 experience points to learn.

Backgrounds

Memento de Morte

Death leaves its mark on the world around it. Cold spots, places where the light seems too pale, the colors washed out and faded. Sometimes, something seeps into the items surrounding a death in such a way that it taints them forever. The fainting couch in a Victorian serial killer's parlor, or the portrait that hung on the wall of his abattoir, for example. The blackened wood floorboards at uncle

The Shroud

The *sudario*, or Shroud, is the permeable skin between the lands of the living and the lands of the dead. The world where ghosts live — the Shadowlands, Underworld, or whatever you want to call it — takes up the same space as our world. We're standing in it right now. It's like a double exposure on an old film camera. Ghosts walk the same halls we do, but it's more like the *memory* of those halls. They haunt us, but our world haunts them. Grandmother's favorite rocking chair may be gone, taken when she went to live in the old folks' home, but it's still there for them. Wraiths live in the wreckage of our memories. They watch us, but they don't always see clearly. Our world is distorted and pale, a mirage seen through milky cataracts.

It is possible for ghosts to cross the Shroud, given the right circumstances. Some ghosts may possess humans, in a manner similar to Dominate 5 (**V20**, p. 155). Others may actually manifest.

Vittorio's estate, reclaimed from a plague ship lit aflame to cleanse its still-living passengers. Books wrapped in the flesh of the monk who inscribed them, carved from his still living body, and bound by him in his last moments of life. But the most common mementos of death are murder weapons. The scalpels of serial killers and the sabers of war criminals. Bludgeons and .38 Bulldogs, nooses and punchbowls. The more death that has drenched the item, the more power it absorbs.

This Background gives you one or more of these mementos of death, allowing you to benefit from the ambient energies when using Necromancy. You must have the relic (or relics) with you to receive the bonus. Many necromancers have a special sanctum set aside for their ritual work for this reason.

- You have one minor relic. +1 bonus die to Necromancy rolls.
- •• You have a relic of middling power or two minor ones. +2 bonus dice to Necromancy rolls.
- ••• You have a few reasonably powerful relics. +3 bonus dice to Necromancy rolls.
- •••• You have a very powerful relic, or a couple of less powerful items. +4 bonus dice to Necromancy rolls.
- ••••• You have an incredibly powerful relic, or a couple of powerful items. +5 bonus dice to Necromancy rolls.

Spirit Slaves

This trait represents a hold you have over a ghost, or several ghosts. Usually this hold is in the form of *catene*, or fetters — either something that the ghost valued highly in life, or possibly a random object or place to which the *spirito* has been attached via a necromantic ritual. Regardless, you have a hold over the spirit and can bully it by threatening its fetter. Alternatively, you might have information about the spirit's goals and can control it by aiding or impeding it.

All Spirit Slaves are assumed to have statistics similar to a recently deceased ghost (**V20**, p. 385). However, higher levels of this Background might reflect more powerful spirits at the Storyteller's discretion.

- You have a hold on one weak *spirito*.
- •• You have influence over two minor ghosts, or one of greater power.
- ••• You're the boss of three lesser ghosts, or fewer who can do more.
- •••• Four ghosts are under your sway, or fewer who are stronger.
- ••••• You have mastered five weak ghosts, or fewer who are more talented.

Necromancy Rituals

Death's Communion (Level One Necromantic Ritual)

The Giovanni have spent centuries going through the motions, making sure that nobody can question their public devotion to the Catholic Church. In private, however, the family often practices their own warped Black Mass, showing devotion to *Dis Pater* and drawing power from the darkness. This ritual acts as a grim parody of the traditional communion, ingesting literal blood (perhaps even of the father) and dedicating the subject to the Endless Night.

This ritual is not performed at every family black mass. An expedited, powerless version may be observed, but the full ritual is more involved.

Manifest (Ghost ability)

This art allows the ghost to manifest in a mortal body that reflects her spotty memory of her living self. The ghost's personality will color their appearance, however. A Spectre full of rage will be flush with anger, her face marked by intensity, while a forlorn shade will appear fragile and washed out or faded. All manifested shades are cool to the touch, and will seem constantly distracted (a side effect of the concentration necessary to maintain this form). Although most onlookers won't notice anything wrong with a ghost using this ability, those close to her in life may pick up on the differences.

System: The shade spends two Passion (**V20**, p. 385) and rolls Willpower; each success allows the ghost to remain solid for one scene. He takes damage as mortals do while in this form, gaining the standard seven health levels. However, if he is "killed" in this form, it merely ejects him back into the Shadowlands, where he must rest and recuperate for a number of days equal to his Passion pool. He may spend passion and activate powers while manifested, and use his stats in the physical world as if he were in the Shadowlands.

System: The caster of this ritual is usually not the beneficiary. If the caster and the subject are the same, the caster suffers a +1 difficulty to her casting roll. Death's Communion takes one hour to complete. The subject of the ritual gains a bonus of +2 dice to all Necromancy rolls for one night per success achieved on the casting roll.

The Ferryman's Recall (Level Five Necromantic Ritual)

This obscure ritual is for the rare instance when a prospective convert has been killed before they could be Embraced, and they are determined to be too valuable to lose. Knowledge of this ritual is jealously, if not entirely successfully, guarded by certain Premascine Giovanni.

System: The caster must have access to the corpse as well as one of the subject's fetters, perhaps obtained using Ritual of the Unearthed Fetter (**V20,** p. 181). The Ferryman's Recall takes 8 hours (reduced by one hour per success on the casting roll) to perform.

The corpse must be relatively intact for the ritual to work, and the subject must have been a ghoul before death. If the necromancer performing the ritual was *not* the domitor, they must have a blood point worth of the domitor's Vitae. The Generation of the Kindred giving the Embrace (usually, but not always, the necromancer performing the ritual) determines how much time may have passed since the subject's death, as more powerful vitae has a more potent effect.

Embracer's Generation	Time Dead
Thirteenth	12 hours
Twelfth	1 day
Eleventh	2 days
Tenth	3 days
Ninth	4 days
Eighth	5 days
Seventh	1 week
Sixth	2 weeks

First, the subject's body must be cleaned and prepared, drained entirely of blood or embalming fluid. Then the necromancer paints a series of sigils onto the body, intended as place markers for the subject's spirit to relearn how to use his body. At the climax of the ritual, the Kindred performing the Embrace pours her vitae into the subject's mouth, and the Embrace continues as normal. Any wounds suffered before the ritual (including the cause of the subject's death and any decomposition) close, but do not entirely heal, leaving scars on the newly Embraced Kindred's body. In addition, the subject's time across the *sudario* leaves its mark on him; giving him the ashen complexion of the Harbingers of Skulls, as well as endowing him with an improved facility for necromantic magic (see the Mortuario Merit on p. 106 for more information).



LASOMBRA

"Swallow darkness, boys, give up your year."

— Ray Bradbury, The Halloween Tree

Shadowplay

First came the drums, pounding, primal, like a heartbeat. Then the guitars began to scream. Sarah let them both wash over the crowd before she sung out a note to follow them. She filled it with pain and anger so tangible they could almost feel it, and then the song began.

She let her voice flow across the crowd, pushed by the beat of the music. Gradually they stopped shouting to their friends or the bartender, and turned towards the stage. They even stopped checking their mobile phones. Good. Now she had their attention. Usually she wasn't very concerned about what her food thought of her music, but tonight she had a different plan.

It was a good crowd, plenty of Goths as usual, but a few punks and even some ravers wondering what the fuss was about. It wasn't just the teenagers, either, which was excellent because the older ones had been angrier for longer. They'd need that anger when they were crawling out of the earth later tonight.

Sarah had been concerned about the size of the venue, but the crowd filled it nicely. She usually booked smaller places. If people got turned away, it made them keener to see what they had missed. The band made less money this way, but the money wasn't important. Being part of an exclusive gig packed so tight the crowd became a single screaming gestalt made them a community, if only for a night, and that made everything so much easier.

After another rock song, it was time to pull down the tempo, and draw them in. The level of the band dropped too, no longer deafening the crowd, making them draw closer to listen. The lyrics of the song were a metaphor. They spoke of oppression, and those who made money from the work of others. As she sang, Sarah reached out into the shadows and let them play across the walls of the room. Amidst the flickers, figures bent in suffering and toil. Cities and factories chewed the souls of the people while "they" laughed and grew fat on profit.

Sarah let her will seep into the music, her power washing over the minds of those listening. By the time the song was finishing, the crowd was chanting the chorus with her. She stopped singing then, pointing the microphone into the crowd.

"Let them hear you!" she yelled at them, and the crowd screamed back. "Let them know we are not going to take this anymore!"

The crowd surged in response. Each one of them was angry for a hundred different reasons, their passion lifted by the music. The alcohol helped too, something Sarah always made sure was cheap and easily available at every gig. The crowd was in a fury. A few more songs and she'd have the crowd in a frenzy, ready to let loose and tear the city apart.

They would be Sarah's new army. A few would even become recruits; the Sabbat waiting outside the city would need a vanguard. With the city in flames, the assault would really begin, and everyone would know that it was Sarah who had made it possible. Should the Bishop fall in the conflict, Sarah had little doubt who might be chosen to replace him.

A HISTORY IN SHADOW

It's all about power. You can dress it up any way you like, but that's always what it comes down to. We should begin with history, not for the sake of tradition but because history teaches us how not to repeat the mistakes of others. Learn from this, because if you can't do better than your forebears can, what is the point of you?

Before we go any further, I should underline we are not a Clan. We have to use the term on occasion, but it does not suit us. A Clan is a social group, a collection of likeminded or like blooded people with no better reason to hang out together than they seem to share a common interest. Clans are pathetic. We are not "Clan Lasombra." We are "The Lasombra," those who have earned the name by proving we have a right to it. You are not chosen to join us; you are given an opportunity to prove you are worthy.

We take from anyone who crosses our path, but not because we feel we have a right to or because it is just. We take because we can; we need no justification. We are not thugs who take on impulse, however; we choose our targets carefully and with patience. What makes us dangerous is that we plan our strikes. Every move is made with cunning, arranging the pieces silently to suit our purpose. When the strike comes, it comes without mercy, its result a foregone conclusion. That is why you should fear us.

THE SHADOW OF CAINE

However, I digress a little. You came here wanting to know of our history, so let us start at the beginning. The first of the Lasombra was Caine. Yes, that Caine. You think it arrogant we trace our lineage to the first of us? How can you doubt it? Caine was charged to give a gift to God, and when it was spurned, he removed the competition. For a punishment, he received vast power and immortality. What legends have Abel or Seth created? Are they anything more than dust for all their virtue?

While the first to bear the name Lasombra was of the Third Generation, we have never forgotten our grandfather, the source of all power. It is not coincidence some venerate him as a sea god. He taught us the way of the ocean. Perhaps that is why we feel drawn there. It is Caine calling to us, and one day we will meet him again when we have proven our ascendance.

You may be thinking I have forgotten the Second Generation, but not so. They proved themselves weak and allowed their children to consume them. Frankly, that is all we need to know of them, a footnote in the history of the Kindred. However, the power of their blood is worth mentioning. You may wonder who among the Third Generation stole it for themselves. We are sure the one now called Lasombra was certainly one of them. As to the other two, the original Brujah may have been one, which is what made her so succulent to her childer Troile. Ventrue probably claimed the remainder, which might explain why his followers like to think they are oh so special.

Cities rose and fell, as cities are wont to do. The first and the second, then Carthage, Rome, Byzantium, lather, rinse, repeat. Is it any wonder we Lasombra have chosen not to sit on these fragile thrones? Here lies another object lesson. Temporal power is temporary. The rulership of kings never lasts. There is always someone in the shadows coveting your power. I think you can guess who that might be.

BLOOD ON THE WAVES

As the feuds between Clans began to settle and the Kindred marked their territory, we claimed some territory around the Mediterranean on the Iberian, Greek, and Italian peninsulas. However, as always we were drawn to the sea. Trade was brisk and lucrative at this time, and merchant ships sailed constantly across the black waters. We raided these timid cargo ships as they plied the waters. Cloaking our own ships in shadow, we came at them during the night. Few even knew what had hit them before it was all over. I get quite nostalgic for those old sea battles, where we feasted and slaughtered those who stood against us.

We could have grown indolent on the riches we stole, but the wealth was only a bonus. You see, for a Lasombra it is not just about winning or beating (in many definitions of the word) our opponents. We seek to show them and their allies how completely we have conquered them. However, an easy victory is no true victory. We are engaged in a constant challenge to prove worthy of being Lasombra. We must always prove ourselves to those with the only opinion that matters: that of the other Lasombra, and they are not impressed easily. To do that requires radical thinking. Lasombra know how to come at a problem sideways, never as our enemies suspect. As such, we also prize subtlety; you need not be a king to rule. Those who exercise control without the trappings of command are truly in power. Anyone with a crown can shout orders and expect obedience; obedience without such ephemera is the mark of a true master.

Alexander the Great's conquest of the Mediterranean destroyed many of our old allies and allegiances... or as we prefer to say, proved they were no longer of any use to us. However, times change and those who cannot change



with them are not Lasombra. We do not like to lose, but we recognize that it sometimes happens. This is the nature of challenge and this is why we must continue to test ourselves. One day, each of us will be bested. It is our job to make the task so difficult that only a truly worthy adversary will manage it. Later, we return and best them in turn, having learned from our previous encounter.

As the Persian Empire fell, we spread out across the land looking for new places to test ourselves and take power. As we expected, the Ventrue were entrenched in Rome and the courts of Europe. Therefore, we did as we have always done: we waited and advised from the shadows, and looked for the next opportunity.

ROME AND THE NEW RELIGION

While empires rose and fell, Rome seemed eternal at the time. No matter how much it overextended or how many bad emperors it produced, the empire somehow endured. The empire brought stability and organization to most of Europe and even the Middle East, so it was the obvious choice for our next strategy. The deluded Ventrue considered themselves the lords of Rome (as much as vampires truly run anything in mortal society), and some wondered why we appeared to take less power. The truth is that we had no interest in building an empire; we only wanted to control one. We allowed the Venture to do the hard work of pushing pieces around the board in the perception of power, while we took from their gains what we wanted. Sadly, we have had to listen to the Venture and Brujah whine about Carthage for centuries. The truth is that if Carthage was really important, we would have taken it from both of them. Unfortunately, the Venture proved more adept than we had given them credit for, and when the time came to take the reins from them it proved difficult. Not insurmountable, of course — we are talking about the Ventrue — but we had to take a different tack, wasting years of planning in the process at no small annoyance to ourselves.

Our new direction made use of a religious sect we had been watching and waiting to develop into something useful. Christianity was a religion of martyrs, which made it an excellent place to find dedicated agents. It proved it could survive after several hundred years of quite enthusiastic persecution, some of which we were responsible for to test it. With a little work on our part, we helped Rome come to

understand the benefits of adopting Christianity as its state religion. Our goal was to create a lasting legacy that moved power away from the Ventrue. We chose to create a new form of power structure, and Christianity was to be our instrument.

When Constantine became the first Christian Roman Emperor, he used religion to unite the peoples of the empire. He organized the councils in Nicaea to regulate the beliefs and traditions of the religion to keep it from fracturing, at least for a time. Even when Eastern and Western churches finally separated, the center held. In time, even Rome fell, but Christianity endured, and with it our power. While the Ventrue wept for their lost glories, Christianity held Europe together in the power vacuum. We sunk our claws deep into the faith, helping to build its power, and it has proved worth the investment time and again.

THE MISTAKE OF THE INQUISITION

Given how much of a friend Christianity proved to be to the Lasombra, it should come as no surprise we also embraced Islam when that appeared. The difficulty of this is that when Christian and Muslim forces clashed, Lasombra were on both sides. This was especially evident in the eleventh century C.E., when El Cid led Spanish forces against the Muslims in Iberia. The fervor El Cid commanded stretched even to those Christian Lasombra who chose to take things too far and dedicate themselves to clearing the Muslim Moors from Iberia. They called themselves the "Shadow *Reconquista*" and became a small but dedicated order of Cainites. Even though their agenda was accomplished to history's satisfaction in 1492, some Kindred have not forgotten or forgiven. As Christian/Muslim relations worsen in the modern era, we have heard several rumors that such an organization might appear again.

This proves that no matter how hard you work to keep things organized, someone comes along to knock everything down sooner or later. The Inquisition was another failure on our part. We grew arrogant about our power within the church and decided to see if we might use it as a weapon to control humanity more directly. All that religious fervor might be channeled and directed at our enemies, and all we had to do was sow a few myths about the indestructible demonic power inherent in certain creatures of the night and direct the kine to strategically "exorcise" those who had become "corrupted" by them.

Sadly, the plan worked a little too well. Instead of being cowed by the power of the creatures we sent them to torment, they were inspired by it. They decided to organize and search out more such creatures to remove the scourge. Those of us who stepped in to stop them were uncovered and slaughtered, our shadow powers only bolstering their claims of our demonic heritage. So we decided to retreat; after all, there was no point in risking our own lives when this Inquisition might destroy a few more of our enemies.

The whole situation was, quite frankly, a clusterfuck of epic proportions. As you might imagine it caused concerns about the quality of our leadership. I should point out what I mean by leadership in reference to the Lasombra. We were led by the strongest, but also by the one who proved he could take us to greater riches. As a group, we do not play well together, and betrayal is simply a brutal but effective way to ensure promotion goes to the right people. This was about to become violently evident.

CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP

With wholesale burning and slaughter of Kindred continuing across the world, a few of us decided a change in leadership was required. Gratiano de Veronese was one of our most respected elders, having proved his worth with skill rather than lineage. His position and eloquence gained a lot of support, even though Lasombra's other childe, Montano, diametrically opposed it. At the center of the Clan, plots and counter-plots developed as Europe burned. Eventually, Gratiano made the ultimate play and, with a small force of supporters, broke into the stronghold of our Antediluvian and diablerized Lasombra.

After that night, the argument became moot: the worthy had taken their due and the weak beaten. There was nothing left to discuss. Montano sensibly made a run for it. Interestingly, Gratiano chose not to lead the Lasombra. Instead, he took an Archbishop position and uses his power to keep the role vacant. Perhaps he had learned the first lesson: that to be a leader simply makes one a target, no matter how powerful you are.

Luckily, Kindred society was having too many problems with the Inquisition to take advantage of our power struggle. Not only were the faithful hunting down vampires on a massive scale, but younger Cainites were taking advantage of the chaos and settling a few scores. Elders used their childer as cannon fodder, but other young ones were freed of their bonds by the death of their sires. Roving packs of vampires gathered for mutual protection in the anarchy and began to hunt down the elders who had proved so contemptuous of their lives.

While we considered the affair to be an excellent way to purge the indolent from Kindred society, other vampires desperately wanted to preserve the status quo. Seven Clans managed to get their act together to form an alliance. Using their combined

power they hid away from mortals and, shivering in fear, hoped that the storm would pass. This is the origin of the great and powerful Camarilla: an entire Sect of cowards. Much to our surprise, the Camarilla's craven plan to hide under a rock actually worked. Vampires became myths, and the Inquisition lost its fervor. An alliance of seven Clans was something of an achievement, far more impressive in its power than the inadequate sum of its parts. When they eventually came out of hiding, these self-declared lords of vampire society offered an amnesty for all those who joined the new order. Old crimes would be forgiven and a new era would be forged.

Like hell.

THE SABBAT

It was clear to us that the destruction of our elder, what we saw as a badge of honor, was to the Camarilla the most terrible of crimes. There was also no way we would bend our knees to an organization of weaklings when we had destroyed a being more powerful than any of them could imagine. We declined the offer, telling the Ventrue where they could stick their so-called Traditions (in truth, old laws that we had chosen to ignore centuries ago).

While we would ordinarily simply have carried on with business as usual, the Camarilla refused to leave us alone. They declared anyone who had not joined their ridiculous social club to be their enemy. Quaking with laugher rather than fear, we organized our defenses. However, as luck would have it, we were not the only Clan to refuse their invitation. The Tzimisce proved to be a ready ally, even though their claims of having destroyed their Antediluvian were clearly an attempt to steal our glory and appear to be our equal. The other four Clans chose to remain on the fence, proving they were no use to us. The Assamites had already let the Tremere pull their teeth, the Setites and Giovanni were not to be trusted, and the Ravnos were a liability anyway. However, there were plenty of renegades from each of the other eleven Clans who did want to join our new cause. The sense to avoid the Camarilla and refuse to trust their lies became the basic entry requirement to our own counter organization. We named it the Sabbat, and it has since then stood for freedom and power.

A NEW WORLD

While we had successfully defended ourselves from the attempt by the Camarilla to control Kindred society, Europe was becoming dangerous. The remains of the Inquisition still operated and might flare up at any moment. Those Camarilla elders who had survived the rebellion of the Anarchs were powerful and dangerous. They were also entrenched in the cities, making resources difficult for us in the Sabbat to get a foothold.

It was a glorious time for us. Tested to our breaking point, it culled the weak from both our numbers and those of the Sabbat. In turn, the worthy feasted on the blood on any they chose. We were free of any rule but our own hearts, and it was in equal measure both dangerous and glorious.

But if we were to endure, we needed somewhere outside the bastions of the Camarilla. Luckily, a whole new world opened up to the west. Where the Camarilla elders saw primitives and desert, we saw opportunity. With many of our Sabbat brothers and sisters, we left Europe and its dusty halls to the equally dusty elders of the Camarilla. While it was hard to start from scratch in towns and cities that were barely worthy of the name, we persevered. We had a blank canvas to urbanize as our own personal feeding grounds.

From there we settled into the shadows of this new America. It has embraced our cause, to welcome all who can prove themselves. The Camarilla came eventually, but we were waiting for them. As we had with Rome, we let the Venture pretend to build great skyscrapers and a financial empire that stretched across the world. Then we took from them anything we desired.

This is where we stand today: a glittering urban jungle where the old social traditions no longer hold sway. Here you can claim what you can take, and power is given to those who have earned it by right and not bloodline. Here, the night and the shadows belong to us.

LASOMBRA IN MODERN NIGHTS

AN AFFILIATION OF RENEGADES

As you might imagine, organizing a group of selfish, egotistical, aggressively ambitious murders, thieves, and powerbrokers is not an easy task. Life among the Lasombra is a nightly game of cat and mouse, politics and assassination. Most might consider this a weakness, but we see it as weeding out the weak. The game is eternal, and to lose is to die. If you can't cope with that, you are not fit to be Lasombra. Every Lasombra, from the lowest neonate to the highest Bishop, is calculating how to put a knife in their enemy's back and looking to make sure no one does the same to them.

There are a few rules to the game, although breaking the rules and getting away with it is considered a badge of honor.

THE TRAITOROUS REFLECTION

There are many rumors about why the Lasombra have no reflection. Some say they are too deceitful for even a mirror to see the truth of them. Others say that they gave up their reflections to take power in the shadows. Some suggest they proved so despicable that even their reflection will have nothing to do with them. There are even those who believe the Lasombra kill their own reflection, in case it someday rises up to challenge them.

Whatever the truth, the flaw is sometimes seen as a bonus. A Lasombra assassin might easily sneak up unseen on someone looking at himself or herself in a mirror. While film can capture a Lasombra's image, some cameras that use mirrors to redirect the image will fail to record them. Having said that, being unable to truly see yourself is an annoyance that gradually grows. It can often wear on the psyche of the Lasombra who wonders if they still look the way they used to. Do they trust the camera or portrait artist to have rendered a true likeness? If not, what are they hiding? While most Lasombra ignore such minor annoyances, for some it can build into obsession and even mania.

No one will ever tell you the rules, but they boil down to "don't be an idiot." Most Lasombra recognize that what is good for the Lasombra as a whole is at least favorable to its members. Acting against a powerful superior just for kicks when they have a good plan going is just crass. It is also amateurish to use the simplest method to dispatch your own kind — unless you can get away with it, of course. While Lasombra are often more pragmatic, their plans would put that satirist Machiavelli to shame. Every Lasombra wants their enemy's last words to be "Ah, I see. Nicely played."

THE FRIENDS OF THE NIGHT

While all Lasombra are considered equal, some are more equal than others. Even among those Lasombra who have proven themselves, there are those who are a cut above the rest. The Friends of the Night are a self-appointed group that sits at the heart of the Lasombra. They have had many names, depending of the fashionable language of the day, such as the "Brether Nokw," "Amies Noires," and the "Amici Noctis," but their agenda has remained the same. They decide who sits in judgment on the courts of blood, and they share resources among themselves to remain at the top of the heap.

However, the Friends of the Night is not a small social club, and most Lasombra who survive a century or more are quietly invited to join. It all comes down to the simple fact that the Lasombra are better than the other Clans are, and need to set a higher standard. Proving yourself worthy to be Lasombra would be proof you are the elite of any other Clan. So to prove yourself among the elite of the Lasombra takes more time and effort. While longevity in this pit of vipers is usually taken as worthiness, not all "Friends" are elders. Many young Cainites who show exceptional talent are inducted after an especially successful Crusade or the creation of a new form of Discipline.

The Friends of the Night is essentially the status quo of Clan Lasombra. They work together to make sure things stay exactly as they are. With their combined age, experience, wisdom, and ruthlessness, little can stand against such a concerted effort. This is not to say the Clan stultifies under tradition; The Friends of the Night are dedicated to seeing the Lasombra advance and adapt. However, they have a particular way they want to see change happen, and the power to make sure it does. They are the "man behind the curtain" running the Lasombra from the shadows.

THE COURTS OF BLOOD

However, do not mistake the existence of the Friends of the Night for complacency. The Lasombra know that the only way to truly test oneself is against a peer — another Lasombra. This naturally leads to a certain amount of friction amongst our kind. To make sure the Clan doesn't dissolve under the weight of all this infighting, a court system has been developed to manage most disputes. These "Courts of Blood" do not convene to issue punishment so much as to grant permission. They don't care who broke the rules, who started what, or who has been unfair to whom. What concerns them is those Lasombra who have proved unworthy of the name, or brought disrespect to the Clan as a whole.

If you want to destroy another Lasombra, you have to prove to the court they are worth destroying, and that you are up to the job of being their executioner. If you can't take them down yourself, you were obviously unworthy to bring the petition before the court. If your evidence wasn't as convincing as they'd like, the court can impose

conditions on your attempt. You may have to warn the target, not use any Disciplines, or destroy their servants first. Again, failure simply proves you unworthy.

Courts of Blood convene in preternatural darkness, so the petitioner never knows who their judges are. That is unless they are capable of seeing through the powers of their elders, in which case they are obviously worthy of knowing who they face. In pretty much all cases of rule breaking among the Lasombra, proof you can break the rule is proof you have the right to do so. One thing the Clan never accepts is failure. If the court refuses your request there is no appeal, although you might bring the case again whereupon different judges will be called to serve from the ranks of the Lasombra. However, no one likes a whiner, and often a second plea is dismissed out of hand, or even seen as cause to dispose of the petitioner.

FACTIONS

There are many different factions among the Lasombra, and some members might serve as part of more than one or none at all. There is not much politicking between the factions, as each has their own agenda, which rarely crosses with anyone else's. They are each a group of specialists more than ambitious political cliques. However, there are times they don't see eye to eye, and that is when things get interesting.

THE CRUSADERS

This faction represents some of the more dedicated and evangelical members of the Lasombra (for which you might read "young"), and it even accepts other members of the Sabbat. The Crusaders, as their name suggests, are constantly planning how to wrest cities from Camarilla control. No sooner has one war finished then they begin to plan another. The elders of the Sabbat encourage this for obvious reasons, and the Lasombra keep an eye on them to make sure one of their own leads the vanguard of every mission.

Members of the Crusaders are bursting with Sabbat propaganda and bloodlust. Anything that is not expanding Sabbat control and crushing the Camarilla is a distraction to them. Those who survive for long are truly dangerous, having faced more combat than most Cainites see in even their long lifetimes. Luckily, most Lasombra crusaders grow up after a century or two and go on to do something more useful.

THE ABYSS' CHILDREN

Our power over shadows, Obtenebration, is a talent the Lasombra guard jealously. The use of being able to do



something no one else can do cannot be underestimated, and we jealously guard our knowledge both of the control of shadows and the Abyss from which they spawn. This has led to the development of Abyss Mysticism, a strange mixture of magic, Obtenebration, and forbidden lore. While to most Lasombra any new ability is little more than another avenue to power, for the Abyss' Children, the darkness is more than just a useful ability.

The Abyss' Children believe there is something out there in the shadow, something dark and deep, and they dedicate themselves to the study of its mysteries. Some say that the Children go too far into the darkness, and not all of them come back. Others suggest they bring something else back with them. Their dedication to shadow unnerves even other Lasombra, who are also jealous and fearful of their command of abilities few understand. Whatever the truth, most Lasombra keep them at a distance where possible, even as they try to hide their curiosity for the secrets they know.

THE FAITHFUL

The Lasombra have a long history of involvement with religion, especially (but certainly not limited to) Christianity. The Faithful take this a step further and actually believe in one of these religions. They have come to understand that God has a plan, even for them. They attend church regularly and follow their faith as well as they are able. As many Lasombra were also priests, some hold late night services for a supernatural congregation. It is a little beneath most Lasombra, who see it as believing your own propaganda.

The Faithful are often remarkably resistant to the power of True Faith, and some might even possess the ability themselves. However, many simply enjoy the ritual of religion, or they find it helps them maintain their spirituality to remain a regular churchgoer.

THE BLACK ANGELS

Almost the opposite of the Faithful are the Black Angels or "Angelis Ater." They believe just as vehemently in God's plan for them. However, they believe it is their job to be the necessary evil. The Black Angels behave like devils but insist they are doing what God needs them to do. They are the unfortunate necessity that allows the angels not to get their hands dirty. God may be perfect but the world isn't, and it would be naïve to think a perfect world will not come to pass without sacrifice. Whether they are right or not, it is best to avoid them.

Black Angels are deeply fanatical, but not very evangelistic. They don't need to convert anyone; they have too much to do. Believing they are doing God's will, there is no line they will not cross. Many elders keep a close eye on this small but growing cult, fearing the Baali may be heavily involved. This bloodline is the most secret order within the factions, as even the Sabbat will spare no cost to exterminate such corruption.

THE KINGS AND QUEENS OF SHADOW

While they claim a lordly title, few among the Sabbat have much respect for the Kings and Queens of Shadow. In fact, membership in their order is sometimes a punishment. It is the job of this faction to maintain power over mortal institutions, places were a degree of empathy and humanity is vital. This means the Kings and Queens usually maintain their Humanity rather than a Path of Enlightenment, a difficult (and some would say pointless) undertaking among the Sabbat.

While they may not have the same freedom to play fun and games like their packmates, the Kings and Queens quietly hold a powerful portfolio of influence and temporal power. They also tend to share and trust each other more, being all somewhat outcast together. They are usually the ones that come closest to the Camarilla. A few have even allied with the *antitribu* and either defected or played one Sect against the other when it suited them. They also sometimes find allies with non-Lasombra vampires in the Order of St. Blaise, as many of that faction's goals overlap with their own.

THE CORSAIRS

The Lasombra's love of the sea remains strong even today, albeit mostly around the coast in Somalia. The Corsairs are a violent reminder that we sometimes like to give our enemies a beating in several senses of the word. While plenty of them captain vessels that take prizes and booty from those who cross their path, others manage shipping companies and cruise liners. While there is a little tension between these two sides of the faction, they both recognize the need to take cargoes and the value of having somewhere to sell them on land.

The Corsairs pride and joy is a deadly fast attack submarine called the "Black Fang." It was acquired during the breakup of the Soviet Union, and has haunted Camarilla controlled shipping ever since. Three packs run the sub under the command of Archbishop Ferrari, and their ability to eschew some of the life support systems makes them hard to detect. The sub gets its orders from the Friends of the Night, who keep its operations a highly classified secret, even among the Lasombra.

THE TRANSHUMANISTS

For some vampires, being at the top of the food chain isn't enough. Spurred on by Darwin's theory of natural selection, the Transhumanists seek to improve themselves

to transcend the limits of their vampiric condition. The Transhumanists understand that they have not completed their evolution as masters of nature until they no longer fear fire and the sun, or rely on blood for sustenance.

Transhumanists come from several different backgrounds. Some are biologists seeking ways to eradicate vampiric hunger, while others are technologists trying to integrate and interface vampires with machines. Some are even occultists looking to cloak the sun in darkness that they may forever walk the Earth. Most of these weirdoes are cranks, but the elders support them in the hopes one of their crazy ideas might just work. The Transhumanists are also useful for the links and partnerships they have made among the Tzimisce.

THE FATALISTS

Part of becoming a vampire is the realization of just how few decisions anyone gets to make. With the powers of mental domination and emotional manipulation, people and vampires can be made to do almost anything, and not even realize they are acting against their nature. The Fatalists firmly believe that all vampires are the playthings of the elders and Antediluvians. The course of your life has been set, will is futile, freedom is an illusion.

To a Lasombra, this concept is frightening, and something only a weakling would believe. But the Fatalists have taken the reasoning a little further. It the theory is true, every action we take can be only one of two things: the design of the elders or an act of rebellion against their control. You are either doing their will or fighting against them. While you can never know which, this means you are either fighting authority or simply not responsible for your own actions. As such, the Fatalists tend to act on instinct, and seek any lore they can find about the ancient ones that they might find answers or be free of them.

THE DOOMED

Not every immortal is good at thinking in the long term. The Doomed are a small but noisy faction considered amateur at best and a liability at worst by the rest of us. They live for the moment and take what they want as often as they like. They think it is surely the right of the masters and mistresses of the night that they can do as they please. The Doomed act purely on instinct, reveling in their vampiric nature to an extent even the Sabbat considers ill-advised, making groups like the Fatalists look like they have foresight. Mortal authorities often catch up with these — usually inexperienced — vampires, often on a tip from their elders. In the meantime, no form of excess or debauchery is too much for the Doomed. They drink today for tomorrow they may die, likely at the hands of a very irritated sire.

LASOMBRA AND THEIR ANTITRIBU

The Lasombra hold a loathing for their *antitribu* that borders on obsession. For a start, it is a betrayal of the highest order. We killed our own Antediluvian; we earned a place free of the Camarilla. To side with the pawns of the ancients is pure treachery. It is also a sign of weakness to cast aside the freedom of the Sabbat to take on the chains of the Camarilla. If there is one thing the Lasombra cannot abide it is weakness, especially among our own. Finally, it diminishes the Lasombra as a whole. We like to show ourselves as the united paragons of the Sabbat: individual, but all dedicated to the cause. The *antitribu* spoil that useful and potent reputation.

The Lasombra use our considerable resources and those of the Sabbat to hunt down and slaughter any *antitribu* they hear about. Every night such a creature lives in a slap in the face. However, there is sometimes a grudging respect for some cases, although we would never admit it. Giangaleazzo, the Prince of Milan, is a prime example. He changed sides and took his city with him, making him the Lasombra's primary target. While our failure to destroy him sticks in their craw, we deeply respect this vampire who basically announced to all of the Lasombra that he would take us all on, and did. Nevertheless, when we finally do take him down, we will spare no quarter.

However, even the *antitribu* have proved themselves Lasombra and that carries weight, no matter what side of the fence you are on. In fact, surviving as an *antitribu* is often proof of a Lasombra's skill, and while they may still be an enemy, you have to respect that. The Camarilla has sought to use this on occasion, insisting the Lasombra *antitribu* negotiate with the Sabbat. Unfortunately, when this happens it is not uncommon for the Lasombra from both sides to screw both the Sabbat and Camarilla together, if the *antitribu* isn't killed out of hand the moment he shows his face.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Acquisitions Expert

Power no longer rests in the hands of the nobility. The new kings and queens of the world are the corporations. You didn't want to start one yourself though, so you found a way to take one. The right word in the right ear, a few rumors to kill the stock prices, and a company was yours for a very cheap price.

However, one company wasn't enough. You built an empire out of other people's legacies, and you never play fair. You have blackmailed board members and threatened their families, falsified reports, and spread lies as unsubstantiated rumor. Where once it was about the money, now it is about the power. Even more than that, you have become the first wave of assault in any new crusade. You target vampire-run companies and steal from the Ventrue, which makes the fight all the more dangerous and the victory so much the sweeter.

Assassin

You kill for money, or perhaps simply for sport. The Assamites are not the only masters of the blade, and with the power of shadow at your fingertips, the darkness belongs to you. You began your career by joining the military, but found yourself quickly shifted into a different department, one that suited you particular skillset very well.

When a vampire found you and recognized your skills, you got a promotion. You already know how to kill, but as a vampire, you have become a deadly shadow master. The ninja of old would be jealous of your abilities as you slip out of the darkness to cut down your target.

Critic

You may not produce anything yourself, but you can destroy those who do. You may have begun with noble intentions, hoping to separate the wheat from the chaff. But you also enjoyed seeing others hang on your opinions. When you became ruthless in your reviews, you gained a following who loved to hear your rip apart a new play, film, or painting. The more desperate artists might do for you to secure that all-important favorable review.

Now your name is better known than many of those you critique. Your word can make or break a new artist and even destroy more established careers. What you like is hot, and what you don't is not. This has put several Toreador under your control, but you love the power you hold over the kine as well. You do so enjoy playing with your food, after all.

Gang Leader

You work with what you've got. Life on the street is hard, but only for the weak. You want to be somebody; you need to join a crew. You want your crew to be the best, and you'd better prove it. You were not going to be anyone's foot soldier. Sure, plenty of gang bangers just want to be part of a crew so they can feel tough. But you wanted to run the crew, and you weren't going to run a crew that was second best.

When you took down the boss, he begged for mercy, but that time was over. You made the rest of the gang fight each other so only the best got to be a part of your new regime. When you get applicants you make them fight, and only the winner gets a place. Each of your crew is worth ten of the others. It wasn't long before you owned the streets. The other gangs can't touch you and the cops are frightened of you. Now the real work begins.

Ghost in the Deepweb

If knowledge is power, what might the darkest knowledge grant you? You are a master of computer technology, but more than just a mere hacker. You have no desire to prove yourself "leet" or break into Microsoft. You understand the internet has deep dark places where secrets can be found, and have dedicated yourself to rooting them out.

You spent your time digging into the deepweb, the systems you need more than Google to find. Hidden here are dark and terrible secrets, and groups that shelter here in the shadow. With these secrets, you can leverage all manner of favors. Just the threat of shining a light in this abyss of the net is usually enough.

Media Star

It began with a song or a TV appearance, but the celebrity status is where the power lies. You used to love the attention, and as your fame grew, you came to enjoy the power, too. People suddenly wanted to know your opinion on so many things, even though you'd never claimed to be an expert. Your fans not only wanted to hear you sing but also wanted to dress like you, think like you, be like you.

Your fans have become an army. They buy anything with your name on it: music, T-shirts, perfume, calendars, and even statuettes. More importantly, they have become your self-appointed guardian angels. Any slur about you in the media provokes a vicious response, often including death threats from them. While it is only internet bravado now, who knows what you might get them to do with a little effort?

Modern Pirate

It's not just about the killing or even the money. You also love the freedom of the sea. You used to think the life of a pirate was glamorous. Now you know better, but you still wouldn't change it for anything. You didn't like school, and had no plans to join some dead-end job or become a corporate drone, so you ran away to the sea. At first, you took a job with a merchant ship, but when Somali pirates attacked, you changed sides pretty quickly.

It has taken a while, but you've worked your way up to become their leader. They are hungry for money and blood, and it's an attitude you encourage. You have a small flotilla of boats, fast enough to catch the lumbering cargo ships. You simply board and take the whole ship to a secret port where you sell everything. Your reputation ensures only the foolish put up a fight.

Priest

The church always enticed you, but not really from a particular love of God. You liked to know secrets, and people were often happy to confess to a priest, no matter what the denomination. They also look to you for guidance, and that can be very useful. A wife who is thinking of leaving her wealthy husband, a teenager unsure how to react to the bullies in his school, a soldier worried about the offer of some "freelance work." People come to you when they are at a tipping point, and you can choose which way to push them.

It is a shame the church doesn't have the power it once had, but that can change. Whatever the directives from the pontiff, you can make sure you get the best of what is left. Your diocese in the city has a prestigious church with a varied, if smaller than you'd like, congregation. Among them are powerful people looking for advice, and looking to you to provide it.

Professional Boxer

You loved the first fight you had, even though it was only in the playground. When one of the other children wanted your lunch money, you beat him into the ground. You didn't win because you were stronger, but because you had the will to hurt him. When you got older, you realized there was money in that sort of dedication. You became a fighter as soon as you were old enough to get in the ring. Sure, you take a few hits, but nothing beats seeing your opponent smashed to the floor under your blows.

Your manager tried to cheat you once, but he won't try that again. The weasels and weaklings think money, reputation, or position is power, but you know different. Muscle is power, no matter who you are or what you are. Power belongs to the strongest, and the ones willing to use that strength.

Spin Doctor

Politics is a dirty game, but you wouldn't have it any other way. You never wanted to run for office, with all those speeches, charity lunches and shaking hands. You don't think you could smile that long every day, either. So you decided to back the right talent instead. Your advice is what got them where they are today, and they should be grateful. Just in case they aren't, you can remind them you know all their secrets.

The politician you support might be a good friend who trusts and values your advice, or a puppet you manipulate as you please. It makes no odds. While you can't always get them to do what you want, most of the time you run their office from behind the scenes. If they get voted out, there's always another eager young face who needs your experience and guidance.

Merits and Flaws

Court Favorite (1-5pt. Merit)

While the Courts of Blood are usually difficult to sway, you have become very good at shifting the balance. A mixture of experience and political empathy allow you to know just the right way to nudge the decision in your direction, or perhaps for that of your client. Any roll made that will affect the decision in a Court of Blood is granted a bonus or penalty (whichever is in your favor) in dice equal to the level you have of this Merit.

Eyes of Shadow (1-4pt. Merit)

There is something about your eyes that makes you look dark and dangerous. Making eye contact with you is like staring into the Abyss. It may not be obvious why, but anyone you talk to gets a chill when they meet your gaze. The difficulty for any Intimidation roll is reduced by the number of points in this Merit (to a minimum of 2).

Bigger Boys Came (2pt. Merit)

When someone uses their contacts to their advantage, you can try to use yours to overrule them. You might get an editor to quash a reporter's story, or get a gang boss to stop his thugs taking down a rival. To do this you must make a roll using Manipulation + Contacts (difficulty 8). If you can get more successes than the Contacts rating of your opponent, their contacts fail to come through for them.



Call of the Sea (2pt. Merit)

There is something about the sea that makes you feel at home. You are in tune with the tides and rhythm of the ocean. When on a boat in the ocean or on a river, you may add a die to all your dice pools except for Disciplines.

Controllable Night Sight (2pt. Merit)

Your night vision is extraordinarily good, even for a vampire. The deepest shadows are like looking into a well-lit room for you. However, in normal light or bright conditions, you have to switch back to less-sensitive vision, or the weakest light quickly blinds you. While your night sight is active, you suffer no penalties for the dark and can see perfectly well. Should you use it in well-lit conditions; you suffer a penalty inversely proportional to the usual penalties for darkness.

Secret Stash (2-5pt. Merit)

You have several resources, sleeper agents, or followers hidden away for a rainy day. For each level of this Merit you have one unassigned background point "sitting in storage" (2 gives you one point, 3 gives you two points, and so on). At any time, you may spend as many of them as you like to increase your level in Allies, Contacts, Herd, Influence, Mentor, Resources, or Retainers. Once spent, the points remain assigned permanently, but until then they cannot be affected by anything. This allows the vampire to create a new resource in an instant, without requiring the expenditure of experience points or awaiting a downtime. The vampire is not really gaining new levels, but revealing levels he has had all along.

Aura of Command (3pt. Merit)

Whether you are good at barking orders or simply have a commanding tone, people tend to do what you tell them to do. You are not so much a natural leader as a born commander. When using the Leadership skill to get others to obey you, the difficulty is reduced by two.

King or Queen of Shadow (4pt. Merit)

It is hard to hold onto your Humanity within the Sabbat, or even simply as a vampire. Your ability to empathize with the kine makes it more difficult. However, you have found a way to draw strength from that empathy. Any degeneration checks you make while on Path of Humanity reduce their difficulty by two.

Long-Term Planning (4pt. Merit)

You never leave anything to chance; every action is a carefully considered stratagem. Once per session you may declare an action you are about to take is actually "all part of your plan" and reduce its difficulty by two points. The Storyteller may veto the use of this ability on particular rolls. The player and Storyteller should keep a note of each of these occasions and decide how they are linking together into a grand scheme.

Instrument of God (5pt. Merit)

Your self-confidence comes not from a belief in your own abilities, but due to a direct manifesto from the Lord. You have a divine purpose and He works through you, even though your goals may seem anything but holy. Whether it is because of you powerful will or an actual connection to the divine, you gain three additional dice to resist the powers of True Faith when they are used against you.

Uncontrollable Night Sight (2pt. Flaw)

Your night vision is good, but you can't turn it off. While you can see easily into the deepest shadows, any light is almost blinding to you. You suffer penalties the brighter the area you are in is lit, inversely proportional to the standard penalties for darkness. Even just standing in a well-lit room is uncomfortable to you.

Insubordinate (3pt. Flaw)

You like to be in charge so much you have a hard time following anyone else's orders. When given a plan or told to do something, you tend to do the opposite on principle. Whenever you are ordered to do something, you must make a Willpower roll with a difficulty depending on the importance of the superior and the danger of the task (difficulty 7 is typical for someone directly above the vampire assigning them a moderately dangerous task). If you fail, you will do anything except what you've been told to do.

Unproven (3pt. Flaw)

Somehow, you have failed to prove yourself worthy of the name Lasombra. Maybe your sire did not test you well enough, or an opportunity to prove yourself has not come up. Whatever the reason, you are not truly considered part of the Clan. All social dealings with other Lasombra suffer a -3 dice penalty. You may also not be chosen to sit in judgment in the Courts of Blood.

Discipline Powers

Implanted Opinion (Dominate ••••• •)

Dominate usually focuses on giving the target specific orders. Using this power, a vampire can instill a feeling, opinion, or even a personality trait the victim will believe is their own. He might be told he loves modern art, hates his new neighbors, or that aliens are looking to abduct him. He can be given new political or religious beliefs, suddenly becoming a dedicated liberal or a born-again Christian (although in the latter case he don't gain real faith; he just decides to follow the tenets of a faith). He might even be given bigoted views, making him racist or sexist, or he may be cured of such opinions. Unlike Conditioning, the vampire has little connection to the target, and can use him as an agent to steer policies to her design without needing to explain her plans.

System: When attempting to implant a new belief, opinion, or following, the vampire makes a Charisma + Leadership roll at a difficulty equal to the target's current Willpower. The Storyteller may insist on a certain number of successes, depending on how contrary to the subject's original beliefs the new opinion is. Once instilled, the new belief is very hard to remove. If the subject remains for months in an environment conducive to their old opinion, he may be granted Willpower rolls for the old beliefs to reassert themselves.

Memory Block (Dominate ••••• •)

This variant of The Forgetful Mind (**V20**, pp. 153-154) allows the vampire to stop a dominated subject talking about or revealing specific information without forgetting it. When questioned about the memory or detail, the victim will evade the question without even noticing she is doing it. If pressed, she will discover he cannot say out loud or even write down the blocked information. This is very useful when a servant needs to possess classified data, but the vampire wants to be certain she cannot reveal it, even under torture.

System: As with The Forgetful Mind, the vampire makes a Wits + Subterfuge roll (difficulty equal to the target's current Willpower). If successful, the memory is locked for a duration dependent on the amount of successes. Another vampire can unlock it with Dominate by making a Wits + Empathy roll. The subject of this power may make a Willpower roll (at a difficulty equal to the original vampire's Dominate rating) if he tries to answer a specific question about the blocked memory.

Successes	Result
1	One hour
2	One day
3	One week
4	One month
5	One year

Shadow Perspective (Obtenebration ••••• •)

Using this ability, the vampire can potentially observe anything done near the shadows. She shifts her perception from the shadows she is standing in to a nearby shadow. She can choose to shift any or all of her senses across to that area as if she were actually standing there. Should she move all her senses, it will be as if she is standing in the other shadow, but she would not even feel an attack made on her own body.

System: The vampire must be in line of sight to the shadow she wishes to shift her perception to, and spend a blood point for each sense she moves. She may only shift her sensory perceptions (touch, taste, sight, smell, or hearing), and cannot affect the area with any other powers she cannot already use from where she is currently standing. However, by shifting sight she can change her options for any line-of-sight effects. She must stand in shadow for the power to work, and there must be shadow at the area she shifts her perceptions to.

She may attempt to shift perception to an area she cannot see but knows very well. If she does so, she must also make a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 9) to succeed. If there are no shadows at the area in question, the power will not work, but the blood points are still spent.

Shadow Lair (Obtenebration ••••• ••)

This power is an advancement on Shadowstep (**V20**, p. 191), effectively allowing the vampire to pause mid-step. She enters a dark realm outside existence, where she is unaware of what might be occurring in the real world. Just as nothing can see the vampire here, she also can't see anything outside the void.

System: Using Shadowstep the vampire enters the shadows, but may spend a blood point to delay her exit for up to an hour. At the end of that hour, she may spend another blood point to remain for another hour or return to the real world. If she returns to the world in a different shadow, she must make a Dexterity + Occult roll as with Shadowstep, but there is no roll if she returns to where she entered. The vampire can take others into shadow in the same way as Shadowstep, as long as they are willing. They do not need spend any blood points, but if they lose contact with the vampire, they are lost in shadow forever.

Shadow Watchtower (Obtenebration ••••• •••)

Using this ability, the vampire can merge so fully with the shadow she becomes part of it. While standing in shadow she seems to dissolve, vanishing into the darkness. While merged in the shadow she is almost indestructible, and can see everything going on around her as if she were standing there.

System: This power is an advanced version of Tenebrous Form (**V20**, pp. 190-191). Like Tenebrous Form, it takes three blood points to assume the form of the Shadow Watchtower, and there must be a nearby shadow to merge with. The vampire becomes part of the area, but can shift to another shadowed area if she desires. If she has no shadow to merge with or move to, she returns to her physical form. When merged, she becomes a true shadow and cannot be detected as anything but an indistinct shadow in the corner. She also takes no damage, normal or aggravated, from anything except sunlight (which is still aggravated damage).

Immovable Object (Potence ••••• ••)

The vampire's strength is such that her force of will alone is enough to make her an immovable object, whether or not she has something to hold on to. She can lock herself in place, clinging onto where she stands with the power of her mind. Using this ability, she can resist any attempt to shift her by telekinesis or physical strength. She digs in, holding herself in place with her will alone.

System: If the vampire spends a Willpower point and is standing on a solid surface, she cannot be moved. She might be hit by a truck or a train and not budge an inch (although she will take some hefty damage!). The only way to move her is to destroy the surface she is standing on. This will work if she is on a bridge, but blasting the ground will just leave her standing at the bottom of a crater.

Combination Disciplines

Armor of the Abyss (Obtenebration •••, Fortitude •••)

When the vampire calls on this power, strands of darkness weave around him and solidify into a dark suit of armor. The vampire is completely encased in shadow, but able to see out of it as if it wasn't there.

System: This power is invoked in much the same way as Arms of the Abyss (**V20**, p. 189), by spending a blood

point and making a Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty 7). If successful, the strands of shadow encase the vampire instead of reaching out. This cloak of shadow fully protects the vampire but does not encumber him in any way, conferring no penalty. It grants him an armor rating equal to his Fortitude and lasts for 3 rounds (or ten minutes) for each success gained on the activation roll.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Empower Minion (Dominate •••, Potence •••)

Using this ability, the vampire can pass his immortal strength on to those who serve him. No matter how far apart they are, the bond of command allows the vampire to channel his Potence to his servant to assist her in doing his will.

System: Any allies currently under the control of the vampire's Dominate power may act with a portion of the vampire's Potence. The vampire must spend one blood point per point of Potence for each thrall he wishes to empower, up to a maximum of three dots of Potence per thrall (the vampire can spend blood over successive turns, as long as the Dominate power is in effect). If the target already has Potence, the controller's Potence level replaces it instead of adding to it.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Fear of the Dark (Presence ••, Obtenebration ••)

With a mixture of Dominate and Shadowplay, the vampire using this ability can inspire a terrible fear of the shadows in his target. Those caught in this effect find their paranoia runs rampant, as fearful shapes seems to form in the shadows around them in the corner of their eye.

System: The vampire invokes Shadow Play (**V20**, pp. 188-189), and then makes a Manipulation + Intimidation roll, (difficulty 6). For each success, the vampire may force one person (mortal or supernatural) in the immediate vicinity to see frightening shapes within the shadows around them. If the target fails a Courage check at difficulty 8, she runs in terror.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Mind Strike (Dominate ••, Potence ••)

By focusing his mental power, the vampire can channel their Potence into a powerful mental attack that does real damage to the victim. He simply meets his victim's gaze and delivers a strike into her very mind.

System: This power costs a Willpower point to use and requires eye contact (**V20,** p. 152). The vampire makes a Manipulation + Intimidation roll (without any bonus from Shadow Play – see **V20**, pp. 188-189) against a difficulty of the victim's current Willpower. The amount of successes are added to the vampire's Potence rating and become bashing damage to the victim. Normal soak rolls apply. As with many Dominate powers, targets of a lower Generation are immune to its use.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Shadow Mark (Dominate •••, Obtenebration ••••• •)

Shadowstep (**V20**, p. 191) only allows the vampire to move between shadows. However, with this power he can mark those he Dominates and use any shadow they are standing in instead.

System: This power allows the vampire attempting Shadowstep to step to one of his Dominated minions instead of another shadowy area. The minion must be standing in shadow himself or the power will not work, but otherwise distance is no object: the vampire simply appears out of the nearby shadow. There is no additional roll or expenditure when making such a Shadowstep, although the difficulty is one level higher.

This power costs 27 experience points to learn.

Shroud of Absence (Obfuscate •••, Obtenebration •••)

This variant of Shroud of Night (**V20**, p. 189) creates not just an area of shadow, but also an area no one looks at. It is effectively a cloak of invisibility, an area any bystander will simply ignore. To look inside the cloak of deception requires a powerful act of will.

System: The use of this power requires a blood point and a roll of Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 7). If successful, an area about ten feet/3 meters across within the vampire's line of sight is cloaked. The cloaked area can be moved at a normal walking pace and lasts for an hour for each success. Anyone wishing to look into the cloaked area must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) and score more successes than the vampire did to create the area. If she succeeds, she can see through the cloak as if it wasn't there.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Abyss Mysticism

As the Lasombra delved deeper into the secrets of Obtenebration, they discovered it drew power from a dark realm of shadows called the Abyss. Mystics within the

Clan began to study this secret realm to unlock its secrets, and through this developed the art of Abyss Mysticism. The Lasombra keep this power secret from the rest of the Sabbat, as the creatures they summon and control with it are as dark as they are mysterious.

Abyss Mysticism is difficult and time consuming to learn, and comes at a cost. Its rituals often have side effects that create Flaws the character cannot remove that provide no bonus points. To learn the power, a vampire must have at least one dot in both Obtenebration and Occult. She may not learn any Abyss rituals higher than the lowest of her Obtenebration or Occult ratings, and each ritual costs a number of experience points equal to three times the ritual's level.

Abyss rituals are cast using a Wits + Occult roll. The difficulty is 3 + the level of the ritual being cast. Only one success is required to cast the ritual, but the Storyteller is encouraged to make the penalties for failure especially horrifying.

(More detail on Abyss Mysticism can be found in **Rites of Blood**, pp. 37-39.)

Light within Shadow (Level One Ritual)

One of the first powers a savant of darkness learns is the ability to see in darkness. Using this ritual, the mystic summons up a ball of shadow and stares into it for so long that her eyes permanently attune themselves to the dark.

System: Upon successful casting this ritual, the Lasombra summons into her hand a sphere of pure shadow. As she stares into the sphere, she makes a Perception + Occult (difficulty 8) roll. If the roll is successful, she permanently gains the Controllable Night Sight Merit (see p. 122). If they fail, they may try again the next night, but if they botch they permanently gain the Uncontrollable Night Sight Flaw (p. 123).

Side Effect: Whenever the vampire uses her new vision, her eyes become disturbing inky black pits of shadow. If she has no control over her sight, her eyes will always look like this.

Comforting Darkness (Level Two Ritual)

The Abyss can heal as well as harm. Using this power, the vampire draws darkness into herself and uses it to heal her wounds. However, there is a price to be paid, and the Abyss will claim it in blood.

System: Once this ritual is cast, the vampire spends a Willpower point and makes a Stamina + Occult roll (difficulty 8). If she botches, the darkness burns them, and she takes an aggravated level of damage. If she succeeds, she may then spend one blood point for each success, regardless of Generational limits. For each blood point she spends in this way, she may heal two levels of bashing or lethal damage.

Unfortunately there is an additional cost before the darkness inside is sated. All blood the vampire consumes feeds the dark inside, not even entering her own system. This goes on until twice as much blood has been consumed as was originally spent. Until this cost is paid, the Cainite cannot use this ritual again. It can also only be used once each night.

Side Effect: The taint of darkness never leaves the caster's blood, turning it a dark ruddy hue, almost black, forever.

Claiming the Dark (Level Three Ritual)

This ritual allows the caster to merge with the shadows, drawing the power of the Abyss into herself. However, the cost for this power, as always, is blood.

System: When casting this ritual, the vampire cuts herself open with a knife and draws the surrounding shadows into her own body. The process takes an hour and is very painful, subtracting two dice from any rolls the Cainite makes for the duration. After this torment, the vampire makes a Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty 8) to hold the power of the shadows inside her. If she fails, the shadows escape her, and if she botches, the shadows take a blood point for each 1 rolled as well.

If she succeeds, her skin turns dark and her eyes become black. All her physical attributes rise to the level of their Obtenebration if they are lower. Obtenebration powers up to level three are used at -2 difficulty, and the blood point cost for Arms of the Abyss is halved. This augmentation lasts for as long as the vampire desires.

Unfortunately, upon rising from slumber each night, the vampire in this condition must pay an additional blood point cost equal to their Obtenebration rating. Should she fail to do so, she returns to normal. In her augmented form, she is also more vulnerable to sunlight and takes triple damage from it. Her Appearance also drops by one point while empowered.

Side Effect: Should the vampire spend more consecutive days in this form than her highest Virtue, her skin begins to darken permanently, in a similar way to elder Assamites.

Vision of Shadow (Level Four Ritual)

There are shadows everywhere, and with this power, the mystic can use them to observe her enemies without their

notice. Using the Obtenebration power, the Cainite calls up a ball of shadows and uses it like a crystal ball to see what her enemies are up to several miles away.

System: The vampire makes a casting roll to call up a ball of shadow that she will use to scry on a target. If the caster fails the roll nothing happens, but a botch leaves her confused and disoriented, suffering –2 to all dice pools for the rest of the scene.

The Cainite then concentrates on a person or location she has previously seen. As she does so, the shadow ball will become clear to reveal a vision of that place or person at that very moment, complete with sound. There must be shadows near the target, and the vision will come from the most optimal position in these shadows. The vision can be anywhere within a radius of the caster's Obtenebration + Occult in miles, or 1.5 times that number in kilometers.

The vision lasts for a scene, or until the target leaves the area. If the target has the ability to sense such scrying (such as with Auspex or a similar power), he can attempt a Perception + Occult roll (difficulty 8) to know he is being watched.

Side Effect: Looking too far into the distance makes the Cainite less aware of what is happening right under her nose. For the rest of the night after successfully casting this ritual, she suffers -2 to all Alertness checks to notice nearby events.

Commune with the Abyss (Level Five Ritual)

The Abyss listens. It is a place of secrets, and they say it hears every whisper ever spoken. With this power, the mystic infuses herself with the shadow so completely that their minds become one. Once joined, the petitioner can ask one question of the darkness, which for once cannot hide the answer.

System: By casting this ritual, the vampire draws into herself the surrounding shadows and darkness. Once they are gone, the vampire falls into a deep torpor-like sleep from which she cannot awaken. The character may then ask one question, which may be as mundane or as complicated as she desires. The Storyteller gives this question a rating based on how obscure or difficult it might be to answer, from one to ten. The rating may even be higher than ten if the question is truly momentous.

Each night the vampire remains in their torpid slumber, she rolls Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 9) and keeps a note of her cumulative successes. Once the amount of successes equals the rating of the question, the vampire awakes suddenly knowing the answer. This answer will be true and complete, and not hidden in a riddle. The Abyss only hides the truth; it does not confuse it or guard it jealously.

Should the vampire fail to gain any successes on one of the rolls, the interval between making rolls moves from days to weeks. Continued failure moves this interval from weeks to months, to years, millennia, and even further. It is said that ancient mystics have lain for centuries contemplating the ultimate questions of the universe. There may even be Gehenna cults that await their awakening.

Side Effect: The touch of shadow never leaves those who have communed with it in this way. After each use of this ritual, the vampire reduces all Intimidation roll difficulties by one, but increases her Social roll difficulties with non-Abyss Mystics by one as well. These modifiers are cumulative and gradually divorce the vampire from those not comfortable with the shadow. They also permanently gain the Nightmares Flaw (**V20**, p. 485).


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MaLkAvian

"The important thing is to pull yourself up by your own hair to turn yourself inside out and see the whole world with fresh eyes."

— Peter Weiss, The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis De Sade

Final Answer

Gergei thought the chains were a bit much. He was in a walk-in freezer behind a two-foot-thick steel door. The freezer sat in the basement of a one-hundred-year-old restaurant with a dozen ghouls eating upstairs. The revelation of his status within the Sabbat brought several Kindred to the building hoping to get a glimpse of an execution. Gergei's betrayal needed to be made public to show what happens to those in a Camarilla city who think they can destabilize the status quo. Especially with a Toreador Prince in charge, such theatrics were common.

The door to the freezer opened. The Kindred stepping into the freezer turned up the collar of his trenchcoat and let out a slow, dramatic exhale. A sadness crept across his face, as if he expected to be able to see his breath. The Kindred rubbed his bald head as he shut the door.

"Helmut," said Gergei. "The accused faces his accuser."

"Is that the face I'm wearing today?" said Helmut as he shoved his hands into his pockets. "You going to come at me? Maybe you can convince them I started it."

Gergei held up his chained arms.

"Kinky," said Helmut. "You're probably wondering why I called you all here today."

Gergei almost corrected Helmut, but he knew better. There was one thing that Gergei needed to know before he met his Final Death. With a tired sigh, Gergei asked the question that hung in the air.

"How did you know?"

Helmet pulled out one of his hands and ran the palm against his hairless scalp. "Blood angels. They've been whispering in my ear ever since you came into town. They knew you were a sinner and that you were quoting Scripture like all good devils do. The angels and I communed three nights ago, which means I got to second base, though it was all over-the-clothes stuff. But while we made out, they switched my tongue with their divine ones. The hundred eyes on my tongue could smell how you felt. So when I talked to the Prince, he had to believe me because I spoke the sexy word of God."



Sergei stared blankly as Helmut took a step closer. Both of the Malkavian's hands were out now, repeatedly stroking a non-existent beard.

"At least, that's what I told her," said Helmut. "Now that we're alone, I can reveal that I'm a tenth level Sabbat guy. You didn't know there were levels, did you? You are eminently disposable cog in our master plans. I threw you to the hounds so that I could concentrate on obtaining mastery of Obliberation. Know that you died well, for your death is the signal for our brothers in blood to storm the city walls and slake their thirst on Camarilla swine."

Helmut stalked closer. His hands clenched into fists that pounded the walls as he stepped closer.

"But that can't be right. It was all observation. Noticing how you disappeared the second Tuesday of every month. How you drank Kindred blood without fear of a bond. The things you said when you thought my blood wouldn't hear them. The way your face scrunched whenever somebody mentioned the Justicar. Even the dead have tics, my friend, and they all added up to you being the spy."

Helmut's face was inches away. The last thing he ever said to Sergei escaped in a trembling whisper that could only they could hear.

"Why would I bother trying to explain something to someone who could never, ever understand?"

The True Histories of Clan Malkavian

Let's start with something simple, then: everything I say here is a lie.

Is everything after that statement a lie? Does that mean everything here is the truth? Did I say that to throw you off? What truths might be hidden to those who read on? What if I say the sky is blue? How can that be a lie? What authority do I have? Why would I go on like this if it's all made up? Am I secretly a member of another Clan? Am I Caine? Are you Caine? Are we Caine?

If you feel frustrated, enlightened, upset, anxious, and curious about that last paragraph, you've just gotten a sliver of a second of the Malkavian experience. Simple does not mean easy. Easy does not mean good. Good does not mean positive. The meaning of things and the makeup of things are entirely different. Truth and perception matter. Perception is easy. Truth is hard.

Where does the name Malkav come from? Every other Clan has a name that derives from an actual word or myth, except for us. And the Tremere, but making words up is part of their spooky powers, like English majors. Saying it aloud makes it seem Slavic in origin, though that doesn't fit with the cradle of civilization Judeo-Christian legend of Caine that we know and love. If we split the word, we get "Mal," meaning bad, and "kav," which sounds a lot like "cave." Perhaps our founding father set up shop in a hole in the ground far away from all those other Kindred happy to hang out in the flesh pits of Gomorra for a free lunch. A different split, "Ma" and "lkav," turns the name into a homophone of "Ma, ilk of," flipping some gender and sending everyone for a connection to the Dark Mother.

So when we say Malkav was our founder, what does that mean? Was there really an old vampire thousands of years ago who called himself that? Was Malkav a vampire broken by the experience that decided sticking around as a vampire was a better idea than greeting the sun with open arms? Who would want to be Embraced by someone like this? Especially in numbers that turned us into a great Clan rather than a footnote or a bloodline? Why didn't all the other big, strong Antediluvians gang up and stomp out the weak, defenseless one?

You can't crush someone you can't find. While the others of his Generation grabbed for the power they never had in life, Malkav quietly slipped into the night. The other Kindred got bored. They fought wars. They slipped into torpor. Malkav did no such thing. Malkav never slept. Malkav never forgot. Malkav remembers everything. He wanders from city to city, looking to pass truth onto those who are willing. He gives it to those of his blood first. We pass it onto the rest of you. Is it out of generosity? Is it out of spite? Why can't it be both?

Or.

Perhaps Malkav wasn't a vampire in the sense that Kindred today can understand. That Generation didn't have to follow rules. It's boring to think that those vampires twice removed from Caine have to sit up straight and do things like we do them now. By recognizing the truth of his power, he became something more. What others call madness is a direct connection to our founder. He lives inside of each one of his children and this connection burns and blisters us because of the power in his blood. That's why nobody knows where he's buried. He's buried inside our hearts and minds.

Or.

Malkav was Caine's favorite childe of his Generation. He gave Malkav the one gift none of the others were worthy of. Malkav received a direct line to divinity. But, like so many gifts of Caine, it was twisted in a way that neither Caine nor Malkav expected. Malkav's blood wasn't strong enough to stand the power being connected to divinity gave him. It broke him and fouled his blood to pass on that broken connection to the divine. The blood still holds the connection to something greater, and Malkav's children reconnect from time to time, delivering the truth to those who may not want it, but need it regardless.

Respectable Kindred scholars believe two of these theories of Malkav. They have been researched, debated, credited, discredited, killed for, written about, and published by vanity presses. The other I made up ten minutes ago while I was having a cigarette in an alleyway.

Which is the truth and which is the lie?

Remember the first thing I said.

Ask five Malkavians for the history of the Clan and you'll get 17.5 different answers. History is a matter of perception. Written by the winners. Doomed to repeat. We don't have the same hang-ups about who begat who begat who. Some of us dig deep into the history as a way to legitimize us to the Clans who do care about history. Others like to make up the most outrageous story possible to see how quickly it gets whispered and repeated. A few have convinced people the only way to see the truth of the universe is through the taste of our blood.

Rome (But Not the TV Show)

The Kindred's bloody fingerprints are all throughout human history if you know where to look. Rather than make our own, we're the one that smear those fingerprints around. We don't have fallen cities or famous people to hold up as evidence of our influence. Instead, I point to the tricksters. Many ancient cultures revere figures unafraid to speak their minds, to think instead of fight and who didn't see things from a conventional point of view. Loki. Coyote. Crow. Iktomi. Were they all Malkavians? Only Beckett knows for sure, and he's a lying bastard. But many of our kind certainly influenced history as the viziers, prophets, and seers whispering into those great men's ears.

If you want to see us at the local library, go check out some books on Roman history. The other Clans rush in

THE FABLE OF THE THIRTEEN GIFTS

Once upon a time, Caine had a birthday party. There were hats and cake and blood feasts. Each of the Clan founders brought a gift to curry favor with our dark Father of Darkness. They each presented their gift in alphabetical order, because that's the proper way to present birthday gifts.

Assam swore that he would strike down whoever the lord of blood wanted killed. Caine asked, "So why aren't they dead yet?"

Brujah brought his mightiest warrior to serve as a soldier in Caine's entourage. Caine asked, "If he was truly mighty, why were you able to defeat him?"

The Childe of Shadow brought a book filled with the secrets of the dead. Caine asked, "If these secrets were useful why didn't they use them when they were alive?"

Gangrel brought a dire wolf, fed on his blood to a fearsome size. Caine asked, "Aren't you supposed to be the biggest, scariest animal in the wild?"

Lasombra brought a relic that revealed its beauty in the moonlight. Caine asked, "How can you expect to be seen if you never come into the light?"

Nosferatu brought a large diamond pulled from the walls of his warren. Caine asked, "Why did you struggle so much to bring me something I already have in great supply?"

Ravnos brought him a coin that turned to stone and back again. Caine asked, "Why should I value that which deceives me?"

Set brought beautiful slaves for use as his father saw fit. Caine asked, "Why should a dead man value the pleasures of the flesh?"

The Child of Light brought prophecies from his meditations. Caine asked, "What value is a prophet that sees not his own doom?"

Toreador brought a bronze sculpture of Caine from her finest artist. Caine asked, "Why should I treasure my own image over all others?"

Tzimisce offered to sculpt Caine into a more fitting monster. Caine asked, "What could you do to me that was worse than being personally cursed by God?"

Ventrue brought a crown for Caine to wear as King. Caine asked, "Is it not already clear who bends their knees to me?"

Finally, Malkav was up, because he was totally late to the party. He walked up to the head of the table, leaned in close, and whispered something. The other founders stared with sharp eyes while Caine laughed. Once our father stopped, Malkav asked his own question of all his brothers and sisters.

"Caine slew his brother, endures the curse of God, and slays men like others kill insects. What terrible thing must I have said to cause him joy?"



to claim a hand in the rise of Western Civilization™. We were there from the beginning. You think the Ventrue came up with some crazy origin story about twins raised by wolves? Rome was our Carthage. Our lovely city wasn't destroyed; it was sanitized. We made blood flowing in the streets fashionable. We showed that we could wield power in one hand and madness in the other. Every Malkavian has a great story about where they were while Nero played his fiddle. Even the neonates.

Let It All Burn

The closest we ever came to losing it all was during the Long Night. It was a time when every vampire got sick of every other vampire's shit. We fueled the revolt against the Princes of the night, but even the rebels didn't want us hanging around once they made their point. Some Kindred would curl up into a ball and go hide in the sewers feeling so unloved. Malkavians learn very early on that if someone gets upset with something that's said, that means it's true. The outrageous things we say often draw out secrets better left hidden. Secrets we use to exert influence.

The Convention of Thorns, like so many other treaties, was about the winners punishing the losers for, you know, losing. There was a movement to geld our Clan with some magical leash. The Malkavian prophet Vasantasena walked into the chambers of the Camarilla and made something clear: if the Malkavians were punished as a whole, they would break their jaws biting the hands that fed them. Blood would be returned on blood one thousand fold. She took a chunk of the Clan over to the Sabbat as a precaution against an extinction level event, but the Camarilla elders blinked.

The lesson here is often lost on those studying Kindred history. There is joy in playing up to what the other Clans expect of us. However, when lucidity hits, and a Malkavian addresses someone calmly by name to tell you something's going to go down, they better goddamn listen. Not doing so makes them look crazier than we do. And that's saying something.

Though Vasantasena took a large chunk of the Clan to the Sabbat, the majority of Malkavians stuck it out in the Camarilla. We already saw the great beast dying and calcifying. The Sabbat lies to itself more than the Camarilla. They sought truth and instead bought into an illusion of control no different from the one the Camarilla believes. At least the Camarilla subtly tries to convince vampire of

THE BLIND BATS AND THE ELEPHANT

Once upon a Time, there were seven blind bats. Or 13... I forget. Anyway, they were a bit hungry for fresh blood, because they were Vampire Blind Bats, so they looked around for something to bite. Except they couldn't look around, as they were blind, which you should have realized already.

But their unerringly keen senses of smell led them to a plump, juicy, blood-filled elephant — that in this story stands for all of reality. Got it?

The Gangrel bat bumped into the tail and said, Aha! This elephant is really a twitching animal! That is what I shall become!

The Brujah broke his fangs trying to bite the hoof and said, Aha! The elephant is like a hard, stony, insensate pestle that crushes all beneath it with pitiless abandon! That is what I shall become!

The Nosferatu flew into the elephant's butt and said, Aha! The elephant is really a wrinkled, stinky, puckered, desiccated mass that lives in a dank cave! That is what I shall become!

The Tremere bit the head and said, Aha! The elephant is really a puny little brain struggling to control a vast and powerful body! That is what I shall become!

The Ventrue felt the legs, and said Aha! The elephant is really a powerful, upstanding pillar that can bear all weight with strength, but with very little suppleness or resilience! That is what I shall become!

The Toreador felt the trunk and mouth and said, Aha! The elephant is really a great, firm shaft or a warm, moist hole! That is what I shall become!

And the Malkavian bat, blinder than all the rest, swooped down and managed to miss the entire elephant. Aha, said the benighted Malkavian, as it flapped past. The others are making a huge fuss over an elephant that is really a big lot of nothing! Well, that is what I shall become!

And so, I say unto you, flap on!

its rightness. The Sabbat grandstands at every opportunity. The Malkavians who were willing to shout louder over everyone proclaiming their own greatness became the *antitribu* of the Sabbat. We're better off without them.

The Name Game

Modern history, at least, has a fun game to play. Many Clans love to name-drop who they controlled, Embraced, or influenced. But that's like giving credit to a pet for helping to get a job or praising a wallet for saving money. Those long nights at Elysium need to be filled with something, so why not make some outrageous claims? I really, really like the 24-hour news cycle for inspiration. They have to fill up the airtime somehow, and some of the things they say are way better fodder for pranks than anything I could come up with on my own. Nobody said we couldn't steal from other sources.

Our Clan stands in the modern nights in an interesting position. We serve the same purpose in the two major vampire organizations. Everyone treads carefully around us, as it should be. There's a fear that we leak information to our brothers and sisters in the Sabbat, either intentionally or in our dreams. Sometimes we will take up with our awful cousins, but that's usually only when the rest of the Kindred in the city are doing something even we think is insane.

There are cities where we have held positions beyond the necessary Primogen or Priscus. Milwaukee, for example, has a fine history of Malkavian Princes. Malkavian Sheriffs have a nasty habit of picking out truths that even those in power want to stay buried. Harpies love to whisper outrageous rumors that certainly can't be true, but make anyone verifying the tale look foolish in the process. Keepers of Elysium often enact strange rules and regulations in exchange for Kindred taking advantage of the promised safety. I've heard of a Keeper that insists if a Kindred wishes to speak to the Prince, she must break one of the vampire's bones for the privilege and must not heal it until after the meeting is complete. The more time requested, the bigger the bone.

We still understand the importance of perception even if history doesn't matter to most of us. Clans may have their own names and identities, but we had a hand in shaping them. You don't think those sobriquets sprung from Zeus' head fully sprung, do you? We quietly gave them as knives for the Clans to use on each other. The symbols too. We understand the power in symbols because of how they convey meaning. They are the purest expression of an idea. That's why we are often portrayed as babbling fools. We're not babbling. We're demonstrating the weakness of words as a way to communicate the truth.

21st Century Nuts

These nights, Malkavians walk the streets listening to the soundtracks in their own head. Cities sprawl out like mystery novels ready to be solved. Every Prince's court is a puzzle box waiting to be opened, even if that means smashing it against the ground to get to the candy within. We are the chaos at the heart of every town, shaking with the beat of a jackhammer and ready to break hearts and put dewy-eyed Kindred back on the bus to small towns if they can't cut it.

Why They Keep Us Around

We know the Truth. The truth set us free, from behavioral constraints to societal instructions. This unusual insight of the world around us becomes the main reason we can do what we do. We get away with it because, in the middle of all the sound and fury, we can crack the case. We can whisper a secret into a Prince's ear known by nobody else born after the birth of Christ. We can look into a garbage dump and find the one suitcase full of body parts in five minutes. We know why the whole city of Sao Paulo is sick, and the terrible price necessary for it to heal. Chaos is a pattern to us. You just have to step backwards far enough to see the edges.

Where does this insight come from? Once upon a time, those in power came to see the oracles that they feared and revered. The oracles spoke the truth and they were hated for their certainty and their otherness. Our condition continues this tradition. Malkav's blood connected him to something greater, and that connection exists in all of his childer. That's the real curse we bear. Madness became a way for the other Clans to tear us down because we say the things nobody wants to hear. When our truths work for those in power, the others hail us as prophets. When they foresee doom, we are cast out as gibbering fools.

There must be a rational explanation for it, in so far that a rational explanation about vampires exists. The vampire body defies everything known about physiology. Kindred are able to heal wounds and throw cars with just their blood. Malkavian meat brains are a strange offshoot of that idea. I'm not talking about that "humans only use 10% of their brain" bullshit either. Plenty of visionaries were called cranks, kooks, and madmen because those with shorter vision and smaller intellect couldn't understand what was truly being said.

Perhaps our Clan has been unshackled from human concerns of biology, society, and morality. All of the politics, power struggles, and intrigue are distractions cooked up to pass the time of an otherwise boring immortality. They are grasps by creatures that were once human trying to fix what they thought was broken about their old life. The Malkavian brain sees the Primogen as the awful people at the high school reunion who still fit into their letterman jackets. We don't care about these games, which is why seeing through them comes so easily. We have an eternity to think ahead of us, and we know it.

The Camarilla hangs onto us for a lot of reasons. It's better to have us pissing out of the tent. We make a great buffer between the cranky Clans and the stuffy Clans. We love having such delicious rules to break and pompous Kindred wearing big juicy targets. The Masquerade is an excellent example of examining perception. The Camarilla's strength is propagating one of the biggest lies in history. We like not being hunted in the streets, because that takes time away from more fun things. It's like sleeping above a laboratory. Walk downstairs and you're already working.

The members of the Sabbat will tell you that their Malkavians are meaner, nastier, and fat-free. Do you think we really care about Evil Goatee versions of ourselves? They may be right, or they may be overlooking that those

Malkavians have a different set of rules to break, so they're working under different conditions. They have to push themselves hard to stay out in front of what the rest of the Sect does for fun on a Saturday night. It almost makes you feel bad for them. But then one of them shows off a haven that contains a single piece of furniture from every victim they've killed, and it's clear they've lost their way.

Does that mean we're independent, like the Assassins, Travelers, Snakes, and Skullfuckers? We appreciate the independents are bold enough to take a stand against the two-party system. It's been hundreds of years since Kindred politics got all shook up, and none of them has given up. On the other hand, they ain't gonna get anywhere without cutting deals with Sabbot and Camarillo running the show. It's one of the longest comedy duos running, and we can't even tell anybody about it. Talk about an ultimate joke.

A lot of us threw in with the Anarchs because they know how to party. They also give us an excuse to go big, loud, and wild with our pranks. They are cute in a way, because they mimic much of what Malkavians go through during their development. A rage-filled youth smashing the establishment. Moments of clarity that fuel greater plans. Burnouts looking for a new cause to believe in. We just wish they'd get on with growing up. We're amazed that a tantrum can last for hundreds of years. But there's a lot to learn from the chaos they bring.

Last, but certainly not least, we have the shadowy, mysterious Inconnu, a Sect of vampires known for their shadowy mysteriousness. Is it a collection of Antediluvians trying to seek out the Clan founders to kiss/kill them? Is it a bridge club for Methuselahs who like smashing together younger vampires like Matchbox cars? Was it the first prank cooked up by Malkav who laughs every time a vampire is convinced to believe in the League of Santa Claus and Easter Bunny Vampire Superfriends? I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you. I mean, again.

The Meek Shall Inherit

Most of the other Clans are defined by their strengths. The Venture have storied bloodlines and positions of power. The Tremere have Thaumaturgy and byzantine secrecy. The Toreador are snappy dressers. Even the Nosferatu are known for their mastery of secrets. The Malkavians, more than any other Clan, are defined by their weakness. Malkavian madness is pitiable to some, terrifying to others. Yet, like so many other parts of the Malkavian makeup, madness as a weakness is a matter of perception. We're perfectly fine letting the others thinking they are weak. That is, in fact, our greatest strength.

Perceiving our unifying trait as an affliction makes it easy for Kindred to underestimate Malkavians. Let them underestimate us. We're going to be talked down to, pitied, and patted on the head. Then they wonder how we knew about their secret havens and their hidden childer. They talk about it right in front of us, thinking we're off to Narnia or distracted by the voices in our head that every one of us allegedly has. What is often attributed to the Cobweb or the Madness Network is just paying attention when we've been written off as a fool or a simpleton.

Often, we are turned into the court jesters of Elysiums and pack houses. We get mocked, asked to tell jokes, or patronized by the ones who prize social status. So few remember that the point of the jester was to tell the king when he was full of shit. We have truth to power in our veins. We can say the things everyone is thinking. If the target flips out, they trash their own reputation. Even vampires think they have a good sense of humor. Even the ones who have long since stopped pretending to be human.

Nothing unites the great unwashed like being blamed for everything. Other Clans get swept up in squabbles and slap fights over ridiculous concepts. We sit outside, pointing and laughing, which gets those Clans upset at us. Whenever something strange happens in a city, they blame us until a better explanation comes along. Doesn't matter if it's a bank error or a backlash of a mystic ritual. The first instinct of anyone in power is to blame, and who will stand up for the vampires that drool and mutter to themselves?

I'm Malkavian and that's Not Funny

Vampires don't like to say what they mean. Look at all the polite terms we use to talk about the nasty, nasty things that happen to us. *Embrace* means ripping the throat out of someone's mother and shoving the blood back in the wrong hole. *Kindred* refers to other bloodsucking monsters who are rivals at best. *Vitae* is blood, blood that we will skullfuck our own mothers to get if we must. The lexicon flows with flowery terms growing on mass graves.

Madness is an archaic word used to describe what happens to the Malkavians because of their Embrace. These terms follow us around like a stink cloud. Others talk about our madness as if it can be defined and accounted. They want to hold us down and define us because deep down, they are scared of what we could really do. They fear the unknown we've touched because we've been able to grab a hold of it just for a second.

Malkavians are broken from their first night as a vampire. We don't have anything to hold on to as we fall. Other

vampires cling to vanity, to power, to secrets, hoping that they buoy them against the great black waters where we live. Malkavians dive, swimming as hard and as fast as we can, hoping to find a little air pocket somewhere in the depths.

It goes beyond mental health. Malkavians can't go into therapy or take medication. The afflictions we suffer may mirror ones defined by psychology, but that's because of our human shells. Some Malkavians drift through illnesses like hosts at a party. It's pattern recognition developed as a human working against perceptions developed as a vampire. Psychology is the study of human behavior. We're not human. Humans love to anthropomorphize things, so sending a Malkavian to a psychiatrist is like trying to talk to your cat by meowing back.

Five Stages of Malkavian Development

A Clan rooted in chaos and insanity shouldn't have any structured leadership. Yet the Malkavians continue to be a major Clan because they do. Malkavians jockey for status and influence just like the rest of the Kindred community. The difference is where the respect and influence comes from. Malkavians don't care about the centuries spent in the night or prestigious lineages from powerful Cainites. No, Malkavian respect pours from how far along the vampire is on the stages of Malkavian development. The farther along the path, the less likely the Malkavian considers the lack of sanity to be a curse.

Fool

We all start here. There are those who say that most other Kindred never get past this stage by getting too wrapped up in the distractions of the undead life. Or, they just keep fighting it, clinging to whatever they can to resist the tide. Fools are usually recently Embraced vampires dealing with their curse. The cute ones even think there might be some way back and waste a lot of time looking for an exit that doesn't exist. They don't have much time for activities above and beyond their insanity. It's hard to campaign to be Sheriff when you're trying to find out where all the voices are coming from, you know? No, I guess you don't know. Well, listen to the voices for once and they'll tell you, okay?

At this stage, we're not much of a threat. We're too busy wrestling with our inner demons to worry outsiders. Fools are little more than a collection of nervous tics and non-sequiturs to those looking in on the Clan. We understand we've got time to work it out, but other Clans often sense weakness and jump on those poor little swans pushing out of their eggs of sanity. An ambitious few attempt to fire off some pranks, but they are usually about as effective as a whoopee cushion from a broken gumball machine. At best, they provide some amusement for other Kindred, who love to watch us go through tormenting ourselves to distract themselves from their own.

Maniac

Malkavians that make it through those first frightful years move on to this stage. Many of us don't make it past here and that's fine. This is the point in development where we lash out at everything because of our pain. If we're going to suffer, you're going to suffer. The curse of madness hits maniacs hard, causing mental, emotional, and physical pain the likes of which surpass anything a mortal could survive. The only way to make it through to the other side is to lash out. Sometimes, the pranks at this stage leave an impression simply because of their violent consequences.

When most other Kindred think of Malkavians, this is the stage we all are in their simple minds. They write us off as violent lunatics even though they need us. Keeping a scapegoat handy works wonders for the political system on both sides of the Camarilla and Sabbat divide. That makes violent pranks at this level that much sweeter. How often can we cause enough collateral damage to illustrate the uselessness of sectarian violence? What are the lessons from leaving a Bishop's childe beaten in the trunk of a car and pushed into the nearest body of water?

Madmen

This is where many of us see the light at the end of the tunnel. That's usually right before the train horn sounds, but this is the first moment where many Malkavians realize that they've been given a blessing and not a curse. The breakdown of worldviews is over. The rebuilding begins now. This is where you let go and drift on the forces you can't understand. That's what leads Malkavians at this stage to seem calm, cool, and collected. The fear of losing everything is gone. Everything they were worried about losing was worth nothing in the first place. Madmen are free to seek out items of real value to their new opinion on the world.

The best madmen don't shoot to kill; they shoot to teach. This is when plans become elaborate lessons meant to teach more than one Kindred at a time. These pranks are for shaking Kindred to their core. Madmen often find themselves in positions of power within a city, since they can usually be counted on to show up at meetings and not talk to the Prince's shoes the whole time. That gives them the resources to set bigger plans in motion, and have a few

Clan members further down the ladder to do the heavy lifting and fall on swords as needed for things to go smoothly.

Lunatic

Is there enlightenment in our condition? Surely, some of us get a great reputation for insight that comes from some gibbering with things outside normal perceptions. This stage reflects those of us who see the world for the gigantic mirror that it is. It's all a lie to a lunatic and these Kindred devote themselves to breaking the biggest mirror of them all. They want to leave big, coyote shaped holes in perception. Lunatics often devote themselves to a signature act that's decades in the making. They channel all that emotion into one bold statement that plays out in a huge shockwave across a city.

Lunatics act and the Clan follows. A careful word, a slight gesture sets all the dominos. Lunatics are the clocks by which Malkavian Time chimes. They say the Great Prank was hatched by a coterie of lunatics. They literally created one egg for each city where Malkavians were located and hid them, like Easter Eggs. The Malkavian that found them got the strongest dose of mental mind twisting power and everyone else got those echoes. That's why so many headless corpses were found in those cities. Wait, I confused eggs and heads again. Malkavians cracked open the heads and all the power came slushing out. Was I not supposed to say that out loud? Oops.

Fool

The end is the beginning is the end is the beginning. Everything you know is wrong. Everyone knows double majors are worthless in the real world. Fools realize that all the time spent building up their new perceptions ultimately burn out everyone. Where can you go once you've seen the world for what it truly is? Reality was made to be broken, so those at this point in their development are revered yet pitied. Honored yet mocked. The master becomes the student. But then were they ever really the master? Or did they just think that thanks to a mix of arrogance, delusion, and the refreshing scent of pine?

What's the point of starting over? Most other Kindred miss that when we make it to this stage. It's not totally starting fresh. The lessons are learned and the howls are new. Every time we build something, we know it can't stand. Kindred think they are static and we intend to prove them wrong, even if we have to burn everything down with us locked inside to do so.

What am I? I'm a fool. Not a fool. Isn't it obvious?



Malkavian Madness Network

It has many names. The Cobweb. The Tapestry. Steve. The Malkavian Madness Network is how we are able to know things other Kindred can't know. We are all plugged into the darkness that surrounds us, more so than the Gangrel who walks with wolves while shirtless and the Tremere who won't shut up about how much they know but can't say anything. This is the insight that keeps us in the favor of Kindred who would otherwise stake us, diablerize us, or lock us up in asylums with lovely sunroofs. It flows from one big, scary river of blood oozing out of the mouth of Malkav.

The Network is connected to Malkav. Some of us go so far to say that it *is* Malkav, figuring out a way to sleep in the minds of all his good little boys and girls rather than some dank cave somewhere. Others say anything we hear, he hears, because his blood is alive. Malkav's pain is so grand that he passes it on to all of us in little pieces that run back to him with all the neat things we've learned. So, for holding those bits of himself, we get a teeny tiny taste of what it's like to be omniscient.

If the network is Malkav, than our elders are the towers, the lighthouses, the gibbet full of a corpse who still talks even though the crows peck at his bones. All the information we hear gets filtered through our elders; the most important pieces get sent out over the Network. The Network is like that white noise you get used to living in a big city. All honks and air conditioners, but then suddenly one of the cars driving by addresses you by name and says something relevant to your evening. The best Malkavians catch this info while it's still useful. Rarely does something go out that everyone needs to hear. Even when a message gets garbled or supposedly sent to the wrong Malkavian, it ends up working out in the end.

Clan Traditions

It's easy to think a Clan like this doesn't have rules and guidelines. We actually have about seven or eight of them. Some of us don't care about any of them, some of us care about one or two a lot, and the rest of us pick them up and put them down as necessary.

The Loneliest Tradition: The Tradition of Mutable Traditions

Outsiders see this as a proclamation that rules are meant to be broken. That's the wrong Clan, first of all. Breaking rules for the sake of breaking rules while looking good in biker cosplay is the Brujah's thing. Clans get upset when you move in on their conceptual turf.

What this tradition means is that rules are guidelines to a safe existence. Malkavians are charged with bending, prodding, poking, folding, stapling, and mutilating those rules to see just how strong they are. We are the stress testers of the universe. We are the ones turning your perceptions off and on again to fix them. We are here to show you which rules work great and which are outdated.

Coin: The Tradition of the Broken Mirror

You cannot go back to the way things were. The Masquerade is important, sure, because most of us don't like being set on fire. However, pretending to be the same person you were before the Embrace is sad at best and dangerous at worst. Malkavians don't keep the same lives they had. Sometimes they drift away from who they were. Sometimes they wipe out that life in a spree of violence and blood. Once the mirror breaks, those pieces stay broken. We can build other things from them. Better things. Sharper things.

Mice: The Tradition of Madness in the Blood

Our curse is not confined. Our blood affects others. A Malkavian ghoul is likely to develop odd behaviors. Someone willing to share blood will pursue his or her side of the bond with an obsessive bent. There's an old superstition that madness is contagious. In our case, there's some truth to it. Our blood warps those who come in contact with it. Even the most hardened diablerist takes a moment to consider drinking a Malkavian's heartsblood. What if the rumors are true about the madness surviving the death of the vampire? Is it really worth it?

It also means that sometimes, that chaos gets the better of us and reduces us to a cackling, howling mess for a while. You've got to let the pain out somehow. Doing irrational, physical things helps, but there's just a sudden buildup of pressure that a good scream lets loose. Malkavians never know when it's going to hit, but when it does, prepare to be down for the count for a week or two. The rare city with a Malkavian Prince often has someone step up to lead while he or she is off-stage. Often, the generation of good pranks comes from this chaotic energy. Acting on the urge to lick everyone's faces at Elysium will cause more chaos than it releases. Purposely changing one word of every message passed between Primogen? That's sharing the fun.

The length of these periods depends, but this tradition calls for unity and protection from the other members of the Clan. We protect our brothers and sisters going through these rough pieces. That can mean a bit of lock-up time for the Malkavian suffering from the episode. Often, the Clan maintains a secret haven where such a vampire can safely stay until the process is complete. Other cities put their suffering Malkavians on display. Nothing like making a vampire chew off his own tongue in Elysium six nights in a row to make the Harpies think twice about dismissing us as "harmless kooks."

Afterwards, the vampire is irrevocably changed. They may have been delusional, but now exhibit an irrational phobia. They have split personalities but now speak as one. The blood changes in ways the body cannot. The Malkavian may have the same face but a much different outlook. I once heard an ancient member of our Clan insist that these changes allow Kindred of a certain age to cheat death and torpor by pulling the soul of the young vampire into the sleeping body and pushing the old vampire into the younger body. This story is completely ridiculous and you shouldn't believe it for a second. Nope. No siree Bob.

Horsemen: The Tradition of Universal Madness

We are the only ones who see what's wrong with the world. Everyone else has fooled themselves into seeing patterns that aren't there. "God does things for a reason." "The universe is all systems." "As above, so below." These are all fictions told to help people sleep at night. We don't need them anymore because we don't sleep. We never sleep. The universe is madness, beginning with a bang and not an orderly line of clear progress.

Oh: The Tradition of Pranks

Let's talk about pranks. We use that word because words are just sounds, made by imperfect beings vibrating imperfect meat lips. It's a concept that's hard to translate to people outside the Clan, and "terrifyingly anarchistic plots with inscrutable outcomes" doesn't quite roll off the tongue either. Pranks are like that trick where you try to pull the tablecloth out from under the dishes. Do it right, and everyone is impressed. Do it wrong, and everyone is upset you ruined dinner. Either way, someone is likely to walk away from the table thinking about how you did it.

There's this idea that our pranks require years of planning and crackerjack timing. We see the threads and pull, hard, to see what falls apart. Sometimes that does require a bit of conspiracy. Most of the time it's just obvious to anyone who is paying attention. We are always paying attention. We see all the cracks, all the lies, and all the pretense. Pranks (ugh, that word) are when we decide to point them out to everybody else. That's when we show the emperor has no clothes by dousing him in gasoline during his tour of the fireworks factory.

What we try to teach with pranks doesn't matter as much as what the target is ready to learn. No Kindred is safe. Security is an illusion. All it takes is one bad night to push anyone down the stairs of sanity to become a mindless beast. All this distraction and artifice becomes unnecessary. We see the Buddha on the road and we kill him. We destroy his beloved childe. We swipe her last painting as a mortal with a poster of a cute kitten.

Recently, many of our Clan manifested the ability to twist minds as a discipline. Many outsiders called this The Great Prank. (Did I already mention the Great Prank? You should have told me.) It's a perfect example of what I'm talking about. Outsiders don't understand how a whole Clan can just decide to change a fundamental part of themselves. It's another lesson in perception. That part of us has always been there. Since the first night, it waited, and it became clear that it was time to reveal it to the world. Some of us bloomed early, especially those in the Sabbat, since they don't have to behave themselves as much. Some of us are blooming late, holding onto Dominate like an adorable mind-controlling teddy bear.

Gun: The Tradition of the Concordia Accordion

I don't know what the hell you're talking about.

The other things that bump in the night? When we look for allies outside of the usual dead people, we can usually find some. Most Kindred don't have an immediate opinion of the faerie, which makes them something of a wild card. Lupines are easy to plan for. Sword-swinging firebreathers, less so. We do a lot to puff up those legends just in case we ever need to call them in to help us out. And, confidentially, their blood is some of the strangest stuff I've ever had. Do it once, but make sure you have a few days afterwards to dry out.

Up: The Tradition of Breaking Traditions

If you don't fuck things up, how do they know what they've lost? How will they know what they could gain? We know we can break our traditions and expect it. But when you do it to another Kindred, that's when the fun begins. Breaking their rules makes them examine their rules and themselves. Self-examination leads to breaking

down preconceived notions. Breaking their rules also forces the Malkavian into unfamiliar situations. I've learned a lot about enlightenment from Brujah quoting the Buddha while breaking my legs.

Knowing how far is too far is more art than science. So is knowing when to break instead of when to bend.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Agent in Too Deep

They said you'd be out by now. They brought you in to infiltrate a conspiracy to control the government. Everyone who knew about your real mission is dead, burned, or turned. You knew you'd have to do horrible things to get inside, but this went beyond anything you could imagine. Drinking blood? Murdering to survive? Yet, these things have their own code of laws. So you uphold them as best you can, both to protect the same people you protected as a Federal agent and as an opportunity to take out these unnatural desires on worthy targets. My God, your real name... what's your real name...

Alienist

The effect of the Embrace on the human psychological condition fascinates you. You could write dozens of papers. Each Kindred is a case study. By focusing on studying the monsters around you, you ignore the monster you are becoming. You emotionally detached yourself in the name of science. Frenzy? No, no, dear boy. Those are *blackouts*.

Doubting Thomas

It's not real. You're dreaming. You're a character in some kind of twisted movie or sadistic game. All these other vampires are actors because there have to be hidden cameras somewhere. They make you think it's blood, but it tastes so good. They make it out of Karo syrup, don't they? You wonder who would do something like this to you. Sometimes, it just gets you so... angry...

Fake Psychic

You can't tell anyone you're a vampire. Nobody said anything about claiming that your attention to detail, your eccentric behavior, and your taste for the weird are part of the package for getting your powers from the astral plane. People already believe in psychics a little bit, and it doesn't take much more than a few leading questions and subtle details to convince them you can read their minds. You even have a small gig working with the local police catching cold cases and unexplained calls. As it turns out, you're even helping the Masquerade by steering the authorities toward non-existent ghosts than the real Kindred at fault in these cases. Hey, maybe you are psychic?

Inmate Running the Asylum

You are a fat, happy spider living in your carefully constructed web. You're protected during the day, you have a supply of pharmaceutical blood to entertain with (plus staff and guard blood when you want to straighten out), and you can walk out of the facility any time of night. Nowhere else can protect you better from the Forces of the Moon.

Judge, Jury, and Executioner

You are generally a polite member of Kindred society. Someday, a real rain is going to come down and wash the streets of all the scum, the criminals, and low-lifes. You take special note of those who treat their fellow kine poorly. You single them out, isolate them, and then feed on them for days. Slowly. Painfully. Then you go back to your normal unlife, feeling much better until the next time.

Online Troll

You say the most outrageous things and people like you for it. Thousands of likes, really. If certain Clans think they have the market cornered on wit and snark, you'll be happy to prove them wrong. You're out of the crypts and into everyone's smartphone, delivering the hard truths about the world around them. You're a pied piper, using 140 characters instead of a stupid flute or whatever. You're not breaking the Masquerade, but you're certainly rubbing up against it like you want it to take you home.

Parental Figure

Your experience with death made you see just what you've been missing all your life. You have so much love to give. The Kindred around you need that love. Put your arm around them. Speak softly. Forgive their mistakes. You take the idea of a Clan literally. They are your family now, and you love them no matter how many people they kill.

Truther

It's all true, man. 9/11 was an inside job brought on by a cabal of mages, corporate masters, and Things From Beyond. They can fake photos, but they can't produce a long-form birth certificate. Becoming a vampire let you focus on your true nemesis: the NSA, because now it can't hear you over its wiretaps. Ancient vampires pulling the strings of their offspring and pitting them against each

other in an unknowable chess match that spans centuries? That's the most boring theory you've heard today.

Wandering Cassandra

You are always right. Princes, Primogen, and other leaders seek you out to tell them about the future. The news is never good. You wonder why Kindred know about your abilities but don't know about their cost. Nobody ever seems to talk about the fires, the invasions, and the bloodshed.

Merits and Flaws

Distracting Aura (2pt. Merit)

Reading an aura using Auspex requires the viewer to focus on recurring patterns and colors to detect a target's emotional state. Because of the unique state of your psyche, your aura is even harder to read than most. All uses of Aura Perception are at a +2 difficulty against you.

Prophetic Dreams (2pt. Merit)

You have dreams during your daylight sleep. Dreams you remember. Sometimes, they even come true. Rather than regain a point of Willpower when you rest during the day, you may choose to have the Storyteller give your character a lucid dream featuring foreshadowing about upcoming events, characters, and situations.

Cold Read (3pt. Merit)

Whenever you meet someone for the first time, you may spend a number of points of Willpower equal to your Perception. For each point spent, you may ask the Storyteller one question about the character. The Storyteller must either answer truthfully or let you take the Willpower point back to you to avoid answering the question.

Paper Trail (2pt. Flaw)

You've spent some time in state institutions like prisons or asylums, likely before your Embrace. Most people have some sort of information that relays date of birth and other bits of fact. This information is hard to eliminate, and may endanger the Masquerade. Enemies with the right influence may be able to track down the information and use it against you. It may lead to vulnerable targets or clue hunters to where your haven is located.

Stigmata (2 or 4pt. Flaw)

Oracles are often marked as messengers of the gods. Your markings come in the forms of phantom wounds that seep blood. The bleeding is slight but incessant, costing you an extra blood point every day just before you wake at dusk.

The 2-point version of this Flaw means wounds that can be easily hidden from prying eyes, such as on the hands or the side. You gain a +1 difficulty to all Social rolls when dealing with someone aware of your condition.

The 4-point version can't be easily hidden, like bleeding eyes. The Social penalty increases to +2, and one of your Attributes also gains a +1 difficulty to all rolls because of the constant seeping blood.

Infectious (3pt. Flaw)

Madness flows within your blood, but your bite carries a taint as well. Mortals take a temporary derangement for every three points of blood you take from them. The derangements stay until the mortal restores the lost blood.

Overstimulated (3pt. Flaw)

Malkavians notice things that many others do not. That means keeping their eyes and ears open far longer than anyone else does. That makes you easily distracted when trying to focus. Take a +2 penalty to all rolls involving Perception.

Dead Inside (4pt. Flaw)

You feel nothing but pain and numbness. While others find ways to make their lives worth living, you sometimes don't get that thrill. Once per session, the Storyteller may cancel any gain of Willpower you made by playing to your Nature or Demeanor.

Discipline Powers

Sibyl's Tongue (Auspex ••••• •)

Many Kindred look to the Malkavians as seers and prophets, but elders of the Clan are the ones who are most often consulted for their augury. Those with Sibyl's Tongue can take their propensity for prediction one step further and actually seek out the answer to a question from the gestalt-mind of the Clan. If anyone in the Clan knows the answers, the elder will be able to pluck it out of their mind. However, there is a price: those elders who are unable to navigate the churning rivers of madness might find themselves dragged along in a direction they didn't intend.

System: The vampire must spend a turn focusing on the collective madness of the Malkavian Clan, and then rolls Wits + Investigation, difficulty 8. If the roll is successful, and if it is an answer that some Malkavian knows somewhere,

the vampire gets an answer to her question, with each success adding clarity to the answer that comes back.

If the roll is failed, however, the collective madness begins to overwhelm the vampire. She gains two additional derangements immediately (Storyteller's choice) for the duration of the scene. On a botch, one of the acquired derangements becomes permanent, although it can be removed as normal (unlike the derangement gained from the Malkavian clan weakness). For particularly dangerous or powerful questions, the Storyteller may give the vampire a temporary derangement even on a successful roll, and even more dire consequences for failure.

Scrawl (Obfuscate ••••• •)

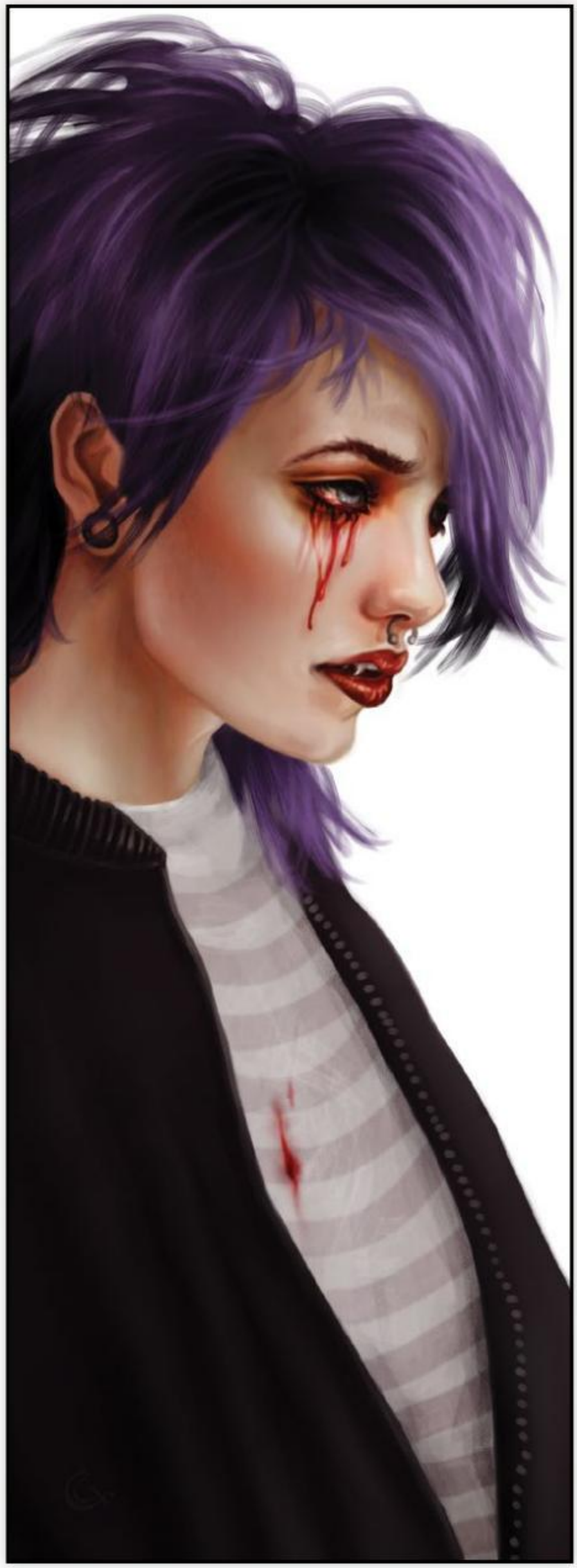
What seems like meaningless scribble to the untrained eye is sometimes a tacit way for Malkavians to communicate with one another. Malkavians often communicate to each other in ways only others understand, but Scrawl allows the Kindred to choose who makes out her cackling code. The shaky hand is recognizable as Scrawl to anyone with the Discipline, though no one outside the Clan recognizes the hidden meaning at all. Elders often use this to pass messages to other members of the Clan, or leave ones out in the open hidden in graffiti.

System: No roll is required to write the message, but if the Malkavian wants a specific Clanmate to read it only, she must know the target, his sire, or his progeny.

Babble (Auspex ••••• • or Dementation ••••• •)

This power allows a Kindred to speak with multiple targets using telepathy. All of their minds are linked, but they must communicate with each other by speaking out loud. Furthermore, each person linked speaks as if the person her or she is talking to is standing right next to him or her. For example, if Alexandria and Mister E. are connected with Babble, Alexandria can murmur quietly and be heard since he's in a movie theater, while Mister E. has to shout because she's on the dance floor of the local dance club.

System: The vampire may link a number of targets equal to her permanent Willpower. Malkavians may push the number of people connected to Babble to her Willpower + Empathy, if all the subjects possess at least one derangement and don't resist the Discipline. Kindred with the Malkavian Time Specialty may choose to use their Awareness instead (see p. 146).



Combination Disciplines

Creepy Clown Coat (Dementation •, Obfuscate •••)

Everyone fears something. It may be a phobia, a person, or a concept. This ability allows you to appear as a representation of a person's worst fears. They may flee, break down and cry, or start throwing punches at the very sight of you.

System: Roll Wits + Awareness, with a difficulty equal to the target's current Willpower. Success allows the user to appear as a human representation of what the target fears most. If the fear is of a concept or an animal, the user appears as a representation of that fear. For example, if a person is afraid of being burned alive, the Malkavian might appear as an arsonist, or as a relative of the target that burned up in a fire. The target must make a Courage roll to do anything other than react to the source of her fear. The target must generate a number of successes equal to the successes on the Malkavian's roll.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Days of Passions Past (Dementation •••, Auspex ••)

People's moods shift from moment to moment. Vampires with Auspex can take their chances and try to interpret a person's mood at that very moment from an aura. However, those with this power look into the chaos and see what moods the target engages in most frequently.

System: Roll Perception + Awareness, with a difficulty based on the chart below to see how far back the Malkavian can read the history of the aura. Each success allows the Malkavian to see another emotion. One success allows the most common color at the time to reveal itself; two successes allow the two most common, and so on. It may also be used to detect when the vampire has consumed the blood of a supernatural creature, including other vampires. This can be used to detect diablerie, but reporting such a crime becomes the Malkavian's word against the target. The Malkavian gains no further insight about what happened, why the target felt this way, or to whom the consumed blood belongs.

Difficulty	How Far Back
9	Since last decade
8	Since last year
7	Since last month
6	Since last week
5	Since last night

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

Do As I Say, Not As I Say (Dominate •, Dementation ••••)

Clever users of Dominate often slip their command words into a sentence with a hint of inflection to hide their commands. For those Malkavians who mastered both Dominate and Dementation, the words spoken doesn't have to be the words intended. When this Malkavian locks eyes with the victim, the words spoken as a command are different from the one the victim hears in their head. The one heard inside the head is the one followed.

System: The Kindred rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty equal to the target's current Willpower). More successes make the subject pursue the Dominate command more vigorously.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

Ignore Me (Dominate ••••, Obfuscate ••)

Some people fade into the background easily. A Malkavian that haunts a specific location can program the people there to completely ignore her while she moves about the grounds. Not only does this give her a home field advantage should enemies confront her in

The Bloodline That Was a Clan

Players returning to **Vampire: The Masquerade** after a long absence might be wondering why all Malkavians have Dementation as a Discipline. The Great Prank mentioned throughout this chapter spread the Discipline formerly associated with the *antitribu* Discipline to their Camarilla family. Malkavians with the classic Discipline choices of Auspex, Dominate, and Obfuscate were suddenly in the minority, and are now known as Dominate Malkavians. We've provided combo Disciplines for both types of Malkavians.

For more information, check out pages 436-437 of **V20**.

this location, but it also makes her a shining example of upholding the Masquerade.

System: Roll Wits + Subterfuge once per day, difficulty equal to the target's current Willpower. This power is an extended action, with a number of successes equal to five times the target's Courage rating.

Once the successes are achieved, the subject completely ignores the existence of the Kindred for the next month, and the vampire can target another person the next day. If the Kindred disturbs a room, the target subconsciously puts things back in place. The target only reacts to the Kindred if she inflicts harm on the target—other physical interactions (such as touching them or searching their pockets) are unaffected. The target makes a Courage roll equal to the Kindred's Willpower rating. If successful, they shake the Kindred's hold.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Malkav's Pavlovian Response (Dementation ••, Dominate ••)

Malkavians blessed with the knowledge of both of these Disciplines can use them to connect someone or something with a specific emotion. The Kindred can make someone hate their boss, love their enemy, or lust after a specific book.

System: The Kindred rolls Charisma + Subterfuge with a difficulty equal to the target's current Willpower. She speaks a word, which can be hidden in a sentence, and connects a specific emotion to that word. Whenever the target encounters the word or the object connected to the word, they feel the emotion. This lasts one night per success rolled, starting with the evening the Kindred uses the power.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Rando (Obfuscate •••, Dementation •••)

Obfuscate has long been a staple for walking unnoticed through crowds. Sometimes, a Malkavian wants to deliver a message to someone from the safety of a crowded street. This power allows a Malkavian to communicate with someone while protecting his identity with a random face. Every time the target looks at the Kindred, she sees somebody else.

System: Roll Wits + Stealth. The difficulty is determined using the guidelines below, and each roll targets a specific person. Every time the target sees the Malkavian, she sees someone matching the current scene. If the target looks away and looks back, the form she sees changes. One moment, the Malkavian might look like a willowy concertgoer. The next glance, the Malkavian looks like a burly security guard, and so on.

Difficulty	Density of people
9	A city street at midnight
8	A sparsely attended gallery show
7	A busy restaurant at dinner
6	A shopping mall at Christmas
5	A standing-room-only concert

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Screams Made Real (Auspex ••••, Dementation ••••)

Everyone has hidden, disturbing images that hide somewhere in his or her mind. This power allows the Malkavian to pull those images to the surface and confront their creator.

System: The Kindred spends a blood point and makes a Manipulation + Empathy roll (difficulty 8). Each success pulls a disturbing image from the mind of the target. The target thinks the images are real and acts accordingly. The images last for a scene.

Affected victims fly into a blind flight or frenzy. Kindred or other creatures capable of frenzy, like Lupines, may make a frenzy check with a difficulty penalty equal to the number of successes on the roll. Humans get no such roll. They much choose flight or fight immediately.

This power costs 24 experience points to learn.

Ze Monkey's Paw (Auspex •••, Dementation ••••)

Superstitions are little pieces of irrationality that still take hold in the rational world. Malkavians with this ability play on these notions to convince a perfectly normal person that an inanimate object is the source of all their troubles. It's a great way to get someone babbling about strange connections, or dig a valuable item out of the trash when the victim throws it away.

System: Roll Wits + Subterfuge (difficulty 6), while touching an object, picturing a specific person, and spending a point of Willpower. The next time the target sees the object, the power starts working. Every success rolled robs the target of a Health level (when a minor accident involving the object occurs) or a Willpower point (when the target somehow blames a bad turn in their life on the object).

Malkavian Time

To outsiders, Malkavians have an uncanny knack for showing up in the right place at the right time. Or, in some cases, the wrong place at the right time. This ability comes from a keenly developed ability known as Malkavian Time. Clan meetings occur on this unwritten schedule, passed through to members by the Malkavian Madness Network. A message is initially sent through some form of media. The sender could write a message on the back of a receipt, whisper something into a cell phone, or press their head against a TV screen. The Malkavians able to receive the message do so by encountering the same media. The receiver will see it written on any receipt in their pocket, hear it over their cell phone line, or have the cable news pundit speak the message directly to them. The Malkavian keeps hearing the message repeatedly until they acknowledge it and take action towards it.

Any Malkavian can take Malkavian Time as a Specialty of their Awareness Skill. Any Malkavians with dots in Awareness can receive messages, but only those with the Specialty can send messages. When a meeting is coming, the Storyteller secretly rolls Perception + Awareness (difficulty 6). Successes clue the Malkavian in to an upcoming meeting. The more successes, the more time the Malkavian has to prepare to see the rest of her Clanmates. One success means the meeting just started, two successes means there's a meeting tonight, three successes means a meeting tomorrow, with each success adding an additional night for the Malkavian to prepare.

Sending messages requires a Wits + Awareness roll (difficulty 6). Every success means the message gets out on another form of media.

The Malkavian chooses the split when the power is used, but the target loses no more than one Willpower point or one Health level per scene. The Malkavian has no control over what the target does with the object or when the curse strikes, but the target is unlikely to keep it for long.

This power costs 21 experience points to learn.

Playing With Madness

Malkavians can be one of the most challenging Clans to play. Players and characters alike can dismiss Malkavians as harmless, blame them when things go wrong, and not take their ambitions or plots seriously. Playing a character that watches his Humanity (or their Path) slip away is hard enough to do, but mixing in one who already has been irredeemably broken by the Embrace makes it that much harder. Malkavians can be played as fools, but there's a reason fools are often the most tragic figure in a play.

Internal Logic

Every Malkavian starts with a derangement. There are several listed in **V20** (pp. 290-293), but don't be afraid to mix and match elements from different things to make something wholly unique. Malkavians aren't made to be diagnosed; they present a cracked reflection of humanity and mortality. They make other vampires wonder how they were able to get through the Embrace more or less intact.

A Malkavian doesn't have to make sense to others, or even to neurobehavioral science, but they should make sense to *themselves*. Playing a Malkavian offers a chance to embrace chaos, but there should be a consistent internal logic. The scope can change, like a paranoid Kindred "realizing" a contentious Prince as one of Them out to get her, but everything should filter back through that worldview in a way that fits the character.

Further, while Malkavians must always have at least one derangement, it doesn't necessary have to be the same one. Malkavians going through the stages of development might shift into another derangement as part of building up their worldviews and tearing them down. Big moments in a character's life (like a loss of Humanity or Virtue dots, or nearly dying from an attack) give the Storyteller and the

player a chance to discuss if switching a derangement feels right, just like in the Third Malkavian Tradition.

Pacing

Damaged individuals don't always display their issues. Madness can be played for everyone on display with full on cackles and hand rubbing, but it's much more disturbing to imply those issues. Some of the scariest Malkavians are the ones that seem normal, but just have one quiet thing that they do that's odd. Little by little, that oddity reveals itself, until the full extent of the wreckage reveals itself. A nostalgic comment about the Malkavian's mortal family might be the first step on the trail that reveals he's made them all ghouls and reenacts those moments with his blood-bound thralls.

The intensity of the derangement is another challenging aspect, though. If it's underplayed too often, it can feel like the player is avoiding a flaw. Similarly, if it's overplayed, it can be disruptive to the flow of the game. If every moment from the Malkavian is a grand, broad gesture, there's no shock value. Controlling intensity keeps everyone off-balance, and that's what Malkavians want. Unbalancing behavior makes it easier for Malkavians to show the world what they see. Staying true to the concept is important, but that doesn't mean hitting the same note night after night. Some nights play soft, but on others, play loud.

As such, the Malkavian must be willing to push boundaries. Get people out of their comfort zones. Everyone expects Kindred to dress in dark colors and loom in a thudding dance club. Malkavians play against those expectations. They hug other Kindred. They mess with personal space. They speak out of turn. But they are also aware that too many pushes in a short time can mean a quick trip to meet the sun. (Also, be aware of player boundaries. If something might offend, ask about it out of character before barging ahead in character. If another player expresses real concern, don't push the subject. There are plenty of other buttons to push.)

When the time comes to go big, though, make it count. This could be the result of a failed Virtue roll. It could be a change in derangements, as mentioned above. It might be the discovery of the true horrors contained in the Malkavian's haven. But no matter what, remember that Malkavians are the vampires that unnerve other vampires. They make beings that regularly drink the blood of the living feel weird and uncomfortable. Good Malkavians own the moment when everyone else in the room stares in astonishment. That's their spotlight moment, like when a Ventrue makes a shrewd power move or a Brujah makes a rousing speech.





NOSFERATU

"Arthur Lenning says of Nosferatu: 'A kind of abstract thing of evil, he has no nobility, nor does he inhabit the dark world of majestic satanic villains. Instead, he is a lower kind of evil, an obscene and loathsome creature that swells amid decay and slime and crawling rats.'"

— Malcolm South, Mythical and Fabulous Creatures

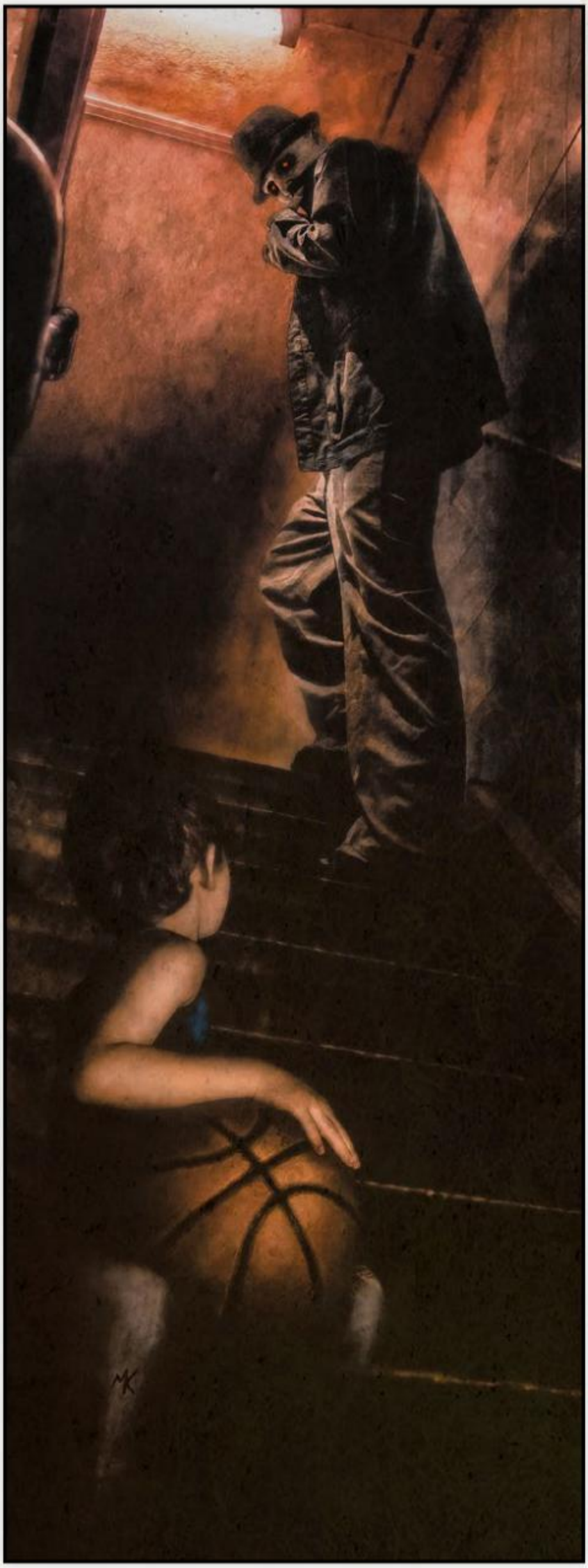
RAT MAN

The devil lives next door to me. I hear him in the night, shuffling up the stairs and along the landing outside my apartment. He usually leaves when night falls, and returns just before the sunrise. It was a long time before we met, but we would pass each other sometimes in the hall. I could smell him before I saw him. It wasn't entirely unpleasant, a sweet smell like decay. It was an old and damp smell too, like a book left out in the rain. He always wore a tatty long coat with the collar pulled up, and a faded trilby hat that helped to cover his face. His shoes squelched a little as he walked, even when it hadn't been raining.

We passed each other like that for months. I said hello a few times as we passed, but he just buried his head in his collar and shuffled past. I thought it was me at first, but Mrs. Cohen next door said she got the same response. I'm not entirely surprised; I usually avoided her myself. Her kids are kinda noisy too, but they always got really quiet when my neighbor was around.

We used to have a rat problem in the building. The landlord insisted we were all leaving food out, but he was just trying to get out of paying for an exterminator. I figured when the rats just vanished that he'd finally given in. Come to think of it, that was about a month after I first saw my neighbor on the stairs. I can't have been the only one to notice, because the kids started calling him "the Rat Man."

That's not to say any of us didn't try to make him welcome. Candice Jonson down the hall baked him a welcome cake. I think she'd heard he was single and wanted to check him out. After artfully scattering a little flour on her apron so she looked like Martha Stewart, she knocked on his door with the biggest smile



she could muster. He never answered. She left the cake outside the door nevertheless, just in case he hadn't heard. It stayed there for days, until one of the kids said they saw a whole bunch of rats nibbling on it.

I'm the only one of us that has really met him. I came home late one night, having worked a double shift because Becky Lewis decided she was too ill. I had to get some groceries and was too angry at my day to put them down in the hall before getting out my key. I struggled for a minute before dropping both bags, throwing my keys after them in disgust. As I knelt down to pick up the spilled groceries, the Rat Man was just there, passing them to me. He had the most elegant hands, long and thin, gnarled like a tree but somehow graceful. Silently he helped me gather everything together into the bags. When I thanked him, he turned to me and muttered that it was no problem. Something seemed to slip then, and under a sort of haze, I saw him. His ears were pointed and his teeth sharp. His eyes looked through me as if he knew my secrets and when I shuddered, it seemed to make him smile.

That's how I know the devil lives next door to me, but I know that if I don't bother him, he won't bother me.

FORGOTTEN HISTORY

Go away. No seriously, just fuck off. Have you just come to see how ugly I am, to be amazed at the horrible curse of my Clan? No? In that case, you are here for secrets. Don't make that face. I know what the rest of you are like, and none of you really wants to be friends. You think I'm being unkind? Invite me to your next party if you are so unprejudiced. No, I didn't think so. Well pretty boy, if you want secrets you'll have to pay, and your own secrets will cost you so much more.

That's it, shuffle away to your fashionable parties and your elegant salons. You don't want the real truth; it's ugly, just like me. I'll tell my stories to the ratties. They know how to keep secrets.

You want to know about history? Huh. Didn't figure you for the type. Okay, let's talk about history. Most people think this all began with Caine, but despite this being "common knowledge," nobody really knows. It seems that the less we see of Caine, the more people believe he is out there somewhere.

There's no evidence of course, for any of it. No one reliable has ever seen our progenitor; no archaeologist has ever found the ruins of the First or even the Second City. You still naïve enough to believe it? Knock yourself out. It is a convenient conceit, I'll give it that, and it gives us all a history to debate and feel special about. The truth is that our history is lost, but at least the stories are entertaining.

So when we talk about history, we're really talking about faerie stories. I've got no problem with that; me and the ratties love a good tale. But let's see them for what they are. Take from them what you will, even believe them if you like. I'll leave that up to you.

ZILLAH AND NOSFERATU

I've heard it said that the original Nosferatu was a hunter. He was made by Zillah, one of Caine's children who sought allies against her brothers. It seems the Second Generation were just as much rivals as the Third Generation and sought to build a powerbase with their children. This really shouldn't come as any surprise. It should be clear to even a modern vampire that we've been fighting with each other for centuries.

Nosferatu (and we'll come back to his "name" in a bit) was a loner, who stayed away from the city to stalk through the forests. He had a reputation as the best hunter in the land, able to spend days in the wilderness, returning with enough game to feed most of his village. As he eschewed city life, Zillah concluded Nosferatu would not be poisoned by its politics nor fall under the influence of her brothers. She sought him out and literally made him an offer he couldn't refuse.

Initially, Nosferatu was quite happy with his newfound power. Already a superb hunter, his vampiric abilities made him unstoppable. He could wrestle with the strongest lion, move about the forest almost invisibly, and even command the animals to come to him. With Gangrel, he made the wilderness his home, and they often ran together as kindred (lowercase "k" there) spirits.

Unfortunately, we all know Caine's immortality does not come without cost. Where Nosferatu had once been a part of nature, at one with the land and the cycle of life and death, now he was an exile. The land no longer spoke to him; he could no longer feel the turn of the seasons and the flow of life. While he could easily track and slaughter any animal, he no longer felt like a true hunter. He was simply a hungry dead thing taking what he wanted from a land he was no longer a part of. Zillah's platitudes that he would grow used to his new state only made him angrier. It seemed even his sire had no answers, nor even an understanding of how he was condemned.

It was not long before he began to plot revenge. As with many of the Third Generation, he created a brood of his own. He chose hunters, but not those like himself. He selected his childer from those already apart from the land. He took murderers and killers, those who glorified in hunting human prey. He trained them well, and with their new powers and lust for blood, they quickly became very effective.

Nosferatu claimed he was creating a private army for Zillah and she was very pleased. Eventually he asked her to leave the city and visit him to inspect his new followers. Once they had her alone, Nosferatu and his brood fell upon Zillah and attempted to slay her. Zillah slaughtered most of Nosferatu's followers and managed to escape. Nosferatu realized he and his band were in deep trouble and made a run for it.

When Caine heard about the affair, he took great exception to conflict between his children and grandchildren. He sought out Nosferatu and challenged him to explain himself. Nosferatu told him everything. Feeling his grandchilde's pain, Caine decided not to destroy him, and instead cursed him. He twisted Nosferatu's body until it resembled the monster he had become, and did the same to all his followers.

At that, Caine considered the matter closed, but Nosferatu did not. He left the city with his followers, never to return. He vowed to have revenge one day and visit destruction on all Kindred. He would cleanse them from the earth, and he charged his Nictuku to never rest until the Kindred were purged.

THE MOTHER

It's a pretty tale, but there are a few inconsistencies. Nosferatu's goal has certainly become harder as time has passed. He must be pretty upset there are more of us than ever in the modern age. Maybe his Nictuku really aren't that good after all? I'll take the fifth on that one. The

big problem here is that if Nosferatu's children are the Nictuku, where did all the rest of us come from? Well, that's another faerie story.

After Caine twisted him, Nosferatu was understandably upset. Several sources, including the *Book of Nod*, say he was something of a looker. But even if he wasn't, it's pretty hard to get used to a face like this in the early days. He was full of rage and hate, just looking to settle his hurt on someone else. It so happened he came across a woman washing clothes in a stream. She was young and beautiful, one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen. Anger and jealousy rose up in him as he watched her and, finding her alone, he fell upon her and Embraced her. He laughed as he watched her body twist and deform, and left her to her fate.

However, this woman was more than just a laundress. She served in the city and had learned to pass information between the various factions. She was an accomplished spy and, having an understanding of the politics of the Kindred, she knew what she had become, even if her new visage tormented her. She went to Zillah, who comforted her and gave her a place among the Kindred. She became the ally Zillah had originally wanted, and they became very close. She hid herself away and used her abilities to listen and report on the other factions for her mistress. She and her childer gained respect and a reputation as secret keepers, and thereby claimed a place in vampire society.

It is this woman, known simply as "the Mother" or even somewhat controversially in some records as "Lilith," to whom we owe our lineage. While she was only of the Fourth Generation, we consider her our founder and progenitor. She is the creator of all we are as a Clan, if not the origin of our blood. The Mother's success at building the Clan Nosferatu is said to be one of the many reasons Nosferatu and his Nictuku hate us above all else. Not least of which is the way she sided with Zillah. She succeeded where Nosferatu had failed, and prospered where he had fallen. There are those who say they have seen the Mother, but such stories are as apocryphal as sightings of Caine. Still, it is nice to think that not every ancient being who watches over us is out to destroy us.

However, the Mother may not be the only Nosferatu we trace our origins to. Nosferatu is often also referred to as Absimiliard, but it is sometimes unclear if they are the same person, especially as there are several conflicting stories about both. Perhaps Absimiliard is the leader of the Nictuku, and Nosferatu is his beautiful brother who loved Arikel — I'll get to that rubbish in a minute — yet both suffered the same curse. If both were actually of the Third Generation, it might explain the lineage of the rare few Nosferatu who claim to be Fourth Generation. Somewhere out there, we may have an Antediluvian who is actually on our side. However, I suspect it is more likely that such elders have reached their Generation by diablerie and are lying to cover up their crimes.

ARIKEL AND NOSFERATU

There is another tale that tells us Nosferatu was once beautiful, so much so in fact that no woman could resist him. As you might expect, he set his sights on the most beautiful woman he knew, Arikel, the first of the Toreador. The tales suggest that theirs was an epic love. Two unearthly beings drawn together as one, ensorcelled by the power of each other's wonder.

Unfortunately it was not to last. Nosferatu was cursed with ugliness. Some say it was because he betrayed Caine, others say he was a twisted soul whose outside gradually came to resemble his inside. When the Nosferatu tell this tale (and few do), Arikel is repulsed by his ugliness and cannot bear to look upon him anymore. She refuses to stand by him, proving her love was only skin-deep. When the Toreador tell the tale, they often suggest Arikel tried her best to stay with Nosferatu, but he was so ashamed at what he had become he pushed her away. Whatever the truth, the long and short of it was that Nosferatu and Arikel were an item, but his corruption tore them apart.

If you believe that garbage, you must be a Toreador. It's the only place rubbish like that could have started. We were once the most beautiful and now the most condemned. Oh woe! If only we could once more reclaim our loveliness, everything would be perfect! Until that time, we must skulk in shame in the dark. Oh, what cursed creatures we are! Boo bloody fucking hoo.

Sure, I get it. It would be nice to be pretty, but what most people who tell this tale forget is that we really don't care. Only a Toreador would believe an entire Clan would be unable to just get over it in time. The loss of a pretty face might seem the worst thing in the world to a Toreador, but to us it's little more than a pain in the ass. All this tale does is keep us down, telling us we should be ashamed of what we are. Well, screw that.

THE DEAL

So there are a few tales about how we came to be, but the more interesting ones are about how we became what we are. From the earliest Kindred legends, the vampires lived in cities, and until the Romans came around there were no

real sewers we could lurk in. So how did we come to scurry in the dark? I like to trace that back to the old Irish legends.

It is said that the Irish were not native to the Emerald Isle, but that they came from the mainland looking for a new home. They followed in the footsteps of an ancient people called the Tuatha Dé Danann who had taken the land from a race of terrible giants called the Formori. The Tuatha were in no mood to share their territory and refused to allow the Celts to land. They even summoned a great storm to try to destroy them as they moored offshore. However, the Celts persisted, and a great battle was fought that saw the deaths of many kings. While the Tuatha brought to bear many supernatural powers, they were eventually defeated.

However, it was a hard won victory, and by no means decisive. Both sides agreed to divide the land between them and abide by the wisdom of the Celtic poet Amergin. Unfortunately, he cheated the Tuatha. While he divided the land equally, he gave everything above the ground to the Celts and everything below the ground to the Tuatha. They retreated deep under the earth and became the faerie folk, a race of strange, often misshapen, and alien creatures with magical power.

The story is a legend of course, but perhaps there is a grain of truth. Perhaps it records a battle between the forces of a vampire army and a human one, and a truce that allowed them to live together. Like the fey of folklore, we are powerful creatures that come in a variety of misshapen forms. However, we have heard tales of the real fey, so perhaps it is best for us not to claim their legends for ourselves. A Malkavian once told me they are a jealous people.

For all these intriguing faerie stories, there is a school of thought that what we are is simple science. Our appearance might be nothing to do with curses and treachery, but instead the result of years of evolution. We are perfectly suited to be the monsters we are, after all. Our leathery skin protects us from the damp environment, our large ears let us hear the echoes down the tunnels, and our big eyes let us see better in the darkness. Maybe we are monsters because we have chosen to become monsters, our lives in darkness making us creatures of the darkness.

But perhaps it is the other way around. Maybe the other Clans have evolved. They have become human so they might merge with their prey. As time passes, they get more attractive to their targets, able to lure them closer and closer. If that is so, we are the primal creatures of legend, the monsters we are all descended from. Perhaps there are no sightings of Caine, because no one is looking for a monster like us?

THE EMPIRE OF THE NOSFERATU

Every Clan seems to have its golden age: the Rome of the Ventrue, the Carthage of the Brujah, ad nauseam. Sure, vampires don't control humans nearly as well as we think we do, but it's true that certain Clans in certain places at certain times were in a good position to push the pieces around. The Ventrue started calling it an "empire," and then everyone had to have one.

We are no different, but you are unlikely to have heard of the great empires of the Nosferatu. In ancient days, our control spread over a larger area than the whole of Europe. We accepted tribute and sacrifice from thousands of humans who treated us as small gods, who must be appeased so as not to bring disaster. How have you not heard of this empire? The answer is simple: because history only pays attention to the first world, and we once ruled over much of the deepest parts of Africa. We made our domain the places of forest so dark the sun barely penetrated the canopy. We left Egypt and the northern deserts to the Setites and the rest, and each of us carved a domain among the tribes of the old places.

Among the villages of our domains, we became part of the people's superstitions. We played the hand we had been dealt, and instead of trying to be human, we remained monsters. We did not rule openly. Instead, we commanded tribute and fear from the shadows as "forest demons." While we were appeased, we protected the villages in our charge. We formed an almost symbiotic relationship with humanity, protecting and nurturing them as much as we fed on them. But we left each other to our own devices, staying in close contact but essentially accepting no society but our own.

URBAN EXPANSION

Our golden age could not last though. As the ages passed, Europe began to take notice of Africa and moved to exploit it. There was little we could do to resist. The Europeans were organized, numerous, and dedicated to taking the resources of our lands and even our people. Our lands were taken one village and one Kindred at a time, and were gone before we really knew what was happening. Our people were stolen as slaves, the villages emptied of our tribute. We were not ready to fight on such an industrial scale, and were forced to capitulate and return to the cities.

But what cities! Each was a magnificent cauldron of humanity and pestilence. The ages of industry had come

upon us. Humanity packed itself tightly in these places for our convenience and wallowed in filth together. Initially, the African Nosferatu looked down at their skulking European cousins. We had been kings and they were sewer dwellers. But we began to respect them once we understood what they had made together. They were kings and queens of vast undercities made of sewers, underground trains, and catacombs buried under the new cities. There was a whole world under the earth, one that had been quietly constructed where no one was especially looking.

We exchanged stories about the wars among the Kindred and the formation of two great Sects. It mattered little to any of us. Let the others play their games as long as they leave us alone. Let them call themselves Camarilla or Sabbat; they both treat the Nosferatu the same way. We gradually forgot our broken empires in Africa and dedicated ourselves to a new empire, deep below. We have always been urban creatures, even before the cities, so we carved a place for ourselves out of the earth and buried ourselves among the trash and secrets of those who lived above.

MODERN MONSTERS

Everyone thinks they know the Nosferatu, those skulks who lurk in the shadows and eavesdrop on other people's conversations. However, most people confuse "knowing" with "ignoring." The other Clans dismiss the Nosferatu because they don't seem to fit in, but tolerate us because we manage to keep ourselves to ourselves. We rarely rise to challenge the others, remaining neutral and selling secrets to all sides. There are few Nosferatu Princes or Archbishops. Those who do take command are often thought to be puppets or a convenient placeholder, the candidate no one wants but no one really objects to.

The Nosferatu are proof that not every vampire is obsessed with power and ambition. We are happy to remain in the background because we know what is out there. Hiding seems the best option when you know what lies in the shadows, and we are well aware that the nail that stands out gets hammered. So let the others take center stage, bask in the glory and the limelight. Better to forego transitory accolades and survive than be famous and dead.

Being ignored does have its advantages, and the Nosferatu have capitalized on them. Like the servants of old, we realized we had become practically invisible among our "betters." As the other Kindred didn't see us as a threat or even peers, they were not so guarded about what they said in our presence. In this way, rumor and gossip became the Nosferatu's trade. Secrets are a very reliable commodity, especially in vampire society. Often untraceable and potentially very valuable, they cost nothing to maintain or copy. It is sometimes even more profitable to offer to keep a secret than it is to offer to tell one. Many Kindred have told their secrets to the Nosferatu and paid them to keep quiet —we'll probably find out anyway, so getting to us first and paying us off is the best plan.

We are continually ostracized and persecuted, but hypocritically relied upon for our resources and neutrality. We care little what the others think, though. Being outcast, we prefer our own company and trust only each other. Everyone else is a potential mark.

ON BEING UGLY

No vampire Clan wears their curse more clearly than we do, but how much of a curse it really is depends a lot on the Nosferatu in question. Some Nosferatu are beautiful people Embraced out of spite, and it is these unfortunates who have the most trouble dealing with their new appearance. However, the Nosferatu don't usually look for their new childer from among the fashionable set. Most are outsiders from low class backgrounds, and a good few weren't cover model material before they become vampires. If appearance didn't matter to them before the Embrace, why should it matter any afterwards?

Still, the change ain't a walk in the park. It's not only painful, but something of a shock. Given the modern image of a vampire we get from shitty TV shows and teen novels, it's rarely what a new Kindred was expecting. It may seem unfair that everyone else is pretty. However, every Clan suffers a curse of the blood in some way. Is it really any better to be paralyzed by beauty, restricted to a particular kind of blood, or driven completely insane?

What makes the Nosferatu appearance a lot easier to bear is that we tend not to associate with other Kindred very often. We don't get invited to the nice parties or asked to hang out in the salons of the Elysium. When you spend all your time in the company of monsters, they gradually become the norm. After a while, it is the humans and other vampires who begin to look strange.

In many cases, the appearance of the Nosferatu is actually a badge of pride. We are monsters who look like monsters, our ugliness stripping away any pretense. Everything is laid bare when dealing with the Nosferatu, making us the keepers of the real truth, uncluttered by any sugar coating. You want an answer, the Nosferatu will give it to you, but you'd better be ready to get it straight. In this way, the

ugliness of the Clan is not really considered a weakness. Not by me, anyway.

THE NICTUKU

There is only one problem with knowing more secrets than anyone else knows: you know what is out there in the darkness. As if life wasn't hard enough, most of us believe there is a group of ancient and powerful elders looking to hunt down and destroy every last one of us, led by none other than our Antediluvian progenitor. It might sound like a bedtime story to frighten the neonates, but most of the Nosferatu elders will claim the rumors are true as well.

Exactly who and what the Nictuku are and what their plans are depends on which Nosferatu you talk to. Some believe they are literal monsters, their humanity long gone. Others know them to be careful and silent, waiting in the deep shadows to pick off the Nosferatu one at a time. All agree they are both dangerous and unpredictable, experienced hunters who know how to kill without leaving any trace.

Having said that, there are those who think the Nictuku are clearly a myth. The legends sound like a bedtime story, because they really are just bedtime stories. If these creatures are so powerful and so clever, how come the Nosferatu are not long dead already? Sure, lone Nosferatu often disappear mysteriously, but with so many enemies is that really any wonder? While the Nosferatu like to think they know everything that is going on, the other Kindred are hardly amateurs. The Ventrue, Tremere, or Lasombra might have quietly removed plenty of us because they "knew too much."

Still, the rumors persist. What is known is that when Nosferatu lose their humanity, they have a tendency to go deeper into the earth or sewers to move away from the light and the life of the city. It is certainly true that there are elder Nosferatu who have been driven mad by their Beast and wait in the shadows to slaughter anything that crosses their path. Are these the Nictuku? It is the one secret even we don't really know, or even want to know. Our childer are taught one thing about the Nictuku, though: whatever you believe, if you meet something dark and deep in the shadows, you run.

THE SCHRECKNET

Just because we live in the sewers, it doesn't mean we haven't embraced technology. A decade or so ago, one of the New York Nosferatu created a Deep Web system for the Clan to share information. The idea caught on, and soon all of us were sharing what we heard online. Algorithms and bots constantly scan the data looking to create links between the information so the Clan can build an overall picture of who is doing what.

Pretty much any Nosferatu in good standing with the Clan has access to the SchreckNet. Those that aren't in good standing just don't get the new passwords whenever there is a periodic change. In a short time, the network has become more than just a database: it has become a social network as well. Some of the younger Nos have even started calling it Filthbook and Garbage+.

We sometimes allow other Clans to use the system. We don't like doing it, but sometimes you have to play nice. When we do let others in, it's only for a limited time, and they rarely realize how little of the system they are getting access to. If any of the others knew quite how big the network was, they would do their best to shut it down. However, it proved very useful for everyone during the battle of New York, and since then we heard the other Clans are looking to build their own networks.

NOSFERATU FACTIONS

When it comes to group activities, the Nosferatu are a study in opposites. On one hand, we are all highly individual and often loners. No two of us are especially alike, and our appearance often makes us avoid the company of others. However, on the other hand, we crave the company of our own kind. To be with other Nosferatu is a reminder that we are not alone, that our appearance is not unique, and that others suffer as we do.

So Nosferatu gatherings are rather awkward affairs. Everyone wants to be there, but few of us really want to take part. It's not like we're known for our social skills or witty banter. The same goes for the factions. A few Nosferatu that recognize similar outlooks and traits form into groups, but these groups are little more than an extended contacts network. Few ever have meetings or any form of agenda. However, they do find the occasional company of such peers supportive, as it helps us feel less alone and outcast. Some also find that giving themselves a label gives them a sense of belonging beyond being just Nosferatu.

BESTIALS

It you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Bestials are those Nosferatu that have become sick of trying to live up to human norms. Instead, they embrace the primitive parts of their nature. They reason that animals are far less complicated, and certainly lack the hypocrisy inherent in many humans. As the human world has rejected them, Bestials choose a different world and remove themselves from even Kindred society.



Joining this faction for a time is common for many new Nosferatu as a way to cope with their new state. But some Nosferatu make it a full-on lifestyle choice. They often become unrecognizable, even to other Nosferatu. They might take on bestial traits in the same way as the Gangrel, but far more advanced. Instead of pointed ears or catlike eyes, they might gain reptilian skin or even a tail. I don't know how it happens, but a few of us point to the Bestials are more evidence that maybe we're not that far from the Gangrel.

CLEOPATRAS

The most brutalized of the Nosferatu are the Cleopatras. As humans they were beautiful, and in many cases shallow and cruel because of it. They were Embraced out of spite as a punishment or a lesson. As such, they are often outcasts among the Clan, as if knowing beauty has somehow tainted them, so they group together for mutual protection. Many eventually become part of the Clan, as what sets them apart is a lack of knowledge about our traditions and society. However, some nurse the anger they feel, especially when they find out that most vampires do not share this curse. Some say they are the ones who find their way to the Nictuku and join their ranks.

I asked about the name once. I turns out it doesn't come from the Egyptian queen, but for the "heroine" of Todd Browning's film *Freaks*. That Cleopatra was an acrobat whose cruelty provoked the "freaks" of the traveling circus she worked in to remake her into one of them. No one is sure if the faction actually had a name before the film's release, and some historians have suggested that it is the modern era that has created the cult of beauty. Perhaps in older times it wasn't really such a big deal.

The act of creating such a creature is highly controversial to most Nosferatu. While on one hand they applaud taking one of the pretty people down a peg, on the other it reinforces the myth that to be Nosferatu is a curse in itself. Cleopatras were not really meant to be Nosferatu, and rarely understand the gift they have been given. However, while many end their existence by their own hand, those who do survive often prosper and find a way to move past their initial horror. In a few cases it even makes them better people, forcing them to see past appearance and do their best to empathize and help those who have also suffered.

FAGINS

Family is important to most people, even the Nosferatu. For some the closeness of the Clan is not enough, and they choose to create a new family of their own. What family they gather will depend on the Nosferatu in question. Gangs of street urchins are just as likely as a collection of

killers and murderers. For the Fagin, it is about belonging rather than what the group actually is, so the group is really a reflection of the Nosferatu's personality.

To cement the bond of family, the Nosferatu will usually use the blood bond. This makes their little group more of a blood cult than a society. Some Fagins get obsessed with growing their cult, or the power goes to their heads and they become a monstrous god in their own eyes. Such extremes usually occur in the Sabbat, but plenty of Camarilla Fagins have got carried away in the past.

LEATHERFACES

A step further than the Bestials are the Leatherfaces, named after the iconic character from *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. (Yeah, we get some of our stuff from movies. It's not like we get many chances to go out to the cabaret for our evening entertainment, do we?) Anyhow, before the film the faction had many colorful names, such as Butchers and Rippers. These Kindred have chosen to embrace not just their bestial nature, but also their monstrous side. Most have given up entirely on humanity and allowed themselves to become the monster they appear to be. Quite often, they are the result of the Embrace of some badly broken people, but some are driven over the edge. However, in the case of the Nosferatu *antitribu*, this behavior is positively encouraged.

Leatherfaces believe themselves to be the monsters in the dark. It isn't enough to kill; their victims must be terrified before they die. They want their victims to know who they are, and know that true horror has come out of the night to murder them. As such, they make a point of using brutal and savage weapons, and adopt the tropes of horror films such as dark basements, lonely cabins, and trails of blood. Despite being capable of killing their victims quickly with their vampiric powers, most like to hunt them for as long as possible to prolong the terror.

LOREMASTERS

For some Nosferatu, secrets are not enough. They seek to learn more about their condition, often so they might better understand it. With the Nosferatu gift to sift fact from fiction and see the truth behind the lies, they make excellent scholars. Many expand their studies outside vampiric lore and latch on to the history and society of other supernatural creatures.

Like many academics, Loremasters can be very jealous of their research. Some even go so far as to seed rumors and lies for others to find so they alone might hold the truth. For the truly dedicated Loremaster, that is simply an interesting challenge. Nothing holds the attention of these academics more than a good mystery and supernatural lore is overflowing with those.

MARTYRS

Becoming Nosferatu is far more of a gear change for a new vampire than for any other Clan, or so I imagine. It is bad enough to come to accept you are a blood-drinking creature of the night with only the most tenuous control over your base urges, but couple that with seeing your own body twisted into a horrific form. The Embrace is hard for the Nosferatu and often even physically painful as well.

To help them deal with all these changes, many Nosferatu make a point of holding on to something human. It might be their family, a sense of justice, or even people watching. But for some, this develops into something of a complex. They latch onto morality and try to calm their own inner demons by becoming an avenger for those who fail to live up to the Nosferatu's moral standards. Their focus on humanity leads then to believe their monstrous change is some form of punishment, and so they are commonly referred to as Martyrs.

The problem is that while they are keen students of morality and humanity, they are still monsters at heart. While many watch from a distance, those who interact with humanity often suffer tragic results. Many kill those they are trying to protect, or visit terrible justice for the smallest of infractions. It ain't pretty to watch, and this is *me* saying that.

SKINS

Not every Nosferatu enjoys living in the sewers and the company of their Clan-mates. The Skins use their powers to disguise themselves as humans and infiltrate mortal society. Many have quite detailed and developed aliases among the kine. They are highly skilled actors, working undercover to build a whole new life (or even lives) outside the dark places of the Nosferatu.

The Skins are very useful for the Clan itself, often in command of resources few Nosferatu control. They are also experts on current affairs and on what is going on in the world above. Unfortunately, many are unstable. The most common reason to become a Skin is as a rejection or an outright denial of their new nature. Eventually they cannot hide who they are, especially from themselves, and that is when it all begins to fall apart.

WARRENS

As the rest of the Kindred leave the Nosferatu to their own devices and happily grant them dominion over the sewers of the city, the Nosferatu have free reign to make

the places their own. A few agents in the sanitation department keep things quiet, and a little nudge in the city infrastructure planning meetings gets some remodeling done. Generally, as long as they function, no one cares what is happening in the sewers.

The Nosferatu make their homes down here among the filth. However, they can always find dry and even quite pleasant places to hold meetings and build sanctuaries and havens. Influence in the city planning office sees to it these places are remodeled to suit their needs. But the Nosferatu are not shy about getting their hands dirty and rebuilding some of the tunnels themselves. These places the Nosferatu have claimed and remade are referred to as "Warrens," and any other Kindred would be fools to try and visit them. Warrens are often labyrinthine and typically have sections full of shit to dissuade those outside the Clan. You want to get in with the Nosferatu? You'd better be prepared to get your hands dirty, and pretty much the rest of you, too.

While each Warren is as individual as the Nosferatu who created it, they always contain a few spawning pools. These are places where the Clan has corrupted the local water with their blood. It ensures the rats, lice, and other creatures that drink or live in this water get a dose of Nosferatu blood. This allows us far greater control over such animals and vermin, and helps us create more effective animal ghouls and swarms as spies. While Nosferatu are just as capable of creating human ghouls, we usually prefer animals and insects. Our blood often corrupts human ghouls in either body or mind, limiting their effectiveness as agents in the human world. So rats and cockroaches, coupled with Animalism, often make far better agents.

Nosferatu Warrens have been known to sprawl deep into the earth. In old European towns where the city has been built over, they have whole buildings and streets refitted for our use under the sewers. Many use the opportunity to remodel as a chance to share their art. In some, the walls are covered with intricate carvings, while in others the tunnels themselves are cut in beautiful shapes and forms. Some Warrens go so deep they open into underground rivers and caves full of crystals. There is a staggering beauty to be found here, but one we guard jealously.

What few Clans know is that Warrens are not exclusively underground, and neither are the Nosferatu. Some cities have very little underground infrastructure due to unstable soil or concerns over earthquakes. It is also important to note that the Clan survived for many millennia without sewer systems to hide in. Given the convenience of sewers, however, those cities without them are rare, and often contain few modern Nosferatu.

Where we can't dig into the earth, the Nosferatu create a series of safe houses. These might be caves, basements, or just ordinary homes. They are then kept secret by alternating the use of each location, so none of them gets used too often. The members of the Clan commit to memory the elaborate systems developed for how they are used and for what. So, an old house downtown might be the main Clan meeting place one week, empty the next, and used as a spawning pool for a month afterwards. In a sense, the Nosferatu create a series of virtual tunnels that connect each of these (often physically unconnected) places, which shift and change to protect the network. Modern technology has made this easier, and the SchreckNet can be used to give those of us new to a city a clue on where to start to meet our own kind.

The other main problem of not having any tunnels is how to avoid the sun. Unlike the Gangrel, we generally lack the ability to hide in the ground, so we need some sort of sanctuary. What does give us an advantage is that we don't care where that sanctuary might be. Nosferatu have dug into the loose piles of rubbish in landfill sites or let themselves sink to the bottom of deep lakes. Some of these places might even be made part of our network.

THE ANTITRIBU

While the Camarilla Nosferatu spend their time trying to avoid becoming the horrors they resemble, our counterparts in the Sabbat revel in their monstrosity. To the *antitribu*, their bodies are a mark of pride, a clear indication they are no longer human, and that human rules no longer apply. In a way, the physical distortion of the Clan makes it a lot easier for Nosferatu to cast off their humanity and acclimatize to being part of the Sabbat. In fact, many employ their packmates among the Tzimisce to make them even more disfigured.

Interestingly, Sabbat Nosferatu are not as violent and bloodthirsty as many of their sect-mates. They certainly have their fair share of Leatherfaces and Fagins, but they rarely engage in the wholesale slaughter young Sabbat are prone to. The *antitribu* simply feel that they have little to prove, so when they do take life en masse, they are doing so for a very particular reason.

While the Camarilla and Sabbat Nosferatu are on opposite sides, they do maintain a few open lines of communication. *Antitribu* even have access to the SchreckNet, as both sides recognize the use of the other in learning more secrets. They also both understand the use of the other side in spreading disinformation, and so treat what intelligence they get with a pinch of salt.

Having said that, they are both terrified of the Nictuku. This is especially true of the *antitribu*, given one of the Sabbat's stated goals is to make war on their founders. So it is unsurprising that most of the information that crosses between both sides of the Clan pertains to our collective ancient enemies.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Bouncer

No one employs you for your looks. They want a big guy to stand at the door, and you fit the bill. Your name's not down? You're not coming in. Simple as that. Some people get a bit ornery when you tell them the rules, and you can't abide rudeness. But when you pick someone up with one arm, they tend to get real polite.

As a Kindred, the places you look after have become a little more upmarket. You've stood at the doors of Elysium and acted as gatekeeper for the most powerful vampires in the city. You never get invited in, of course — no way they'd want a Nos at their party. But you keep your ears open, and it's amazing what they let slip as they pass you by. Sometimes you don't even need to be invisible.

Connoisseur

You may be ugly, but that doesn't mean you can't have nice things. Being twisted on the outside doesn't mean you have to have a twisted heart. It is the ability to enjoy beauty that connects us to humanity. Being ugly, you have a unique perspective and perhaps a better understanding of its truth than anyone else does.

You have collected enough art to make a Toreador jealous, but that is not all. Your wine cellar collects a hundred stolen vintages. Your bookshelves hold dozens of rare first editions. Each night you like to open a new bottle and savor its exquisite bouquet (before feeding it to a mortal and drinking their blood) as you read from an elegant work of literature surrounded by the beauty of art.

Crusader

You work in the shadows to make the world a better place. When you joined the Nosferatu, you learned a great many secrets. Too many secrets. There is a lot that is wrong with the world, and you decided to fix it. Your monstrous form means you have to work in the shadows and hide your identity, but that's perfect for you. You can hunt the criminals who operate above the law, bringing a little street justice to those who have slipped through the system.

You have become a night hunter. You can track your prey unseen. Then, using your incredible strength, you can strike when they least expect it and administer justice. Hell, you were never going to show up in a courtroom anyway, so why not take the direct approach?

Face

Plenty of people think being a Nosferatu means having to hide, but not you. You have the power to be anyone you want. Every new day is a new face and a new identity. You don't have to be average either. Why shouldn't you live like a movie star? Beauty is only an illusion anyway, so what you do isn't even cheating.

You have become the ultimate scam artist. Your winning smile cloaks a monstrous form that no one ever notices. When the job is done, you return to the shadows and the sewers, where no one will think to look for the young and beautiful. The next day you pick a new face and a new mark, and do it all over again.

Information Broker

We live in an information age. Gold, jewels, money, they won't count for much in the long run. What you have is information, and its value never goes out of style. It takes a little snooping to find valuable secrets, but over the years, you've got very good at it. People leave their secrets lying in all manner of places. If you are willing to dig through trash, literally and figuratively, there is a lot you can find out.

Your ability to walk unseen is the most useful attribute you have, but a few strong-arm tactics have got marks to spill the beans more than once. It is important to make sure the information is good though. Your reputation would suffer if someone caught you passing on lies. People come to you expecting a certain level of quality, and like any businessperson, you do not want to disappoint your customers.

Loremaster

There are no secrets like the old secrets. While the other Nosferatu are clamoring to find out what Prince is hiding, you recognize that Princes come and go. Ten years, a hundred, even a thousand, there'll be a new lord of the domain and it all starts again. What a waste. You have better secrets to uncover, the deepest secrets of all vampires.

No one really knows the answers to the big questions. Who really was Caine? Where is he now? Did he even really exist? There are old creatures who have worked hard to hide our history, and that only makes it all the more intriguing. So when powerful people start warning you off, you know you must be getting close.

Pet Store Owner

You don't think animals are better than people are, but it's a close call. You wanted to be a vet when you were younger, but quickly discovered that the insides of animals was not what interested you. You wanted to just spend time with animals; it didn't matter which ones. Getting a job in a pet store let you do that. Sure, it was sad to see each animal get bought and taken away, but it made you happy to see them go to good homes and know they would be loved.

Unfortunately, not everyone knows how to care for animals. Some people take them for granted, or throw them away once they have stopped being so cute. Now you have the power to seek those people out and teach them a lesson.

Prince's Advisor

The others think you've sold out, but you think of it as knowing how to be useful. The Nosferatu rarely have an agenda, rarely take sides in the games of the Kindred. You may have picked a side, but you remain neutral. You don't share secrets for free, but you simply offer advice to whoever controls the domain. You serve the office of Prince rather than the Prince themselves, and thus remain outside the power games.

You have modeled yourself as a civil servant, while Princes come and go; you remain to serve the city. You never actually share the secrets you know. You simply advise on the relative merits of any particular course of action. Some say you have an eye on the Princedom yourself, but you are content to serve. For now.

Rat King

You don't need people. People are overcomplicated, selfish, and unreliable. They make a mess of everything they touch. You prefer the company of animals, and have become part of their pack. For some Nosferatu it is cockroaches, but for you it is rats. You sleep in a swarm of them and the rest scatter across the city. When they return, they whisper secrets to you.

Wherever you go, you have a crowd of rats with you. They run through the clothing you have and scurry about all over you. They are your family and constant companions, and a sixth sense that reaches out far across the city. Some people are squeamish about rats, but how could they fail to adore these loving and loyal pets? When you have a swarm of rats for your family, you will never be alone.

Watcher

You never liked being involved in things. You got called a "wallflower," but that was better than being called a freak. People are messy, complicated, and unpredictable, but they are also fascinating. You never understood what they expected of you, so you stayed outside. You watched carefully, though, hoping to learn the secrets that seemed to come so easily to everyone else.

Now you are Kindred, you are even more of an outsider, but somehow that just feels right. Hidden under a cloak of shadow, you can watch the comings and goings of those around you as you see fit. Life itself has become your own living soap opera, but sometimes the drama reveals some very interesting twists.

Merits and Flaws

Foul Blood (1pt. Merit)

Your blood is vile; in fact, it tastes so disgusting it requires a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) just to avoid gagging and retching after tasting it. If someone is foolish enough to attempt diablerie on you, they need to succeed in three (difficulty 9) Willpower rolls to go through with it. The blood is so disgusting that no one can keep it down long enough to use it to become a ghoul, either.

Lizard Limbs (1pt. Merit)

Like a lizard, you are able to actually shed parts of your body. By spending a blood point and a little effort, you can detach a hand or foot, or even an arm or leg. This might be to escape bonds or a grapple. Unfortunately, the appendage will not reattach, and you will have to regrow that over time (usually a couple of days for a hand or foot, and a week for a limb). You also suffer a -3 dice pool penalty to actions that would require the use of more limbs.

Long Fingers (1pt. Merit)

You have been blessed with unusually long and graceful fingers. This means you have an easier time with fine manipulation as well as grappling tasks, gaining an extra die when attempting such actions.

Monstrous Maw (1pt. Merit)

You have either oversized tusks for fangs, or a huge mouth full of sharp teeth. Whatever form it takes, your mouth is that of a monster. When attacking with a bite

you do an additional point of damage. You may also add a die to your Intimidation dice pool when you smile.

Piscine (1pt. Merit)

Water is a far more comfortable environment for you, be it the sea or sewer effluent. Rolls involving swimming or underwater movement have their difficulty reduced by 1.

Slimy (1pt. Merit)

You secrete an ooze, which is as disgusting as it sounds. The ooze covers your entire body and soaks into your clothes. It makes you slippery and difficult to hold, requiring opponents to gain two more successes to grapple you. The dampness also makes you a little fire resistant, reducing your difficulty to soak fire damage by 1.

Spawning Pool (1-3pt. Merit)

You have a spawning pool of your own (or possibly donate heavily to the Clan's main pool). Creating such a pool takes time, and requires regular infusions of blood, at least six blood points a week for a year.

The Merit grants its level as a dice pool bonus to the Nosferatu's use of Animalism in their home city, but only with animals considered vermin, such as rats and cockroaches. Essentially the bonus is only available for creatures that might conceivably drink regularly from the tainted blood.

Once established, the spawning pool requires twice its level in blood points each week to it. Without proper maintenance, its level will drop by one. It can be rebuilt by maintaining it at the new level and adding four additional blood points each week for six months.

The Merit cannot be improved above its initial level, as this also represents the convenience of its location and the variety of creatures that might find it.

Tunnel Rat (1-5pt. Merit)

You are remarkably adept at moving through the underground tunnels that you call your home. When attempting to navigate, escape, or track through sewers and underground places you know, you gain an additional die for every point you have in this Merit.

Sleep Unseen (2pt. Merit)

The power of Obfuscate usually requires you to concentrate at least a little. However, you are able to lock the power on, allowing you to sleep while remaining hidden. To do so requires the expenditure of another blood point, but it will last throughout the day's rest. Those with Auspex can still attempt to detect you, but mortals will be unaware of your sanctuary. This can be a useful trick for Kindred who like to travel.

Tough Hide (2pt. Merit)

Your skin is much tougher than usual, possibly like that of a rhino or a lizard. This hide protects you against most normal damage, granting you an extra die when making a soak roll. However, this bonus does not apply against fire and sunlight.

False Reflection (3pt. Merit)

Even when using their Obfuscate abilities, Nosferatu still show up in their true form when noticed by machines, such as cameras or video surveillance. With this ability, the Nosferatu can extend their power to recorded images and media. However, as with Mask of the Thousand Faces, the original image isn't actually changed; it is just that people see it the way the Nosferatu wants it seen. Unfortunately, computers are not so easily fooled: if the image is used for facial recognition software (for instance), the computer will see the Nosferatu's real face and fail to find a match. The Nosferatu has best take care how this power is used, as it may wear off in time. Some archived photos have given librarians a nasty surprise, years after going into storage.

Patagia (4pt. Merit)

Your arms and legs have leathery flaps of skin between them, similar to that of a flying squirrel. While they make finding clothes a nightmare, they also allow you to glide for short distances, given enough height and a decent wind. The Storyteller might require an Athletics roll when it comes to landing.

Rugged Bad Looks (5pt. Merit)

While you are still hideous, you are not quite as monstrous as most Nosferatu. You still have an appearance of 0, but you might pass for human in the right light. It is a still a good idea to cover up and stay in the shadows, but the sight of you (or even the smell of you) is not an instant breach of the Masquerade. Having said that, you are still ugly enough to unnerve the crap out of most people.

Stench (1pt. Flaw)

Most Nosferatu pick up a certain odor, but you stink so bad even your Clan-mates find you hard to be close to. Your presence is preceded by your stench, removing two die from all Stealth rolls.

Dangerous Secret (1-5pt. Flaw)

You have come to know something you really wish you hadn't discovered. Worse yet, the people you have the

BUYING AND SELLING INFORMATION

It's hard to give an abstract system for information. Secrets are each unique and special, and such things often lend themselves better to plot and story rather than dots and dice. As such, we don't offer a specific system for selling and knowing secrets. However, the Storyteller may wish to allow Nosferatu a background similar to Anarch Information Exchange (**Anarchs Unbound** p. 98) to represent their network and control of the city's information.

dirt on know that you know. It might be that you have discovered the Prince's haven, or that there are infernalists hiding in the diocese. Whatever it is, you are not sure whom you can tell, and if you do, you will only make the subjects of the secret more enthusiastic about getting rid of you. You may even be implicated in the secret and risk going down with them. The more potent the Flaw, the more powerful the people in question are, and the more they want it silenced.

Anosmia (2pt. Flaw)

Your life in the sewer has removed your sense of smell and taste. This means you are unperturbed by even the worst stench or most disgusting flavor. However, it also means you cannot ever succeed at any Perception rolls that rely of taste or smell. It also does not make you immune in any way to gas attacks or poisons; you just won't be able to tell they are there.

Parasitic Infestation (2pt. Flaw)

Living in the dark has made you a home to all manner of creepy crawlies and bloodsuckers. Your skin is crawling with ticks, lice, and leeches of all descriptions. They constantly bite and burrow, and having fed on your vitae, they have become very hard to kill. Not only can you not command them, you have tried everything to get rid of them and still they persist. Whatever the reason, they find you so succulent they reduce your blood pool by the result



of one die divided by 3 (round down) each time you rise. The constant itch also keeps you on edge, increasing the difficulty of any Self-Control or Instinct rolls by 1.

Bestial (3pt. Flaw)

You are closer to animals than humans, and it shows. In addition to the Nosferatu Clan weakness, you have an additional weakness: whenever you frenzy, you gain an animal feature, similar to the Gangrel Clan weakness (V20, p. 55).

With Storyteller permission, permanently acquired animal features may be justification to acquire certain Merits after character creation, such as Lizard Limbs (p. 160) or Monstrous Maw (pp. 160-161). If so, the Storyteller can simply award them, or require an experience point expenditure (such as two times the Merit point value). Similar Flaws can also be taken, but cannot grant additional freebie or experience points.

Enemy Brood (3pt. Flaw)

You have made an enemy of another group of Nosferatu. Unlike your usual enemies, they know the places you like to go and aren't too squeamish about following you there. They keep you on the move, hunting you from sanctuary to sanctuary. The sewers themselves might not even be safe for you anymore. If you move to a new city, they use their contacts to pass on the word to their allies to keep hounding you. Sooner or later, you are going to have to take them down to rid yourself of them.

Putrescent (4pt. Flaw)

The supernatural process that usually keeps a vampire's form from rotting after death has failed to work on you. Your body has become putrescent and fragile as it gradually decays. All soak rolls you make have their dice pool reduced by 1. You may even lose body parts if you suffer a solid enough blow. Should this happen, make a Stamina roll (difficulty 6) and lose a part of your body (Storyteller's choice) if you fail. Should you botch, you also receive a level of aggravated damage. These missing parts may regrow, but your body continues to rot.

Contagious (5pt. Flaw)

Your body has died on the inside, filling you with noxious bacteria, spores, and even fungi. Mortals that touch you or on whom you feed must make a Stamina roll (difficulty 9) not to fall ill. The illness puts them in bed with fever and sickness, and each week they may attempt the Stamina roll again. The Storyteller might reduce the difficulty if the target is receiving proper medical attention. On a success they recover, but if they fail, they remain feverish. At the end of each month the victim remains ill, they lose a point of Stamina; if they are reduced to zero Stamina they die. If the Nosferatu knows of their contagion and infects someone maliciously, the Storyteller might call for a Humanity (or appropriate Path of Morality) degeneration roll if they die. Supernatural creatures generally have the ability to heal or cure such sickness in themselves, and vampires are immune to these germs of the dead.

Incoherent (5pt. Flaw)

Human speech is impossible for you. It might be that your mouth is too misshapen after the Embrace, or that years of living in the sewers have made you forget how to communicate. While you can understand what is being said to you, you cannot respond. Telepathy works on you as normal, and you have no problem communicating with animals, but human speech is barred to you.

Discipline Powers

Busy Doing Nothing (Obfuscate ••••• •)

With this ability, the Nosferatu is perfectly visible, but appears to be doing something innocuous when he is actually up to something else. If he is picking a lock, for example, he will appear to be standing by the door innocently. Even when involved in a brawl, he will seem to be a bystander. The image works in a similar way to Mask of a Thousand Faces (V20, p. 185), in that the Nosferatu is exactly where he appears to be.

System: To use this power, the Nosferatu rolls Manipulation + Performance (difficulty 7). The better the result, the more action the Nosferatu can take without disturbing the image. For one success, he might only be able to listen to a door while appearing to stand near it, while for five successes he can be engaged in a fight and appear to be a bystander.

Displacement (Obfuscate ••••• •)

The Nosferatu can use his power not only to disappear, but also to appear shifted a little to one side or the other. Essentially, she isn't standing quite where she appears to be. This makes the vampire extremely difficult to hit. It is almost harder to strike her than when she is invisible, as trying to ignore what you can see in front of you is very difficult.

System: This power costs a blood point to activate for a scene. While active, this power imposes a dice penalty of the user's Obfuscate rating to any attempt to hit or touch

her. The attacker is allowed a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty equal to the user's Obfuscate rating + 4, maximum 9) to notice the deception after a few blows. If successful, the attacker can reduce the penalty by the amount of successes she gained. The penalty is also further reduced by the attacker's Auspex rating, but to a minimum of 1 in all cases.

Combination Disciplines

Bestial Presence (Animalism •••, Obfuscate •••)

Using this power, the vampire summons up a little of the Beast in each nearby vampire and gives it form. This gestalt entity becomes a brooding animal presence that follows the vampire like a companion.

System: The companion is summoned using Manipulation + Animal Ken with a difficulty of 8. It remains for a number of hours equal to the amount of successes gained. The vampire must also spend one blood point.

The brooding presence of the companion puts all nearby vampires on edge. They feel their own Beast watching and whispering to them. While the companion is present, all vampires (except the summoner) in its immediate vicinity suffer -2 dice to all Social rolls and all rolls to resist any form of frenzy.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Cloak the Beast (Animalism •••••, Obfuscate •••)

Even a Kindred who has not mastered the Beast might learn to hide her failings from others. With this ability, the Nosferatu has such control over their animal side that she can use her powers of stealth to conceal how badly she may have fallen from grace.

System: This power requires no roll, simply granting an ability that comes into play whenever any power attempts to determine the Kindred's Humanity/Path or Virtue ratings. The difficulty of such an attempt is increased by the Kindred's Animalism or Obfuscate rating (whichever is higher). A failure shows the Kindred to have solid control over their Virtues, and a Humanity/Path rating of at least a healthy 7. The player should be warned that depending on whatever recent actions provoked such a scan or interview she may still have a lot of explaining to do!

This power costs 24 experience points to learn.

Forbidden Zone (Obfuscate •••••, Potence •••)

By infusing her strength into an area as a barrier, the Nosferatu can create a space that resists any form of physical entry. However, this barrier is illusionary and all in the mind of the target. The area might be cloaked or not, as the Nosferatu decides. However, entering the area requires anyone else to have to push through an apparent invisible force. The vampire can release individuals from this power simply by touch.

System: The vampire rolls Strength + Subterfuge (difficulty 6) and spends a blood point. For each success, the character may maintain the zone for one hour, although once set up she need not remain nearby. The vampire can create a zone of any size up to a radius of six feet/two meters for each point of Potence and Obfuscate she has. So a vampire with Obfuscate 5 and Potence 3 could create a zone with a radius of up to 48 feet/16 meters.

For anyone except the vampire to enter the zone requires a roll as if the character was attempting to open a door (**V20**, p. 261). However, the zone is actually a mental barrier, not a physical one, so the successes required equal the vampire's Obfuscate + Potence, and the difficulty is 7. Characters already inside the zone may leave it without any problem, but must make the same roll to return. The vampire can touch any character and exclude them from the effects of this power at no cost.

This power costs 24 experience points to learn.

Haunted Place (Presence ••, Obfuscate •••••)

Given how few Nosferatu master Presence, this is a rare power, but a potent one. The Nosferatu cloaks an area in power, making the place almost impossible to miss. However, it becomes noticeable due to the fetid and corrupt aura the place acquires. Most people avoid it without even knowing why. It seems somehow corrupt and twisted; somewhere no one with any good intent might choose to visit.

System: To create such a place, the vampire must make three rolls on three consecutive nights. Each roll takes an hour to perform, as she spends at least five blood points around the area during the course of the hour. Then, the player rolls Manipulation + Empathy and chooses a difficulty number (the same difficulty number for each roll). If all three rolls are successful, the aura of corruption settles over the place.

For anyone but the vampire to enter it, he must make a Willpower roll with a difficulty equal to the one the vampire chose in creating the Haunted Place. The effect lasts for as long as the vampire lives, or until the Storyteller rules the area has changed significantly or lost some of its menace (such as an urban renewal program).

This power costs 21 experience points to learn.

I Know (Auspex ••, Obfuscate ••)

You don't actually need to know a secret to use it as leverage. With this power, the Nosferatu is able to make it appear as if she knows something the subject would rather keep secret. Essentially, she surface scans the target for feelings of guilt, and uses Obfuscate to project into his mind the subtle body language and turns of phrase that convince him the vampire really knows something dangerous about him.

The Nosferatu knows nothing in reality; even the light scan she does to establish guilt gives her no clue as to the nature of what he might be hiding. But the target doesn't know that, and convinces himself the vampire must know his darkest secrets.

System: This power requires a Perception + Subterfuge roll at a difficulty equal to the target's current Willpower. For each success the vampire gains, the subject is more convinced the vampire knows something confidential and dangerous about him. For one success, the target believes she may know something potentially damaging, whereas for five he is sure the vampire knows his deepest secrets.

How the vampire chooses to use this leverage is up to her. Proving she doesn't actually know anything, such as guessing badly about the secret or offering details that prove wrong, will break the illusion.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Power Animal (Animalism •••, Potence •)

The Kindred's connection with animals is such that they can transfer their physical power to animals under their control. Such creature can be made stronger and more deadly with an increase in strength from the vampire's Potence.

System: The vampire must first make a connection to an animal using Feral Whispers (**V20**, pp. 129-130). She must then spend a blood point for each point of Potence she wishes to invest in the animal for the rest of the night. She may not grant the animal more Potence points that it has Strength, or than the vampire has Potence. So, a rat with a Strength of 1 may only be given Potence 1, but a pig of Strength 4 can be given a Potence of 4, as long as the vampire has at least a Potence of 4.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Wolf in Sheep's Clothing (Animalism •••, Obfuscate ••)

This power allows the Nosferatu to use their Obfuscate powers on animals as well as humans. They might cloak an animal companion to bring them into Elysium, or simply to sneak about the city with them on their nightly wanderings. They might also use their power to make them seem more impressive, dangerous, or even benign.

System: This power allows the user to apply any Obfuscate power to any animal. The vampire makes any required rolls and spends any blood required by the ability, but the effects are applied to the animal. The animal in question must either be under the control of Animalism or have drunk the Nosferatu's blood.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

SCHRECKNET

Many Nosferatu use Schrecknet as a way of compiling, organizing, and sharing their hard-earned information. Not every Nosferatu is willing to share with the network, and more than one Warrens hasn't updated their system since the 90s. However, the hodge-podge of networked computers is still one of the largest and most secure databases of Kindred information known, even if much of the security comes from using software and operating systems that are hand-built or horribly obsolete.

Any Nosferatu that can get access to a Schrecknet terminal or uses a device that can access Schrecknet can get a -2 difficulty on any Investigation rolls involving Kindred society. Theoretically, other Kindred could use Schrecknet to get the same bonus, but the Nosferatu jealously guard their secrets.



Ravnos

"One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star."

— Friedrich Nietzsche

The Rose Wilts

The house lights dim, and a hush falls over the audience. Raucous patrons cease their clinking of glasses, and a smatter of applause flutters through the crowd.

When the lights come up — I appear.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to a spectacle beyond your understanding! Prepare yourself for sights beyond logic, where magic is the order of the day!" I smile, and feel my easy charisma winning over the crowd. Each trick, each surprise, each confused gasp and whisper the audience makes is like blood in my veins, keeping me alive another night. When the show is over, none of them will grasp the difference between what was real and what was not, which illusions were sleight of hand and which were the currency of dream. For my own part, there's really no difference at all.

Afterwards, in the dressing room, I listen to the continued applause and cheer of the crowd before they slowly disperse to go home. My room resembles the inside of a caravan wagon; a box with curtains and a dressing-screen, tightly packed with scraps, discarded tools of the trade, and half-forgotten objects of art. It feels like home.

A flower spins from the tip of my finger, twisting into existence with a thought. The petals form and flush, becoming the bloom that once brushed your cheek. I remember you dancing. I smile.

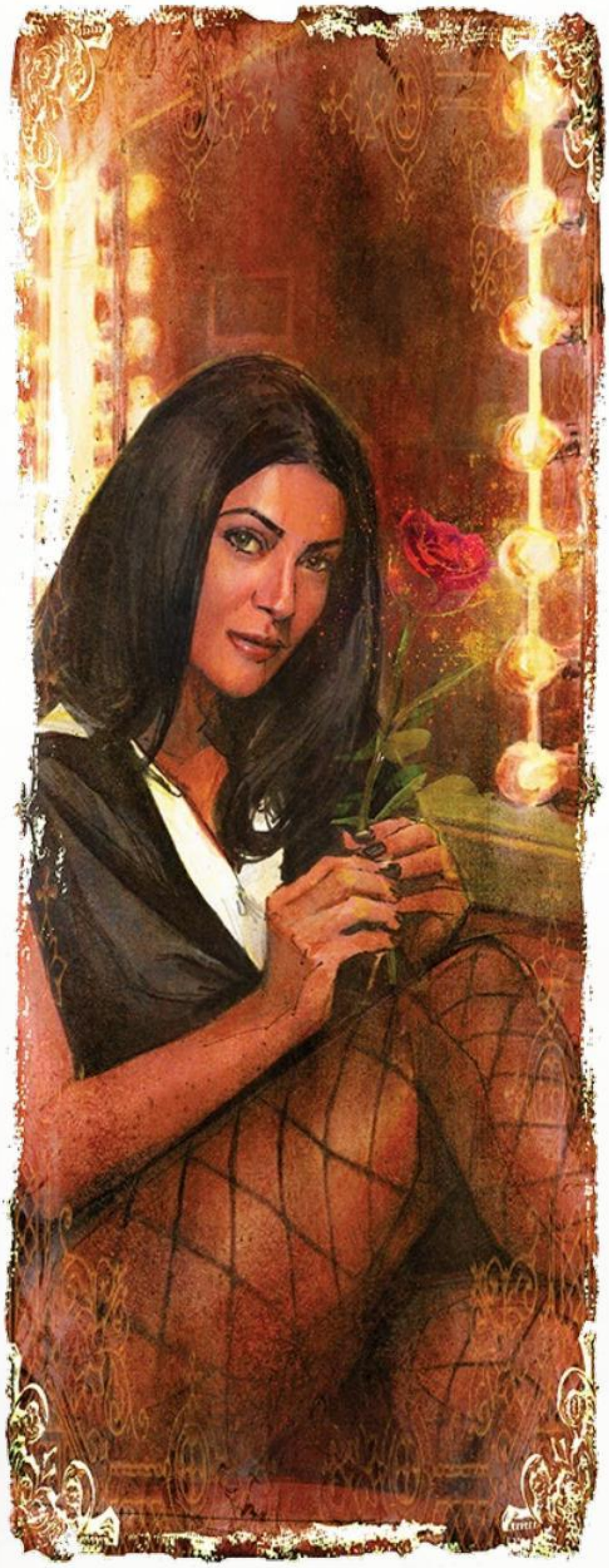
Every dream reminds me of you. Every rose carries your beauty; every whisper of sound within the maya is your voice. I roam this world alone, living from show to show, feasting on one mortal after another, but never again will I feel the touch of your fingers. How I wish you were here to share it all with me. Yet every time I make an illusion of you, my love, it fails to capture all that you were. I create you from nothingness, you smile at me from the maya and offer me the hand of dream, but it is a hollow memory. Soon dispelled.

I have everything I could ever wish to possess — all the money I could imagine, all the luxuries and adventure. I have lived for centuries, playing decades-long cons against my enemies, enjoying the world as it turns and changes. The dream lives on. I live on.

But you... you left me long ago.

The rose wilts in my hand. I was not paying attention, and the illusion took on a life of its own, echoing my sullen thoughts. I dispel it with a snap of my fingers. I can hear the audience cheering more loudly now, calling me back to the stage for an encore. I rise from the makeup table, settle my shoulders, and put on my smile. I am nothing but another illusion. I have not been real for years.

Opening the dressing room door, I head back out onto the stage.



A History of Smoke and Mirrors

Welcome, traveler. Sit, and speak a while. Let me tell you the stories of my people, and if you are entertained and enlightened, perhaps you will tell me a bit about yours....

Of the great Clans of vampires, the Ravnos are perhaps the most misunderstood. Our origins are difficult to trace, our past is clouded by a lack of written records, and our present is a tale told by a thousand voices. Roguish vagabonds, noble Brahmin, storytellers and travelers, thieves and liars, we Ravnos are masters of smoke and mirrors, deception and truth alike. Our culture is vastly different from other Clans, and our sensibilities are likewise distinct. Moreover, as with all things misunderstood, we bear the burdens of prejudice and bigotry. Is it not the way of the world that difference breeds contempt, and fear breeds hatred? Yes, and it is for this reason that the Ravnos Clan must be cleverer, wiser, and always three steps ahead of those who would do us harm.

Ravnos hail from all backgrounds and races, from many different cultures and eras. Yes, there is some bigotry within the Clan, but who can blame us? Facing ostracism for too long, clinging together for too many centuries against the strong storm winds. If you were not raised as part of our family, how do we know that we can trust you? That you can understand what it is to be Ravnos? For this reason, some of our elders hold firmly to the ways of the past. They keep the old lore, and they are hidebound by long-revered tradition. If a sword guarded your unlife for five hundred years, could you put it aside so easily?

We are *shimulo*. Vampires. We remember things long past, and we fear the future. Yet we are Ravnos, a Clan of change and chaos. As the world shifts, so too must we transform. A fox knows his enemy will not be fooled by the same trick twice. We must adapt. And so we Embrace new blood, and push ourselves to keep up with the modern world even as we keep an eye on the past. This division of old and new, traditional and unconventional is a thorn in our Clan's heart. You will see it bleed again and again, as I tell you our tales.

We are travelers, individuals who crave adventure and love to wander. Indeed, there is nothing a Ravnos values so highly as his freedom! We do not usually create permanent havens, join societies such as the Camarilla

Lexicon

Asuratizayya: "countless demons," figures of great evil in the Ravnos tales; includes a wide variety of supernatural creatures

Brahmin: the religious caste of the Clan

Chandala: the lowest caste of the Clan; the Ravnos consider them nearly Caitiff

Karavalanisha Vrana: "Wounds of the Night's Sword," an epic poem recounting the history and legends of the Ravnos Clan

jati: the four ranks of the Ravnos, namely Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Chandala.

Kshatriya: the military caste of the Clan

kumpaniya: a traveling group of Ravnos, usually a sire and childer

mayaparisatya: (also "**maya**") a reference to the illusion that both covers and reveals the truth about the world

shimulo: a Romani word for vampire

sudra: (also "**shudra**") the lowest caste, composed of ghouls and mortal servants.

svadharma: an individual's purpose, destiny, reason for being

Vaishyas: the management and organizational caste of the Clan

Zapathasura: the Ravnos progenitor

or Sabbat, nor take positions in a city's established power structure. Nomads and opportunists, we choose to remain on the fringes of civilized society, moving from one locale to the next as we wear out our welcome. Does that mean we are your enemy? No. But it does not often earn us friends.

Destiny guides us. Each shimulo must chase her individual *svadharma*, and this is the lure that leads us forward as ardently as a lover chases his beloved. To be worthy of a great svadharma, we must stay sharp and ever ready. We must lie to the liars, trick the tricksters, and always remain one step ahead of death. We are comfortable in the company of danger, but we do not lie down with the lion of destruction. Those Ravnos who do not know how to judge when a dangerous game has ended are not long for this unlife. Yes, we eagerly accept great risk if it means the potential of great reward, but we also know when to fold our cards and leave a hand unplayed.

Do not listen to the lies. Ravnos aren't greedy, nor evil; we are simply seeking wisdom, and truths do not come easily. We follow the path of destiny, and in fulfilling that purpose — by embracing our vampiric nature and giving ourselves over to svadharma — we learn to see through the illusion of "reality" and perceive ultimate truth. Am I speaking too boldly for your sensibilities, my young childe?

Calm your mind. Let me guide you to an understanding of our ways.

Wounds of the Night's Sword

The tale of the Ravnos Clan is a tapestry spun from a delicate, sometimes nearly invisible thread. Like the Vedic poems of old, our history weaves between truth and fable, recorded in a saga that educates as well as inspires. Our legend stands immortalized in a work known as the Karavalanisha Vrana, or "Wounds of the Night's Sword." If you are fortunate, young one, you will one day hear the entire work recited by our greatest scholars — but that would take days, even weeks, and I fear you are not yet patient enough to be wise.

It is said that our Antediluvian, a creature called Zapathasura, conceived the original text of the Karavalanisha Vrana during his time in a legendary city, long before the Great Flood. By his will, and by the continued work of all those who followed in his footsteps, the Karavalanisha Vrana grew and fulfilled many functions for our Clan. It is beautiful, yes, but it is also encoded with knowledge of our history, of Ravnos lore, of lessons learned, and of our Clan's great svadharma.

Most Ravnos can quote verses, or small portions of the poem. Some can recite an evening's worth, or a specific parable from beginning to end. Only a few, the most dedicated of Ravnos lorekeepers, can recite the entirety of the poem, and those have spent decades learning the exact words, order, and inflection. Even then, there are few certainties. Every storyteller has differences and idiosyncrasies, and certain lineages of the Ravnos have been entrusted with specific portions of the poem. On occasion, memory has rendered the language imperfect, or those entrusted with

specific verses have passed into death, leaving the rest to piece together the knowledge that was lost.

A Ravnos' knowledge of vampiric history comes from an understanding of events as they unfold in this Vedic poem. The Karavalanisha Vrana also serves as a basis for the Path of Paradox, a code of ethics adhered to by many Ravnos. The work is of critical importance to the Clan, despite its amazing complexity and the difficulty of memorizing such large swaths of text.

Of Myths

You will find, young one, that many other vampire Clans claim that the first vampire was the biblical "Caine." You should not believe them. The Karavalanisha Vrana describes several different "first vampires," at least one of whom was female. Truth has many faces. No matter what they say, or how often they try to stifle information they do not like, you must always remember to question. With questions, we find truths.

Legend says there was once a city where vampires and humans lived together in peace. Regardless whether the ruler of that city was *the* first vampire or simply *a* first vampire, it makes no difference. We must only agree that the city was ruled by a single masculine figure and his three offspring: Enosch, Zillah, and Irad.

Some versions of the Karavalanisha Vrana tell that Zapathasura was created by gods, whole and singular, like Athena from Zeus's brow. Other renditions imply that he was a mortal or ghouled servant to the Master of the City, and was Embraced by one of the Master's three childer. A third variant states that Zapathasura was Embraced by another, someone outside the city, and that he was sent as an envoy to the Master and his brood. Whatever his origin, the versions agree that Zapathasura was within the city — for a time.

When the First City fell, Zapathasura fled, putting his own safety ahead of all else. He cared nothing for the mortal inhabitants, nor for the vampires within that city, as none of them were family. The poem describes Zapathasura's journey to the city's east, accompanied by another vampire whom he'd met there; a woman named Ennoia. Thereafter, the two were lovers for many centuries, until a great curse turned her into a monster. Falling into madness and cruelty, Ennoia betrayed Zapathasura. She tried to kill him, and again, Zapathasura chose to flee. He left Ennoia, hoping she would die in the deserts, and in return she swore vengeance against him and all his childer until the last dawn should rise. That vengeance continues, as the two Clans — Ravnos and Gangrel — despise one another.

Now, young one, if you wish to know the truth, you have but to look upon any member of the Gangrel Clan. Ennoia is their mother, and they all bear her curse. Each and every one of them is cursed upon the Embrace to all display bestial, monstrous features; the evil within their soul made manifest upon their flesh. They are condemned, marked with the curse of the gods, and every mortal can identify them with ease, even as the prey knows its predator. Do not befriend them, lest Ennoia's vengeance come upon you and your family.

Of the Asuratizayya

According to the most commonly recited versions of the Karavalanisha Vrana, the Ravnos Clan first appeared in India when a group of supernatural creatures "betrayed their duty" and used their powers to spread war and tyranny across the face of the Earth. The Karavalanisha Vrana names these creatures asuratizayya, or "countless demons." We do not know what they are. We only know what they have done, and we know what the tales say about them. Perhaps the asuratizayya are not a single kind of supernatural creature, but instead many different things and many different people, each touched by some ancient evil that we are charged to forever fight. "What are the asuratizayya?" is a question for your meditations, my friend.

What we do know is that the Karavalanisha Vrana charges the Ravnos Clan with the destruction of these terrible beings. For his cowardice at Enoch and elsewhere, Zapathasura was burdened with this weighty svadharma. He, and we by virtue of our shared blood, must seek out and destroy the asuratizayya in order to free the world from their corruption. Further, as a punishment for his pride, Zapathasura and his line were also placed under a curse. We were cursed with the sin of vice — that no matter how hard we try, a Ravnos would always fall to temptation. This is our failing, young one. Some choose to fight against it; others succumb in measured doses that it does not overwhelm them out of starvation. A few give in entirely, losing themselves within their darker nature. However, one of Zapathasura's brood inherited more of his sire's cowardice than the others, and the failure of his svadharma is a legendary portion of the Karavalanisha Vrana — and figures prominently into the tales of the asuratizayya.

Ravana, childe of Zapathasura, was tempted and converted by the asuratizayya. At their bidding, he abandoned his sire and went into their service. According to some tales, a newly confident Ravana came to Zapathasura and told him of the deal that had been struck. The childe offered the Sire great power and wealth on behalf of the

asuratizayya. "Cease to fight against us," said the countless demons, "and join your childe in our service." In fear that the offer would tempt his curse of vice, Zapathasura struck his child, but the blow did Ravana no harm. Ravana fled, and in his wake, Zapathasura fell into torpor.

Of India

According to the Karavalanisha Vrana, many Ravnos remained in India after Zapathasura's fall. While our Clan cannot be truly said to be "based" anywhere, much of our culture was established during this time of relative peace. We began to establish the jati, or castes, each according to the natural temperaments and skills of the vampires who founded them. Our priests and philosophers became Brahmin; the warriors called themselves Kshatriya; those best suited for mercantile activities and Clan organization became the Vaishya; and last, those with little talent — or low talent — became the caste of Chandala. Below them, even our ghouls and mortal servants are a jati; the sudra, lowest of the low.

Although the Ravnos are no longer based in India (nor are the majority of our Clan Indian in mortal heritage), the traditions of jati continue. To this day, those segregations are important within the Clan's hierarchy, allowing Ravnos to easily identify one another's talents and know our places. The jati continue in part because most Ravnos tend to Embrace childer who fit the sire's choice of personality and ability; Ravnos who respect the jati tend to naturally chose childer who will do likewise. Such childer become part of the sire's caste. Occasionally, a newly released childe chooses to join a jati other than that of its sire. Doing so is an embarrassment to the sire's lineage and teachings; to choose and raise a childe who rejects her svadharma? It is a humiliation.

According to legend, the Ravnos Clan ruled over much of India, defending them from other vampire Clans as well as the darkness of the asuratizayya. Indian civilization is quite rich, and quickly advanced in writing, complex theology, and significant skill in mathematics and warfare during a time when the rest of the world was steeped in ignorance. However, this was also a bloody period of history, and in the end, many of the Ravnos who survived the conflicts abandoned India, shocked at the degree of bloodshed and destruction they had wrought upon the mortals they'd been trying to protect.

Following in the footsteps of Zapathasura, our Clan returned to being wanderers. We chose the life of vagabonds, hunting the asuratizayya and refusing to settle down in one place for very long. We keep moving, traveling, sharpening our minds and our skills, fulfilling our destiny, and hunting the asuratizayya. Better that, then to live in complacency and be destroyed.

Of the Rroma

The Ravnos have suffered because of the curse laid upon our blood. If something bad happens while a Ravnos is in the area, inevitably someone blames that Ravnos. Everywhere we go, we garner suspicion and mistrust. To the Clan's credit, we did not allow our mortal companions to suffer for the sins of vampires among them — we remembered the lessons we learned in ancient India, and the bloodshed we inadvertently caused. No. When we traveled with the Rroma, the Ravnos generally treated the kumpaniyas with respect, giving them as much protection as possible. Those who failed to be a good guest, who treated the Rroma as ripe, portable herds to be feasted upon and forgotten, were quickly taught painful lessons. It did not happen often, I assure you.

This was the first schism within our Clan. The fluid natures of the Rroma did not mesh well with the traditionalism of the jati. It took many decades to reconcile the two, but when we managed it (more or less), it was a great boon to our Clan's svadharma. We must be both: the old and the new, the flexible willow and the steel rod. These paradoxes are at the heart of truth, childe! Do you hear me? Ah, perhaps later, I can expound on the great truths. For now, let me continue with the history of our Clan.

Perhaps it was guilt, or perhaps a drive brought about by the Clan's greater svadharma that led to the most vicious battle between Gangrel and Ravnos in recorded history, and it had much to do with the Rroma. A powerful Gangrel elder named Intam, following the cues of an old Christian legend, began to search through the Rroma people, looking for a sign that his God somehow blessed one of the kumpaniyas. When he grew frustrated, he would slaughter the mortals in terrible ways, convinced that the Rroma were hiding some great secret.

To protect the Rroma, the Ravnos stopped running and attacked. They trapped Intam and destroyed him, slaughtering several Gangrel childer along with the elder. The tale those vampires recounted was a fanatic one; their intention was to find a certain group of people blessed by the Christian god, and then forcibly use those mortals as a stepping-stone to their own salvation. To "Golconda," a mythical state where they become once more human, casting aside their place in the universe; dishonoring their svadharma and the truths of the vampiric state. It could not be allowed.



The elders of the Ravnos Clan met to discuss this situation, horrified that the Gangrel would abuse mortals over such idle superstition. More, that the Gangrel would turn their back on their svadharma and seek a way back into mortal life. Our Brahmin spoke with the ancients of many Clans, and found guidance with the seers among the Malkavians. On their advice, we offered to share our knowledge, our wise path of enlightenment, with many elders of the Gangrel Clan. We did this in order to help the beasts understand where their childer transgressed. Some accepted our offer, and joined with us against these heretics. Others rejected our offers of peace, claiming each Gangrel had the freedom to choose her own way. They did not care.

Still, these foul Gangrel chased Golconda, and more than that, they took many mortal lives in their obsessive quest to spit upon the truth of the cycle. They murdered, ravaged, stole, and provoked even the protections of the Silence of the Blood—the so-called Masquerade that hides vampiric understanding from mortals—in order to chase this childish dream. Our Clan saw then that Gangrel are beasts, both in form and spirit; they are barely human at all, and willing to sacrifice anything for their own goals.

With this in mind, the Ravnos punished Intam and his childer, slaughtering all that they could find of the lineage. He sought desperately to return to the cycle? We simply granted his wish.

Hidden Ravnos

Many members of the Ravnos Clan hide among other groups of travelers. Ravnos were Embraced from this wandering populace, and as new blood joined our immortal Clan, our culture changed and adapted to include new ways. To the Clan's shame, many Ravnos Embraced during this time held fast to the bigotries and hatreds of their mortal ways. These biases have infected our Clan, and as our elders became more and more static over the passing of the centuries, the Ravnos Clan made... poor choices. We were not led by wisdom, but rather by pride. Some cast down women, others insisted on treating non-Rroma vampires as outcasts and lesser beings, and some few even killed any individuals who were Embraced Ravnos without undergoing certain "ritual purifications" prior to the Embrace.

No one group of people that taught us these strictures or influenced our ways. It was an adherence to the old bigotries,

misplaced respect given to a closed-minded understanding of the world. It was — and is — sheer foolishness.

Seeing truth beyond reality should be our guide. We should see not a person's physical form (be it male or female), but instead to understand the truth of the spirit encased in that flesh. We should judge a vampire on their svadharma, and not her race or mortal life.

I do not know why our Clan still struggles to understand these lessons. Perhaps that, too, is part of our curse.

Nevertheless, it is important for you to know that despite this bigotry, the Ravnos were not constrained by the European continent. A group known as the Kinyonyi travel Africa, where rumors exist that a Methuselah named Ramessu established court in ancient Egypt and styled himself a pharaoh. There are many stories of tricksters and Rakshasa Embraced among the nomadic peoples of the African continent.

In other lands, there is a famous tale of a Ravnos named Neve, who hailed from the Americas. I have been told that she led a lineage of Native American Ravnos made of members of the Lakota, Comanche, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Blackfoot, Shoshone, and other Plains Indian nations.

The Ravnos spread throughout the world, sharing our wisdom and insight with those open-minded enough to see that the physical is an illusion. Seek, and you shall find.

The Carnivals

From the early 1800s through the turn of the twentieth century, traveling performers were an incredibly popular and common pastime throughout continental America. From small one-man bands and occultists to large carnivals, these roving entertainers became a natural part of the American landscape. Thousands of people escaped small apartments to see these performing acts, losing themselves for a few hours in the illusions and fun of dreams. In the beginning, the entertainers were a fusion of centuries-old cultural traditions, music hall variety acts, Yiddish theatre, and geek or freak shows. As the years progressed, these performing groups formalized. Carnivals and modern circuses were born.

Vaudeville, too, sprang from such roots. However, most vaudeville acts aspired to inhabit permanent stages rather than maintaining the life of a travelling group. On any given night in a city's red-light district, one could see comedians, singers, plate-spinners, ventriloquists, dancers, burlesque, musicians, acrobats, animal trainers, and more. These were the places where our Clan prospered, and these were our allies and companions. Even the suspicion and disdain toward such performers by practitioners of "more civilized arts" mirrors many of the biases held against the Ravnos by other Kindred.

Like a force of nature, like a wind through trees, the Ravnos Clan moved among these groups. Our penchant for illusions and dramatics, as well as our wandering natures, fit in well with the culture of the carnivals. I will tell you this, childe, though you may not believe me: Though there is no proof that the great P.T. Barnum was Embraced into the Clan, many of his axioms capture Ravnos ideals. I met him once, long ago, and I can tell you that if he does not walk among our Clan in these nights, it is a pity and a waste, indeed.

The World Wars

The World Wars were difficult times for the Ravnos Clan, particularly in Europe and in Africa. As travel grew more and more difficult, we became constrained and forced to hide like rats. Mortal authorities grew more attentive and watchful, persecuting strangers and prohibiting travel; making it difficult for us to survive.

As a Clan whose philosophy stresses freedom and the search for one's true destiny, the idea of internment camps was abhorrent — much more, the atrocities performed within those encampments. Many Ravnos, particularly those of Rroma birth, did all they could to aid and free the prisoners, up to and including the Embrace. Forsaking the then-common practice of Embracing primarily into a jati or within certain mortal bloodlines, the Ravnos sacrificed part of their philosophy so that we could save many innocent lives. Many Ravnos trace their Embrace to these nights. Jewish, African, Rroma, European, American... anyone who needed help, who was persecuted became our allies. We knew that svadharma demanded it. We could feel the call to Embrace, and to defeat the evil that was plaguing the continent in whatever way we could.

Unfortunately, this desperate practice did not help our Clan to stay hidden. The swell in our numbers led to many Ravnos abandoning Europe to seek havens in Australia, America, or Africa.

The New Era

The hippie movement of the 1960s was an interesting time to be a Ravnos. We thrived on the romantic perception of wanderers (a resurgence, perhaps, of the 1920s' interest in the hobo culture), sailing comfortably on the proliferation of hallucinogenic drugs and a rise in the study of Hinduism and other eastern religions. Yet the "Age of Aquarius" occurred even as the Clan was struggling to reaffirm its identity in the wake of the Second World

War. Through the 1960s, into the rebellious '70s and '80s, our Clan prospered. But... we also changed.

With the influx of Ravnos Embraced from all parts of Europe, and the deaths of many vampires during the two World Wars, our Clan's population ratio changed. The elders were static, set in ancient and traditional ways, while these new childer arose from many different backgrounds, religions, and races. Many of these young Ravnos were Embraced out of desperation (and many sires died in the war, or did not have the time to properly give their childer an accounting), and because of this, the childer were not indoctrinated to respect the traditional ways. Their sudden inclusion led to ripples that shook the Clan's long-held and static culture. Can you imagine introducing a Ravnos Embraced at a Sex Pistols concert to an ancient scholar of the Brahmin? Difficult nights, indeed.

These young Ravnos had modern perceptions, wider views of the world. They held different ethics, morals, and beliefs. Many of these New World Ravnos are hobos, vagabonds, and non-traditional wanderers. They challenged the caste system of the jati; they rejected the idea of blood purity. From fireside to fireside, they questioned the old ways, staunchly debating what they saw as an archaic hierarchy and prejudice. Many joined the Anarch cause. They gave us many headaches, these wild, tempestuous childer, but they also opened our Clan's eyes to a stasis we held in our hearts for too long.

Particularly static adherents to the Path of Paradox felt that this disrupted the Clan's true path, and that the Ravnos svadharma lay not along these new routes, but in a return to the old ways. Rifts erupted between kumpaniyas and even among members of familial broods. Over time, these arguments sparked anger and vindictiveness, and even cost some of our young hot-bloods their unlives.

Sensing that the Clan was on the verge of another schism, influential Brahmins stepped in and counseled peace. They sent messages by animal and written word to other elders, spreading wisdom by word of mouth as well as the craftwork of dream and vision. These Brahmin argued that these new childer and their many questions were to the Clan's advantage. The Ravnos had once again become too static, too set in their ways, and the Clan's svadharma had moved upon the world to provide us new teachers. To tear away our veils and break our stasis.

The wisdom of the Brahmins brought a peace, but unfortunately, the Brahmins wielded their authority too strongly. They are not "leaders" of our Clan in the traditional sense, but more a conscience, guides and advisors. We respect them. Most of us do. Although arguments were still bitter, the fighting among Clanmates died down, or at least became subtle. Either way, it was no longer a threat to the Clan's survival.

Still, many of these rivalries and worldview differences persist. Some Ravnos even went so far as to turn their backs on the Clan. They rejected the Brahmin, resenting that these vampires tried to force their opinions on the rest. Nowadays, not all Ravnos consider one another "family," or even worthy of Ravnos blood. Some cling even more staunchly to the old ways, while others struggle to forge new philosophies and seek new truths — at any cost. A few Ravnos even joined the Sabbat and called it "freedom from the tyranny of our elders."

The svadharma of our Clan says we must tear away the illusions of the physical world. One should never assume a thing is true; not even the most closely held beliefs. Questions lead to truths, and truth provokes change. Our purpose is enlightenment, and that only comes through trials. This schism, and the temporary loss of our brethren to the Church of Caine, is only one more trial along the path.

Who We Are

"Call me a vagabond, and I'll smile. Call me a thief, and I'll laugh. Call me a liar, and I'll cut out your heart."

We Ravnos are scoundrels and tricksters, philosophers of a greater truth. We are educated, modern, yet bound in part to a hierarchical past that strongly influences our current culture. They are rogues and travelers, driven by the need to seek out and destroy demons hiding in human guise. Yet for all our good intent, our spirits fall too easily to temptation, and by the lure of vice. We are a paradox.

As it has always been, Kindred society condemns and scorns the Ravnos without ever seeking to understand their purpose. We are called foul, unclean, and wicked, and rarely given a chance to explain our actions before being hunted and destroyed. The courts of the Camarilla fear and despise us. The Sabbat believes us to be arrogant interlopers whose hedonism prevents us from realizing that the world stands on the verge of destruction. The Anarchs act as though we are mocking them, and most Autarks stay away from us for fear their carefully balanced neutrality will be affected by commiseration with a Ravnos.

Most Ravnos do not align themselves with the Sects, preferring to be on their own or to travel with a small kumpaniya. Many young Ravnos tend toward nomadic unlives, traveling from one domain to the next or hiding on the fringes of established territories. We believe that

Sect alliance, putting the requirements of a larger group before our own needs, compromises our quest to fulfill an individual svadharma. Temporary allegiances are possible, and even necessary. However, allowing your karma to become deeply intertwined with another's is the same as voluntarily giving up your free will. It is against our path and our destiny.

Modern Ravnos encompass a wide variety of individuals, and all manner of races and cultures are represented among the Clan. For a Clan of misfits, there is a unity within our blood that calls us together to seek a greater purpose.

Still the scapegoats of society, they are often accused of crimes they didn't commit, and punished even when provably not guilty of a crime. Of course, we are often guilty — no matter what evidence paints — and they know this, too. We are not angels, nor demons, not innocent, nor guilty. We are as complex and flawed as any other being. Yet we have reputations as transients, scoundrels, and vagrants. We cannot change those reputations, so we use them to our benefit. If an enemy assumes he knows the truth, he will often not seek further.

Misdirection is a powerful ally.

Antitribu

The Sabbat unified behind a desire to resist an oppression they saw between elders and children. They denied the Camarilla's unification attempts, and espoused a strict doctrine of both freedom and unity. At the time, the magnificent paradox of trying to consolidate those two diverse philosophies tempted many Ravnos to join the Sect. Packs feel much like kumpaniya, and the Sabbat's violent rejection of blood bonds is in keeping with Ravnos ideals. There are some tangible benefits as well, though I have never been particularly tempted.

However, the Ravnos are not common among the *antitribu* of the Sabbat. This is in part because the Karavalanisha Vrana speaks of our Antediluvian as a benevolent (or at least, not vicious) being, and in part because many verses question Caine's role as the ultimate progenitor of all vampires. These philosophies are heretical among the vampires of the Black Church. Further, most Ravnos dislike the practice of Vaulderie and the vinculum, as it has similarities to blood bonding. Tying ones svadharma to another (or in this case, an entire pack) in such an indelible way is deeply abhorrent to traditional Ravnos philosophy.

Those Ravnos who have joined the Sabbat tend to fall into a few camps. The first and largest being those who were simply Embraced into the Sect, and never given a choice in the matter. They know little of the history or legends of the Clan, and easily accept the philosophies of the Sabbat.

The second camp of Ravnos is individuals who joined the Sabbat out of a sense of revenge or persecution. Some were abused by the Camarilla, or have a personal vendetta against the Ivory Tower. Others are those who left during the two schisms in our Clan — some Rroma, who rejected the Indian heritage, while others are young modernists who rejected both Rroma and Indian traditionalism. Both joined the Sabbat specifically to escape the ethnic prejudices of their elders.

Further, there are some Ravnos who were mortal Rroma, persecuted by the mortal Inquisition during the Sabbat's founding. They joined the Sabbat to escape these faith hunters, and to visit pain upon any mortals who dared believe themselves more powerful than vampires. The fact that the Sabbat now has their own Inquisition is not lost on me.

Only a slim handful of Ravnos in the Sabbat adopt the Path of Paradox as their ethical road of behavior. The Path is heretical by the Sect due to its tenets (notably its perspective on the Kindred role in mortal affairs; its prohibitions against Embracing, becoming blood-bound, or carrying karmic debt; and its proclivity to question Caine's role as the First Vampire). Most choose the Paths of Cathari, Feral Heart (or its precursor, the Path of Harmony), or the Path of Night.

The Kris

Among the Ravnos, there is a saying, "If you harm your brother, you harm yourself." The Clan is a family — large, bickering, divided — but still, in many ways the world is absolutely us-against-them. Therefore, when a Ravnos takes action against another member of the Clan, it is the family's responsibility to judge — and if necessary, punish — the responsible individual.

Traditionally, judgments occur at a kris, a gathering of Ravnos where major issues are discussed and a council of Brahmin makes decisions. Resolving an issue at a kris is a method of last resort. Punishments can include Final Death, particularly for those who are judged to have worked with the asuratizayya, or sabotaged another Ravnos' svadharma. Although customs can vary, and some kris are more formal than others are, the basic methods are always the same.

The Clan selects an odd number of judges, usually five or seven. These judges should range as widely as possible: from a neonate to elder, recently Embraced and ancient in

years, both men and women. Further, the judges should include members of several jati, and at least one Brahmin, who will serve as the head of the jury.

Punishments from a kris typically include acts of submission, challenges of courage, or appropriate fines, among other things. Fines are not usually paid in money, but with valuable information or items from the guilty party to the one maligned. If the crime is particularly weighty, the guilty party may be declared "unclean" and banished from the Clan for a period of time or until he makes reparations for the crime. A Ravnos that has been declared unclean is honor-bound not to use the maya or manifest Chimerstry of any kind. A Ravnos who breaks this prohibition are hunted down and killed, usually by members of the jury that levied the punishment.

Young Ravnos do not always have the patience, interest, or respect for tradition to call a kris when they feel they have been maligned. The practice of "counting coup" against a Ravnos that has betrayed you or caused you difficulty is not uncommon. One-upsmanship is a ritual in itself, and forcing your enemy to suffer widespread public humiliation can be just as satisfying as killing.

The Ravnos Embrace

The Ravnos Clan is fairly informal, but the Embrace is something they do not perform lightly. The Clan's philosophy on the Embrace believes that a Ravnos should only be created if it is for a reason directly related to the sire's svadharma. This is particularly common thought among those who follow our Clan's moral Path of Enlightenment.

However, among those who prefer the traditions of the kumpaniyas, there is a custom that a Ravnos should ask the permission of the oldest member of the Clan within the city or local area. Gaining that permission is a formality, but also serves as a check on the Ravnos' choice. The other Ravnos is then honor-bound to look into the matter and ensure that the prospective childe is capable of assisting her sire on the road to his svadharma.

New childer receive instruction in the Clan's history and legends, and before their release are often required to memorize one verse of the Karavalanisha Vrana. This is both to ensure that some part of the poem lives on in each Ravnos, and also to show the childe's respect to the oral tradition and history of the Clan. Typically, a childe's term under the sire's accounting takes up to a decade of study, observation, and assistance along the sire's path. During this time, the childer is also expected to begin her contemplation of her own path, looking to find her svadharma apart from that of her sire.

The Castes

In the Clan's early days in India, the Ravnos were a deeply caste-oriented society. The four jati gave the Clan structure and hierarchy, and helped each member of the Ravnos identify and follow their svadharma as laid out by the responsibilities of her caste. The Brahmin are responsible for keeping the wisdom and lore of the Clan, performing the duties of educators and advisors. The Kshatriya make war on our behalf, or served as a defense in dangerous times. They create strategies of battle, watch for the asuratizayya, and offer protection to members of our Clan who are in need.

The Vaishya protect the silence of the blood, maintaining mortal influences and keeping an eye on our Clan's herds. They handle interactions with wealth and physical things, focusing their attention on the material world. The Chandalas are all but Caitiff; the weak, those punished for crimes among the Clan, or those who have failed in some meaningful manner. They perform the tasks that no other caste wishes to touch. Its members are forbidden to Embrace, and they are expected to spend much time in meditation and attempt to improve their standing through performing onerous or unclean duties.

When the Ravnos Clan left India, they continued to maintain that basic structure, adding a further layer of complexity garnered from their travels with the Rroma. The term "phralmulo" to identify Ravnos born of Rroma blood became part of the Clan lexicon, though there was no caste for the Rroma-born (nor, in modern culture, does it indicate superiority or inferiority to other Ravnos). The manner in which the Rroma-born Ravnos remained tightly knit and loyal to one another was identified as a caste by earlier elders, who chose to see it much like another jati.

Today, the jati system is respected, but no longer holds the authority that it once did. Older Ravnos insist on the delineations, scorning any young Embrace that does not seek to enter and respect the castes. Ravnos who were born among the Rroma may have some prejudice toward those who were not (including their elders), but the Clan has become too diverse for those biases to rule the Clan's svadharma. Childer are Embraced from every culture and lifestyle, educated into the Ravnos way of life and taught to respect their elders even as they are encouraged to seek their own destinies.

I have always felt, young one, that the thread that truly holds the Clan together is the Path of Paradox. The path's ideals are common among the Clan, even among those who retain their humanity. We are all taught the Path's tenets, and we are expected to respect its restrictions. Those

who defy and reject those ideals reject the very heart of Ravnos culture. Even those who must pick and choose which tenets to respect — the Vaishya, for example, who work with mortals despite the path's restrictions — are taught that the Path of Paradox is the only method to find ultimate truth. They give up an understanding of truth in order to keep our Clan safe, and we respect their sacrifice.

In the study of conflicting truths, and our unified desire to see beyond the falsehood of the world around us, the Ravnos find a universal communion.

Svadharma

I have spoken much of svadharma, childe. What is it? It is an inner calling. A sense of one's destiny. A scholar once said that svadharma was the idea that man owes his service to others, that he owes his life to the betterment of the world. It is the application of your life — in our case, your eternity — toward a single goal that will enlighten or uplift the world. It is the fulfillment of one's purpose as a creature within the maya. It is duty. Righteousness. Liberation and exaltation... ah, perhaps I'm speaking a little above your head, hm?

Very well, let me put it into simple terms. A Ravnos seeks her svadharma throughout her immortal life. The first step along the path is meditation and self-realization, exploration of the self and the world in order to discover your place within it. From that place, you can attempt to discover your individual purpose. This is not something as small as a single task, nor as large as the movement of continents. It is always a betterment of the self and the world around you. Knowing your svadharma is a divine revelation, an unshakable understanding of purpose, and that only comes when one has sensed one's true place within the world.

Each person has unique duties and responsibilities to the world. Perhaps you are a Brahmin artist, and your svadharma is to bring an appreciation and philosophical understanding of the art of India to the west. A Kshatriya might feel called by svadharma to cleanse Egypt of the darkness brought by Set's children. A Rroma-born Ravnos might feel her svadharma is to save her mortal people from persecution, to guard and preserve them and their traditions for future generations.

Rarely is one's svadharma fully achievable in a single lifetime. However, we are immortal, and thus there are a very, very few who have completed the calling of their destiny. When this occurs, we call it *moksha*, or the resolution of one's karma. For mortals, it means they are liberated, released from the cycle. They can move on to the next stage of their enlightenment. For vampires, the term is used differently. It is also a freedom from the cycle, and if the vampire chooses (and was not already), a formal acceptance into the Brahmin caste. The vampire in moksha has a choice to make: Will they begin again, seek their new place in the world, to seek and accept another great svadharma, or will she choose to destroy herself and become as ash? It is an intensely personal choice.

A Ravnos chases her svadharma. Night by night, she keeps her mind turned toward fulfilling her greater goal, even as she manages her night-to-night activities, amusements, and ambition. Even as achieving inner perfection cannot be attained in one night, neither can a person's svadharma be completed by taking one action, or killing one enemy, no matter how powerful that enemy may be. It requires years, decades, or centuries of continued right action. Yet the path begins, and carries on, one step at a time.

The Path of Paradox

The Path of Paradox came into being in part due to the blending of Ravnos culture with South Asian religion and philosophy, and in part due to desperation in the minds of elder Ravnos who had fallen too far to their Beasts. There were failures along the way: ethical structures and philosophies that could not properly restrain vampiric Beasts. Some worked to keep a vampire from wassail, but failed to allow those vampires to properly function within Kindred society, and their adherents were quickly eradicated. Still, the Path of Paradox is one of the more infinitely flexible paths in existence. Ravnos scholars are constantly modifying it, and there are many variations of the path throughout the world. The most common variants of this path are the hallowed, traditional Mayaparisatya, and the spiritual, more modern Samsara.

The Mayaparisatya demands that those who follow its tenets have an understanding of our place in the world, and seek to fulfil our svadharma at all costs. This, too, is common in the Samsara. We Ravnos quest for purpose. We endure pain and suffering in the name of enlightenment. Those who adhere to our path see the loss of their humanity as a metaphysical sacrifice, an acceptance of our vampiric nature. We step away from humanity in order to become the creature that we were intended to become upon the Embrace — a true vampire, with even fewer ties to our original mortality.

It is the nature of the Ravnos to quest for our svadharma, to seek and find each individual's purpose and destiny. The Path of Paradox is a tool upon that journey, a way to fully submit to the universe. Through the study of its tenets, a vampire attempts to penetrate the illusions of the physical world. The path and its variants have led us toward a better understanding of reality and illusion.

Where the Mayaparisatya focused on the jati hierarchy and interactions between vampires, the lessons of the Samsara concentrate one's ethics toward a somewhat more spiritual viewpoint. The Path of Paradox evolves even as we must evolve, so that we might learn to see through the conflicting truths of this world.

One of the most critical doctrines of the Path of Paradox asks the student to discover the inherent inconsistencies and enigmas of the world and accept them; finding meaning in the contradiction of two truths. The law of contradiction states that two antithetical propositions cannot both be true and that nothing which is true can be contradictory with any other truth. This is logic, and mortal philosophers have often stated that to deny this belief is to deny all truth. Yet it is within these paradoxes that the illusions of the physical world are revealed. Once you accept that such conflicts exist, what is the purpose of any truth?

The word "paradox" means "beyond belief" in the original Greek, and the scholar Aristotle relied heavily on the rejection of paradoxes to base logic. Yet Ravnos know illusions can exist, and that some things can be both false and true. The ability to know and not know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, and to reject morality while still claiming an adherence to ethics, is the heart of the path. Only those whose minds and spirits grasp these elusive truths can spiritually ascend and see through the falsehoods of this world.

Some vampires say that a Ravnos on the Path of Paradox should support seeking Golconda, because vampires are already "out of the cycle," and such a state would be returning a vampire to the natural order of things. I disagree. To go back, to turn away from the gift we have been given, to attempt to return to a mortal state — that is the heresy. And many in our Clan agree.

The Nature of Chimerstry

The Ravnos are masters of illusion and deception, skilled to the extent that it in inherent in their blood. The discipline of Chimerstry is the art of weaving the essence of dream into constructs that take on substance in the physical world. We see this power as our birthright, our reward for the constant study of paradox and truth, and as a means by which we can show others that their assumptions are false and meaningless. More than a tool, Chimerstry is a meditation, a spiritual essence, and a joyful communion with truth itself, in its most naked form.

Chimerical illusions take shape from a quasi-substantial essence called maya. Items crafted with the powers of Chimerstry are not real, but they have do have a minimal substance. A chimerical gun has the appropriate weight and heft. A chimerical flag will sway in the wind and will cast a shadow. A construct made of Chimerstry construct cannot affect anything more substantial than a bright light or a slight breeze, but the substance of its creation acts in many ways as though it were an actual, physical item. Still, it is illusory, and cannot be relied upon to provide the same protections or functions as a real object of its type.

Chimerstry generally has the potential to add, but not subtract, from the physical world. A chimerical banner can be placed over a wall, but a chimerical hole could not be placed on the wall to allow a character to see through to the other side. Nor can a character use Chimerstry make someone invisible, though it can create a bush for someone to hide behind. It can create a hat to shadow the face, but it cannot change someone's facial features (as that would require both adding and subtracting shapes from the current face). It could make additions to an individual's clothing, if the new clothing is in all ways larger and more encompassing than the clothing beneath the illusion.

An illusionary wall can block a person's progress, but it is not substantial enough to support more than a few ounces of weight. The maya is a thing of dream, working in tandem with the subject's subconscious mind to cause the individual to unconsciously react to the illusion as though it were real. This is also why recognizing that something is chimerical is not enough to cause a person to disbelieve the illusion. A person can be told that a wall is fake, but the individual's subconscious mind continues to react as if the wall is real. Each individual must personally disbelieve the illusion in order to convince the subconscious that the item is, in fact, false.

If an illusion's creator disbelieves her own illusion, it immediately ceases to exist. The user must treat her illusions in all ways as though they are real or the maya fades. Of course, sunlight burns through Chimerstry instantly, destroying any and all such constructs when it touches them. The light of the sun reveals all truths in time, does it not?

Virtue and Vice

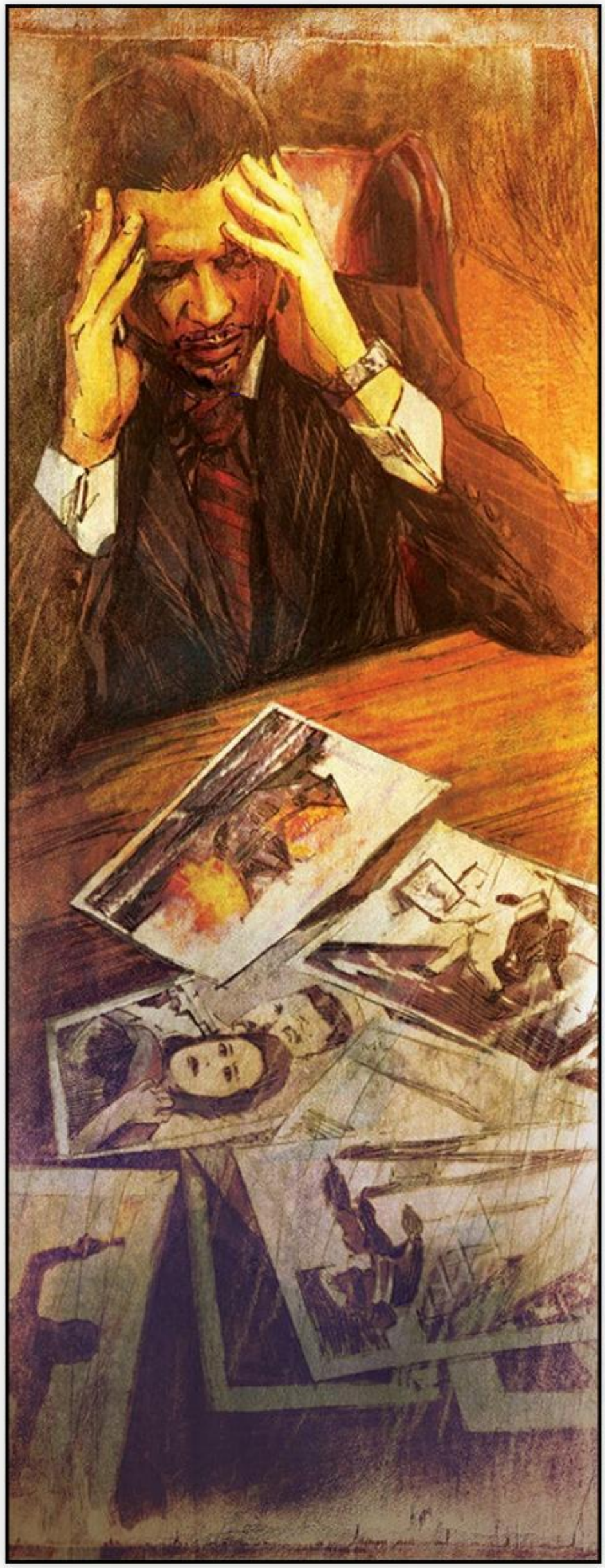
Every Clan has a weakness. A curse, legends say, placed upon the vampire Antediluvians because they betrayed Caine, or committed some other sin so great that a godlike power chose to visit pain and suffering upon them. The Karavalanisha Vrana teaches us that the Ravnos Clan's

founder, Zapathasura, faced punishment for his cowardice and his self-centered choices. Upon him lay the task that he could never complete: to find and destroy the asuratizayya. However, there is another portion of the curse, one that plagues all Ravnos on a nightly basis: that each suffers from a vice, and cannot put that craving to rest no matter how much they feed the dark urges.

The temptation of vice is intrinsic to the blood of all Ravnos, subtly (and not so subtly) encouraging us to act against our morals and give up our victories for even one small indulgence. Every Ravnos is different; every vice is distinct to the individual. Some are easily distinguishable vices — a penchant for envy, or an astonishingly short temper — while some, such as the urge to enslave others, are less quantifiable in classic terms. Lying, cruelty, theft, and other vices lead the Ravnos Clan to evil deeds, and serve to further blacken our not-so-sterling reputation.

When presented with the opportunity to engage in her specific vice, the Ravnos must indulge it. Failing to do so might cause the Ravnos to experience mental anguish, physical sickness, or withdrawals, with shaking hands, pale flesh, headaches, and nausea. No matter how stalwart the Ravnos, eventually her vice will overcome her, causing her to indulge the urges as thoroughly as possible.

Naturally, most Princes are leery of allowing such individuals free rein within their domains. Even if a Ravnos has every intention of obeying the rules and maintaining decorum, her vice will eventually get in the way. Therefore, most Ravnos are turned away by Princes, or only allowed to spend time within the domain if they are willing to pay a great deal in advance of any troublemaking that may occur.



The Treatment

The tradition known as the Treatment comes from a medieval practice of shunning and group shaming. The Ravnos can be very powerful when we work together, childe. Listen to me, and understand.

For those Princes that truly persecute the Ravnos or forbid them passage for no reason, there is a custom among the Clan known as kesht, a colloquial word for "stick." The closest thing to a proper translation for the word is "the treatment," wherein the Ravnos' friends and family among the Clan focus their ire upon a particular city that has wronged their kin. In effect, the city is beaten with a stick — the "stick" being

every sin, vice, and crime that the gathered Ravnos can perpetrate within the domain.

When a Camarilla Prince goes too far against us, our Clan comes together to teach that individual a lesson about strength in numbers. Traditionally, the Ravnos who has been maligned contacts a member of the Vaishya jati, the caste whose purpose it is to keep the Silence of the Blood and maintain mortal influences and contacts. That Vaishya, if convinced that it is appropriate, coordinates the Clan's full-scale harassment of the Prince and his territory.

Ravnos show up, using illusions to snarl traffic, confuse news reporters, create chaos, and sow problems. The longer we are in a city, the worse our plague becomes, snarling bureaucracy and using our Chimerstry to bring more and more trouble down onto the city. If the Prince does not quickly relent, these difficulties turn into killing sprees seemingly done by mortal psychopaths, massive robberies, property destruction of valuable art or city structures, and other significant damage, though we never break the Silence, nor endanger Elysium. The Treatment will continue until the Vaishya who called for it, in consideration with the individual who was initially maligned (if any), agrees that the Prince has been appropriately punished.

Our purpose is not to make the Camarilla as a whole turn its eyes upon our Clan, but rather to harass, embarrass, and eventually force such a Prince into capitulation. We do not expect to be treated as equals with the "vaunted Camarilla," but we are vampires, and we demand respect.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Bollywood Star

You're older than you appear. Raised Hindu during the era of the Raj, you bowed willingly to the Ravnos jati when it was your time to be Embraced. You're a thing of tradition, but also a creature of tremendous pride, and it's taken you a long time to find ways to join the production without risking discovery as a vampire. (As a diva, you insist on working only at night.) In a few years, you'll have to fake your death and find a way to start over, but fame and fortune will always call you back to the spotlight.

King of Thieves

For centuries, you've traveled from city to city with your kumpaniya, always looking for bigger and better things to steal. It's not about the prize, it's about the challenge — and the story you'll tell after you're done. You've got the charisma to get out of any trouble, so if you're caught, that'll be a good tale, too.

Kumpaniya Violinist

You were born to know music, and you'll die with a song on your lips and a violin in your hands. You've lived through most of this century and part of the last, and fifty years ago that you accepted the Path of Paradox and left your humanity behind. You're a traditionalist, a realist, and when necessary, a murderous brute who suffers no insult and no insubordination. Someone must teach these young childer what it is to be Ravnos, or else take responsibility for their failures, and silence their songs forever.

Male Escort

When you started working for a high-class escort service, you didn't think life could get any rougher. You were fleeing some bad men that you had made angry, and you were looking for any escape that would provide you enough money to get out of the country. Then it turned out you were good at the job — and even more unexpectedly, you liked it. Now that you're a Ravnos, you've stopped turning tricks and started using your business sense and sensuality to make a list of the rich and elite with... more discerning tastes. You can give them anything they want.

Modern Hobo

When the stock market crashed in 1929, you reacted... poorly. After the murders, you didn't have the guts to kill yourself, too, so you grabbed a bag of things and leapt aboard a boxcar headed south, toward Mexico. After a few years, you met a stranger in one of those boxcars. You didn't expect the sudden Embrace; he didn't expect to be diablerized a few years later. Served him right. Now you live the life you always wanted: immortal, powerful, and entirely free.

Mouse in the Cupboard

Embraced in the gentle Age of Aquarius, you wept blood for days when you found out what you'd become. Now you struggle to reconcile your humanity with the more savage impulses of your Clanmates, trying to pull them back from the Path of Paradox whenever possible. Secretly, you like to hide in your haven and make illusions of your old life and your old friends, wishing you could trade your soul to go back again and walk beneath the sun.

Stuntwoman

When you were alive, it only took a little convincing to get you to risk your life for a thrill. Now that you're

dead — and damn tough! — you don't even bat an eye. Dangerous stunts, risky escapades, even a little thugging on the side; it's all fun and games so long as you don't get hurt. And you never do.

Vaudeville Frontman

You didn't believe your sire when she told you she was a vampire. Had to see it for yourself. Even now, you think there's probably some trick to it, somebody holding a candid camera and seeing when you'll figure it all out. But until then, you'll keep doing what you do best; the ultimate con man, the barker at the fair. By the time they realize they've been grifted, you'll be way out of town. Barnum was right: there's a sucker born every minute, and you've got plenty of minutes to spare.

Video Gamer

You're descended from Indian parentage, but that's not what caught the attention of your sire — it was your flashy gameplay and your unsinkable ego. You went through the accounting, waited three years for the release (not a big deal; you've waited longer for game releases), and joined the Kshatriya at the urging of your new vampire family. Turns out you're pretty damned good at tactics, and you've proved your worth more than once when the Clan needed you. Must have been all the RTS.

Zookeeper

Ever since you were a child, you've felt called to protect and care for animals. You became a veterinary technician and then started working at a zoo. You weren't ready for death — wandering in on a starving vampire feeding from your animals was the last thing you expected — but now that you're a Ravnos, you're even surer you're in the right place. Humans are dumb, lying, worthless pieces of crap who deserve what they get. Animals have it much better, and they're better company, too.



Merits and Flaws

Antitoxin Blood (1pt. Merit)

Although vampires are typically immune to mortal drugs and poisons, there are supernatural venoms that can affect Kindred physiology. A Ravnos with this Merit is immune to all forms of drugs and poisons, including the venoms and toxins of supernatural creatures or those created by supernatural powers.

Brahmin (1pt. Merit)

As a member of the Brahmin jati, you are a priest, artist, teacher, or other pillar of society. Perhaps you keep the lore of the Clan, or perhaps you act as an advisor to other Ravnos in need of wisdom. Once per session, if you fail an Academics or Expression roll, you may immediately reroll it.

You do not have to purchase this Merit to be a member of the Brahmin jati, but only members of the Brahmin jati may have this Merit.

Kshatriya (1pt. Merit)

You are a member of the Kshatriya jati; perhaps you are a warrior, a descendant of rulers, or a member of the military. Your role is to protect the Ravnos in war, and govern in peace. Once per session, you regain a Willpower when you successfully use a combat maneuver (see **V20**, pp. 274-278).

You do not have to purchase this Merit to be a member of the Kshatriya jati, but only members of the Kshatriya jati may have this Merit.

Legerdemain (1pt. Merit)

You're extremely good at sleight of hand and other physical tricks. Difficulties when using Subterfuge for physical trickery, shell games, card tricks, and so forth, are decreased by two.

Mute Devotion (1pt. Merit)

Your Animalism carries an unusual side effect: it lingers in the minds of the beasts you speak with or control, lending them a certain resistance to others. When someone else attempts to command a creature you have previously controlled with Animalism, their difficulty levels are at +2.

Vaishya (1pt. Merit)

The Vaishya jati are tasked with utilizing influence, maintaining the human herds, and keeping finances. They are often seen as traders and merchants, but to the Ravnos, they are also a critical part of maintaining the Masquerade that hides vampires from mortal hunters. Once per session, you may call on of your Backgrounds as if you had an extra dot in that Background (up to the normal maximum of 5).

You do not have to purchase this Merit to be a member of the Vaishya jati, but only members of the Vaishya jati may have this Merit.

Critters (2pt. Merit)

You're excellent with animals — so much so that they constantly seek to befriend you. Wherever you go, the animals are happy to see you, and more often than not, happy to help you when you ask for their aid. You receive a bonus die on Social rolls to affect small animals. Further, animal companions who have had continual interaction with you see you as something of a pet, and occasionally bring you small useful things. Once per game session, animals will bring you a useful piece of information or a small item relevant to events. This item might occasionally play into the individual Ravnos' particular vice, as the animals quickly pick up on what pleases their friend.

Heart of Needles (3pt. Merit)

Your natural abilities with illusions have rendered you particularly jaded and unimpressible. How can anything be as perfect as your own imagination? Because of this, your heart is harder than most, and you have a significant resistance to emotion control. All powers and Social challenges that attempt to manipulate you emotionally are made at a +2 difficulty.

Chandala (1pt. Flaw)

Being a member of the lowest jati, the Chandala, is a mixed bag. You are responsible for the disposal of corpses, as well as many other foul tasks, but at the same time, you are often ignored. Your Social rolls against other Ravnos are made at a +2 difficulty.

You do not have to take this Flaw to be a member of the Chandala jati, but only members of the Chandala jati may have this Flaw.

Flawed Reality (2pt. Flaw)

Your illusions always contain a notable flaw, and as such, are easier to disbelieve. The difficulties of all rolls to disbelieve your illusions are reduced by two.

Oathbreaker (2pt. Flaw)

Making an oath ties one person's svadharma to another, linking the two spirits until the oath can be fulfilled. With this in mind, a Ravnos never breaks her word once given in good faith, and so long as it was done with proper ceremony. If the Ravnos spits into her palm and shakes on her word, then the oath cannot be broken without negatively impacting the vampire's svadharma (or so Ravnos superstition dictates).

The oathbreaker will lose her way, falling into vice and worthlessness, until the broken oath can be redeemed. Anyone who looks at your aura can see a sickly red slash indicating the broken oath. You may not spend Willpower to ignore your Ravnos vice, and you do not gain Willpower from fulfilling your Nature.

Lost Svadharma (3pt. Flaw)

You once knew your svadharma, but when the time came to fulfill it, you failed. Now that destiny has passed you by, and there may never be another chance to make it right. Other Ravnos know the tale, and hold your failure against you. You are scorned, and your confidence has been thrown into doubt. Your total Willpower score is permanently reduced by one and you may not spend Willpower when performing actions where other Ravnos are directly involved.

Discipline Powers

Subtle Spy (Chimerstry ••••• •)

The user of this power may create a perceivable, understandable illusion (such as a lamp or a person) that incorporates part of her own consciousness, effectively granting the illusion a small amount of independent intelligence. When the Ravnos dispels that illusion, she may draw this intelligence back into herself, learning anything that her illusion witnessed as if she had experienced it firsthand.

System: Imbuing an illusion with Illusory Mind costs two Willpower points, and lasts for one night (or less, if the Ravnos wills the illusion to dispel). If the illusion is an object, it will witness anything that the Ravnos could sense from the object's location. If the illusion is mobile (a person or animal), then it may be programmed as per Apparition (V20, pp. 144-145), and at the end of its existence, the Ravnos will learn everything the Apparition sensed. Further, this Apparition is vaguely conscious, and can knowingly change its actions in small ways: stepping around an obstacle, giving the appropriate response to a simple question, and so forth.

The user of this power does not know what is occurring around her illusion if she is not otherwise there to sense it. She may dispel the illusion at any time, and at any distance, drawing back to herself the substance (and experiences) of that illusion as it is destroyed. If the illusion is dispelled or disbelieved before the Ravnos can reincorporate it into herself, the illusion is destroyed and no knowledge is returned to the Ravnos, other than the fact that her spy exists no more.

Combination Disciplines

Carriage Horses (Animalism ••, Fortitude •••)

This power originated among Ravnos kumpaniyas. Most traveling groups had animal ghouls for the purpose of protecting and guarding the vampires during the day, and some clever individual learned how to make those retainers serve an even greater purpose. By the use of this power, a Ravnos can transfer a point of damage he has suffered to one of his animal ghouls.

System: If the Ravnos has any animal ghouls within sight, he may elect to use this power. The player spends one blood point and rolls Stamina + Animal Ken against a difficulty of 8. Each success transfers one Health level of damage (any type) to the animal. This can only be used immediately after the vampire is wounded (after the soak roll) and counts as a reflexive action.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

Eventide Strength (Chimerstry •••, Fortitude •)

Typically, the powers of Chimerstry are dispelled by the touch of sunlight. However, a Ravnos who has studied this power has learned subtle tricks to reinforce the maya within her illusions, rendering them less vulnerable to the sun.

System: A Ravnos who has learned this power can strengthen her uses of Chimerstry, causing it to survive one hour of sunlight.

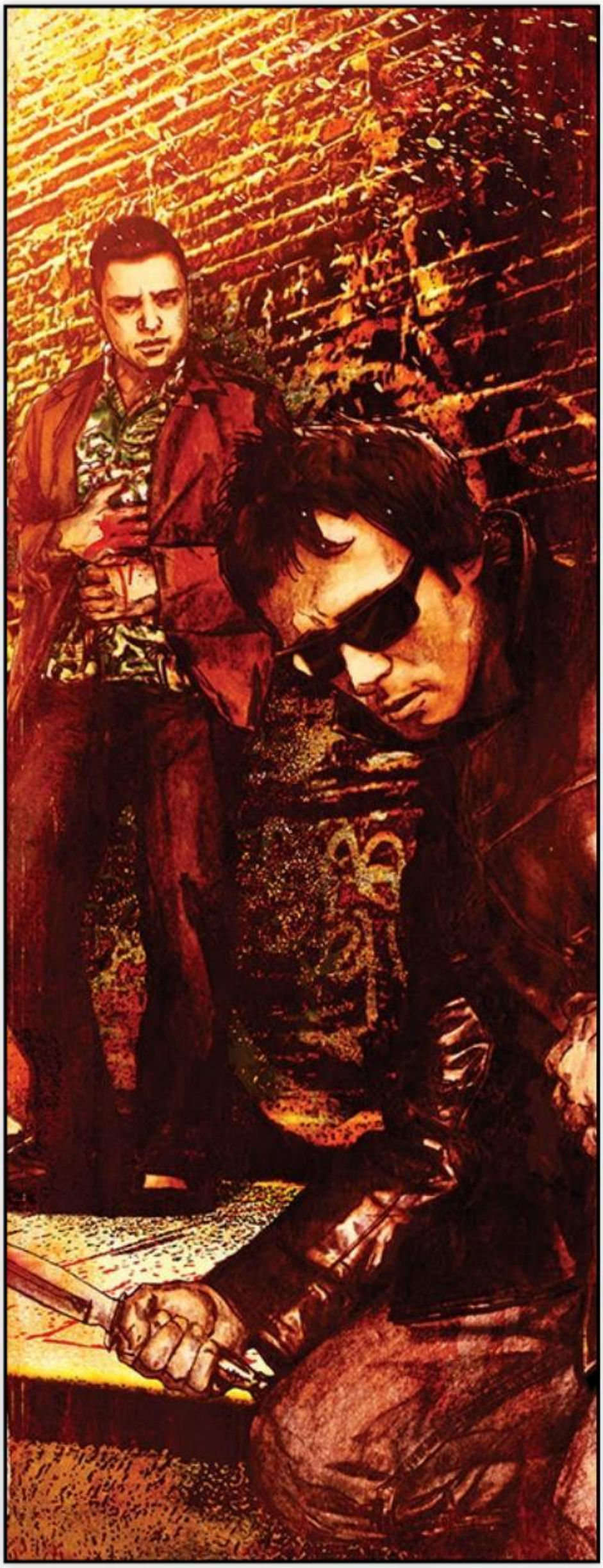
This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Heart's Desire (Auspex ••••, Chimerstry ••)

With this power, a Ravnos reaches into a target's emotion and creates an image of the target's greatest wish. This desire manifests as some sort of material object: a love letter, a stack of money, or the golden crown of a Prince. No matter what manifests, the Ravnos who used this power understands the meaning and nature of the item, and is able to comprehend the target's deepest desire. The Ravnos has no magical ability to understand the why or wherefore of that desire; only that this is the person's fondest dream.

Obviously, handing that love letter to the target will not convince her that the Ravnos can (or has) caused her greatest desire to truly come true. Instead, most Ravnos cunningly use this power to discover a target's secrets, and never reveal to the other individual that Heart's Desire was used at all.

System: To target a player with this power, the Ravnos must have touched them within the last three rounds. Once that has been achieved, the player must spend a blood point and a Willpower point. Then, roll Intelligence + Subterfuge against a difficulty of the target's current



Willpower, and achieve three successes. If the Ravnos is successful, an illusory item manifests within the Ravnos' hand as if Fata Morgana (**V20**, p. 144) had been used, and the Ravnos instinctively understands the meaning of the item and the general nature of the target's desire.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Sympathetic Agony (Chimerstry ••, Fortitude ••••)

The Kshatriya caste developed this power as a weapon of last resort, punishing their enemies with illusory agonies in the throes of combat. After a target strikes a Ravnos who has successfully used this power, the target feels the pain of that specific attack instead of the Ravnos.

System: The user of this power rolls Manipulation + Intimidation against a difficulty equal to the victim's Perception + Self-Control. If successful, for the rest of the scene the target will feel a supernaturally augmented reflection of any pain she inflicts by attacking you.

Any time your target attacks you, she immediately suffers a penalty to all physical actions equal to the successes you scored when activating this power. Penalties inflicted by Sympathetic Agony last for three full turns. Penalties from this power do not stack; a character under the effects of multiple applications of Sympathetic Agony suffers a penalty equal to the highest number of successes scored on a single use of the power's activation.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Waking Dream (Chimerstry •, Fortitude •)

You may briefly treat an illusion you've created as though it were real.

System: Once per game session, you may utilize a simple illusion (climbing a rope, landing on a trampoline, unlocking a door with an illusory key, or similar) as if it were real for one turn. Waking Dream cannot be used to directly harm or help any other character.

This power costs 6 experience points to learn.

Optional Rule: I Really Need a Drink

As an optional rule, if a Ravnos successfully resists her vice (as dictated by her Clan weakness) several times during the course of a session, the Storyteller might increase her character's Self-Control difficulties in order to properly show the Ravnos' ever-increasing, addictive draw toward fulfilling her particular vice.

The Various Paths of Paradox

The Path of Paradox is a dynamic Path of Enlightenment, constantly evolving as the Ravnos who adhere to it learn further truths. Although the Path ideals and ethics are very similar, the Path sins presented here are not identical to those presented in **V20** (pp. 335-336), and that is deliberate. **V20** presents the Mayaparisatya Path as it has been through history. This material presents optional, alternative views of the Path to depict how the Path has (and is) evolving. Your Storyteller may, or may not, choose to adopt this material for her chronicle.

The Mayaparisatya Path of Paradox

The Mayaparisatya Path of Paradox concerns itself with the vampire's karmic duty to the jati, and to their place in the world. It is too simple a conceit to say that the Ravnos destroy vampires and seek to fulfill their innate svadharma and karma. In fact, the Mayaparisatya is arduous and demanding. It seeks to use the basis of one's physical and social place to mimic her "spiritual place," in order to assist the vampire with an understanding of the cycle of ages. Developed among the Ravnos who traveled from India to Europe, this version of the Path has existed since the time of Roman Empire.

This path was once the primary Path within the Clan, and it is still adhered to by some of the most static Ravnos, such as the Brahmin elders. This path encourages its followers to be fierce individualists, to avoid following laws (especially those of mortals), and to accept his utter inhumanity. They see most other vampires as abominations, and work to fulfill their own svadharma so that they might one day be freed of the "entanglements" of the cycle of rebirth.

The Samsara Path of Paradox

The Samsara path, named both for the literal meaning of "a journey" and the metaphysical association of samsara with rebirth and reincarnation, is one of the newest versions of the Path of Paradox, created by young Ravnos around the turn of the millennium. While it follows the basic strictures of the overall path, it focuses on more modern concepts and has a greater understanding of

Mayaparisatya Path of Paradox Hierarchy of Sins

Rating	Moral Guideline	Rationale
10	Embracing a woman	Women should be bearers of life, not death.
9	Embracing outside the jati	Most others fail to comprehend the depth of the Paradox philosophy.
8	Destroying another shimulo	Charity does not, as is widely believed, begin at home.
7	Killing a mortal for sustenance	Death robs a person of the ability to fulfill their svadharma.
6	Failing to destroy a vampire on another Path	Those who cannot see the true way should be returned.
5	Killing a mortal for reasons other than survival	A person may not have achieved her svadharma, and preventing such is anathema.
4	Failure to aid another's svadharma	The gods have set this as the shimulo's purpose.
3	Allowing one's Sect affairs to take precedence over one's dharma	One's allegiance should be to the gods, not one's companions.
2	Becoming blood bound	One may never destroy one's regnant, which is the whole purpose of this Path.
1	Embracing needlessly or out of personal desire	One must return others to the cycle, not extract them from it

Samsara Path of Paradox Hierarchy of Sins

Rating	Moral Guideline	Rationale
10	Embracing a mother	Mothers have given life, and should tend life. They should never be made servants of death.
9	Respect deception, but seek truth	This is the infinite paradox. Through uncovering paradoxes and realizing that both parts are true, we peel away the world's illusions.
8	Killing a mortal	Death robs a person of the ability to fulfill their *svadharma*.
7	Failing to destroy a failed vampire	A vampire has failed when she rejects her vampiric nature. Trying to become mortal again, attempting to live a mortal life, acquire perfect humanity, or revering mortals above vampires are signs of utter failure.
6	Returning to your mortal life or pretending to be mortal	Your svadharma is no longer theirs; those ways are forbidden to you after the Embrace.
5	Carrying a karmic debt	Owing someone on a spiritual level (for example, because they saved your unlife) impacts your svadharma. Such debt prevents you from fulfilling your destiny.
4	Failure to follow your svadharma	Once you know your purpose, you must never betray or turn from it.
3	Killing a vampire that is clearly following his svadharma	No destiny is more important than any other. You cannot stop the workings of fate or karma, and you should not try.
2	Becoming blood bound	Forcibly tying your svadharma to another's is anathema.
1	Embracing, except as a critical part of your svadharma	The Embrace ends one svadharma to begin another. Never lightly end another's path.

Western Path of Paradox Hierarchy of Sins

Rating	Moral Guideline	Rationale
10	Refusing to commit diablerie on an elder	Elders have great power. Take it as your own.
9	Refusing to lead a disbeliever into the light, or into destruction	Some Cainites can be shown the way. Reach out to them if possible.
8	Showing any concern for mortals	Mortals create laws to restrain us.
7	Failing to gratify your desire	The vampiric form grants us hunger and desires to know what experiences to seek out. To avoid them is to truly die.
6	Failing to trick others when the opportunity arises	The Embrace frees us to indulge our whims.
5	Being caught stealing or engaging in subterfuge	Both mortals and Cainites frown upon our activities. Do not allow them to discover your treacheries.
4	Refusing to use power to your own advantage	Greater power is greater freedom.
3	Joining a Sect or otherwise stabilizing society	Society limits action and denies us our needs.
2	Actively hindering change; allowing others to know one's true motives	What others know, they can understand and use against you. Support change, so that the balance of knowledge is in your favor.
1	Becoming blood bound	To submit to others prospects is to cease to be an individual and to become the extension of another's will.

multiculturalism. As such, it uses a different Hierarchy of Sins than the one presented in **V20**.

The Western Path of Paradox

The Western Path is a corrupted derivative of the Mayaparisatya Path. Considered a sick abomination to most, it contains many ideas and ethics that are deeply heretical to the Ravnos Clan. On the surface, it may look like a path of debauchery and indulgence, but those who follow its precepts are wantonly cruel, deeply narcissistic, and wholly self-destructive.

While once this Path was popular among Ravnos (and some few Malkavians), many Ravnos, particularly the Rroma-born, hunt down and destroy any who adhere to this Path. It is a Path of cruelty and chaos, far more severe than mere "trickster" behavior, and one that actively endangers vampiric existence as a whole. The Clan (and, in fact, most vampires) consider the Western Path to be a plague and a threat to the Masquerade, but it is still intensely attractive to a number of vampires. And so the cycle continues.





TOREADOR

"And under this carnival disguise,
the heart of an old youngster who is still waiting to give his all.
But how to be recognized under this mask?
This is what they call a fine career."

— Jean Anouilh, The Waltz of the Toreadors

Petrichore

After the rains have cleared, Josette sits on the ledge of the window. She watches the boy in the alley below as he rummages through his bag. She inhales the smell of wet earth mingling with his sweat. She focuses on that smell, files it away. It is important to remember every sensation. Josette has always loved the smell of the earth after it rains.

She listens to the boy, the music of him. The rushing rasp of his skin against the edge of his bag sends chills up her spine, the chiming tinkle of his tools clattering together. The fast, excited beat of his heart throbbing. In the distance, Josette hears the buzz of the city. A few blocks away, a car idles, and she is afraid that it will turn toward them. It turns away. Good, she thinks. Nothing can interrupt this. Tonight will be the night. She has waited for this, called in every favor she has to make this moment hers. But she will wait, at least until he is finished.

She has seen his work. The angry things thrown up on the sides of trains and in the battered tunnels of the subway were the first things she noticed. They are still the earliest pieces of his that she can find. He became famous, thanks to her. Nobody knows who he is, but they clamor for his new pieces on Instagram and Tumblr. She curates the pieces for him. He has passion, but no sense of his place in the world. He can't taste his own greatness.

Now his work is so much more complex. The boy lays out a collection of cans on the asphalt. He unfolds a stained and battered cardboard template, and tapes it to the brick wall. Josette knows the ritual. He plans his work meticulously. He cased this place for weeks. We have that in common, she thinks. The awning above him protected the wall from the elements, but the rain drove the streets clear. The stencil is only part of the plan, and it comes in many parts. Next will come the beautiful percussion of the can as he shakes it, the silken hiss of the paint as it stains the brick with his thoughts.

Josette has seen the face he keeps hidden behind the handkerchief screen-printed with the bottom half of a skull. She's seen his eyes up close. The brown eyes shattered by the neighborhood, glued together by outrage. He saw her, but he didn't understand what it meant. Unless she turned it on, Josette was just another black girl in a neighborhood full of them.

The artist works, and everything else recedes. The rush of traffic and nightwalkers falls off, and all of New York becomes one small back alley that smells of wet earth and spray paint.

Tonight he will understand. Josette will open the artist's eyes. She smiles, and steps off the ledge.

A Dramatic History

I know, darling. The past is so *yesterday*. But you have to know the rules before you can break them. You have to understand the fundamentals before you can innovate. Those who forget the past, and so on and so forth. So sit down and keep your bloodhole shut, because it's story time.

Now, where was I? Oh, yes. You might think that immortal creatures would be able to tell you with certainty how we came to be or the exact events that happened because somebody was surely there and they recorded exactly what happened and didn't embellish things at all because *history*, right? Sadly, Kindred seem to be as shortsighted and self-centered as mortal historians are. We rarely remember what happened unless it revolved around us, and even then, we tend to... embellish.

What can I say? Our family has always had a flair for the dramatic.

The Founder

Noddist scholars have spent endless nights debating the identity of the Toreador founder. She has many names: Arikel, Astarte, Inanna, and Ishtar, to name a few. In most tales, she is a sculptor. A small number of medieval texts even identify Arikel as a man. While I've heard stories of Ishtar the bull-dancer, who entranced Enoch with her sinuous grace and bravery, the bulk of the Toreador share the story of Arikel the radiant, the sculptor who enthralled even Caine. Personally, I choose to believe that the truth lies somewhere in the middle. It is probable that she was all of these things; athlete, dancer, and sculptor; one does not preclude the others. In the end, it doesn't matter if the truth of what happened is different. Most Toreador will gladly choose romance and a good story over dull, dry facts any night.

Caine ruled Ubar, the First City, with his childe Enoch. They say that in those nights, the Kindred existed alongside the kine in something that passed for harmony. Among the mortals, Enoch found a pair of twins who bore the grace and beauty of angels. They immediately captivated him. He spent endless nights discussing philosophy with the young man and listening to his poetry and prophecy. While he sat, the young woman, Arikel, sculpted, drawing Enoch's image forth from clay with such skill that Zillah mistook the statue for her own brother. Enoch could not bear to watch the angels fade over time like the other Kine the Cainites ruled. He knew that Caine would not approve, but he could not deny his heart's desire to share immortality with the twins. He Embraced first Arikel, followed by her twin brother, whose name history has forgotten. We call him Malkav, now. You can't be surprised, childe. Art has ever been closely followed by madness.

In time, the three childer of Caine begat their own childer, for a total of 13. No, I don't know all their names. I don't think anyone does, and it doesn't really matter, does it? If one of the Antediluvians woke now, deciding what to call them would be the least of your worries. The important thing is that Caine finally decided that enough was enough, and he forbade the creation of new vampires. This was, as you can imagine, not terribly popular with the progeny of Enoch, Irad, and Zillah. But they listened, at least at first.

For a while, things worked out. Some say that Arikel even fell in love with Absimiliard, one of Zillah's childer, a man as beautiful as she was. They shared their haven and their blood, and became utterly bound to one another. The Cainite empire grew from the city of Ubar, and the 16 Cainites existed among the children of Seth with their Dark Father.

Then came the Deluge, and washed Ubar away. Caine looked upon the devastation and the deaths of so many of his subjects, and he blamed himself. Surely this was a punishment from God for spreading the curse he'd been given. For daring to seek the company of others in his endless purgatory. So he forsook his childer and his grandchilder, and he buried himself away from humanity. Twelve Cainites of the Third Generation begged for permission to Embrace, but their sires denied them. They rose up and slew their sires in a great battle. Caine heard of the battle, and he returned to find the carnage. The sight of his three favored childer reduced to ash and dust filled him with rage. In his wrath, he leveled his own curses upon the 12 Cainites who participated in the slaughter. The only one who remained uncursed was Arikel, the bull dancer and sculptor, for she alone had refrained from the slaughter. To her, Caine said, "Flee far to the north, for when your siblings find that you escaped their fate, they will be angry." With her, she took Caine's blessing: that no matter how long she stayed on our side of the grave, she would never lose the human taste for beauty.

Ancient Times

Arikel made her way through the world, avoiding her cousins and trying to find her place in the world. She clashed with the Gangrel founder, Enkidu, and his childe Ereshkigal in Sumer. Some stories tell how she Embraced the son of Minos, king of Crete, before ending up in Mycenae. Around this time, we actually start to see the direct influence of Arikel's childer on the world. For example, we know that a Toreador—possibly Arikel herself—sought the affections of King Amphion and, thanks to our obvious magnetism, he returned her affection. Niobe begged him to consider their marriage, their kingdom, and their fourteen children. And

I know it's a shock, but Amphion actually *did*! He told the Toreador he couldn't go with her, because of his children. So she did what any reasonable bloodsucking psychopath would do: she killed his children and forcibly Embraced Amphion. As far as Kindred histories go, Amphion is the first Toreador whose bloodline can be traced to today. Well, unless you believe some rumors I've heard from Chicago about Minos. Anyway, Mycenae didn't suffer the Kindred well. The Methuselahs fought amongst themselves to snatch at the reins of power, and only succeeded in destabilizing the entire nation. Their gambits left many of them dead or in torpor, and their mortal minions lost or mad. Which left Mycenae itself open to invasion by the Dorians.

When Arikel fled Sumer and had her time in Greece, the Brujah worked to build Carthage while the Ventrue shored up their own power in Rome. After Mycenae, some Toreador cropped up in each nation. They say one of Arikel's childer — a girl named Tanit, Embraced for her beauty, not her intelligence — followed Troile, the founder of the Brujah, as her lover. Others say the Toreador would never stoop so low, but someone had to teach Troile and her brood the art of shaping emotion, wouldn't you say?

Meanwhile, the Toreador in Rome, chastened by their experiences in Mycenae, simply did their best to survive. The Ventrue were fond of them, in part because they did not threaten the power dynamic the blue bloods had learned to manipulate and foster, but also because of their love of beauty, art, and architecture. The Toreador encouraged the arts while the Ventrue encouraged infrastructure. Rome became a center of culture and learning, a safe place — well, as safe as any place could be — that drew its people in.

Don't get me wrong. You might hear some puffed-up, self-important Kindred spew this "secret masters" line, that vampires are somehow responsible for human history. It's a lovely story, my dear, but it's simply not true. We can barely keep control of our own society without things splintering in "sects," "coteries," and whatnot, so how could we possibly control *humanity*? Of course, there are ways that our kind can wield quite a lot of influence on a *single* person, through emotional or mental manipulation. In my experience, though, the easiest ways are the best. We act as patrons to the arts. We *pay* for it, darling. It's actually *very* easy to amass a fortune as a Cainite.

But I digress. Like in all times, eventually war came. The inevitable conflict between Carthage and Rome, and Rome won. But the Ventrue's obsession with the Brujah cost us all.

Like I said, the Kindred were never "rulers" of Rome. They operated in the shadows, nudging things here, assassinating people there. With the Ventrue spending all their time focused on empire building and their rivalry with the Brujah, who knows if they missed the opportunity to slit the right throat and stop the rise of Christianity? Probably not, but it would have made existence a lot easier if they had. Apparently they paid the tiny little mystery cult no mind, until the zealous newborn Christians divined our weaknesses and burned many of Rome's Kindred to ash.

After the fire came a decade of emperors, fighting over Rome like it was the last hit of dope. A few puffed up elders might say this emperor was a Ventrue pawn or that one was pledged to the Toreador, but who knows, and who cares? It was a complete fiasco, and nobody came out on top except the Christians. Yeah, I have no idea how they pulled that eleventh hour conversion on Constantine, but it worked out big. And if the stories are true, there's no *way* we were involved in that. They say he had a lantern on the battlefield that contained a fragment of the sun. It's possible, I suppose, but I hope to hell it's locked away in the basement of the Vatican way out of the reach of anyone actually pious.

So Byzantium became Nova Roma, and have you *seen* that place? Baby, the Toreador were on it like Licks on a blood bank. The Ventrue stayed behind in Rome, stubborn gits that they are. And of course, *we* were the bad guys for bailing.

The Dark Ages

The fall of Rome was a slow thing by mortal reckoning, but to the Kindred, it happened in the blink of an eye. As the empire collapsed, the Gangrel, Brujah, and Tzimisce tore through the carcass, slaughtering the Ventrue as they found them and chipping away at Rome a piece at a time. With the Ventrue occupied, the Toreador were left to gather what they could and get out while the getting was good. They did their best to salvage and preserve what they could of Rome's knowledge and art before it was burned or buried or rutted with — whatever the disgusting barbarians were going to do with it.

There was nothing to be done but hoard and preserve the knowledge, and hope for a rebirth of reason and culture. On the other hand, the Kindred finally learned to survive under the nose of the Catholic Church. Since most academics of the time were monks living in monasteries, it became necessary to move among the men of God. Many were never the wiser, but of course, some came to enjoy the benefits of the blood, or became willing supplicants to immortal Toreador flesh.

You'd think the Dark Ages were an utterly boring time to be a Kindred. I mean no castles yet to play at Gothic drama, and Europe was basically nothing but plagues and heresies. You'd be right, of course, if it weren't for the rest of the world. Over in the Middle East, they were perfecting algebra and making the most fascinating art. I mean, there



was Salianna and her Courts of Love, playing at chivalry and courtly love, but quite a few Toreador decided to abandon Europe entirely for the Middle East or south, to Africa.

In Byzantium, the Toreador tried to keep the idea of a real Empire, of a larger culture and society, alive. The Byzantines, at least, appreciated and valued the lessons the Toreador had to teach them. After standing strong for so many years, in 1204 C.E., the gates of Constantinople were finally breached; not by Saracens, but by Christian men. I have heard whispers that the Giovanni were intimately involved in the Crusade that finally tore through their defenses, but I couldn't tell you what a bunch of sibling-loving necromancers would want with the last light of Nova Roma. They say the streets ran red with blood, and you can be sure it belonged to both Kindred and Kine.

Anyhow, before I move on to this next bit, let's get one thing out of the way first. Yes, I'm sure there were Toreador involved in the slave trade. Many Toreador were ambivalent; some saw it as being little different from the practice of ghouling mortals. Others saw a great deal of difference between creating one or two dependable ghouls and enslaving an entire race through violence. There were Toreador who worked to fight slavery, but they railed against an overwhelming tide.

Most of the Toreador in Africa were, as always, fascinated by the societies. The little things that make up a person's life, which they don't even consider. And their art. The people of Africa were capable of great works of art, of beautiful traditions and wonderful legends and tales. There's just so much! Malian Bògòlanfini and Dogon ceremonial masks, Shona soapstone carvings from Zimbabwe, and so much more. I mean, Africa is so large that most of the rest of the world's landmasses can fit inside it comfortably. There are so many different cultures and civilizations across the continent that one could spend centuries just exploring them all. And after Europe started colonizing, the frisson of the cultures meeting produced even more amazing art. Look at the Ghanaian figurative palanquins and abebuu adekai coffins to see what I mean.

Somehow, the Toreador congregated in Nigeria, in a place called Sungbo's Eredo. They Embraced and ghouled and mixed with the locals, and from what I hear, it was the center of Toreador culture on the continent well into the 1980s.

The Renaissance and Founding of the Camarilla

Remember how I said that there were Kindred hiding within the Church? Well, sometime in the 1200s, the Church decided to root out groups of heretics. Which

seems kind of harmless, right? Let them dig at each other's dogma and maybe they won't notice that the pale fellow in the corner's drinking from an altar boy. The Toreador encouraged the formation and growth of a little sect within the church called the Inquisition. One of the major casualties of the Inquisition was the Court of Love, and specifically Esclarmonde, the Queen of Love of Toulouse. Would it be twee to say that this backfired?

But in the end, it was worth it, because it led to a rebirth of reason and culture! The first bit of reason we can discuss is that the Kindred finally united enough to set down in writing a few laws that should have been there from the start. The Convention of Thorns was, essentially, the Versailles Treaty of our kind. It set aside the bloody Jyhad and punished the losing parties for their crimes, while — if we're being honest — not really addressing the concerns that started the revolution in the first place.

Of the seven Clans who built the sect, the Toreador were undeniably one of the — if not *the* — most vital founders. The Ventrue are built for zero-sum wheeling and dealing. We're built for diplomacy. The Camarilla may not itself be luminous, but it makes for a grand conductor of our light. The most important law that the Camarilla instituted, and most common sense, was the Masquerade. That's right; it took until the fifteenth century for them to figure that out. Even then, it took Rafael de Corazon and the Toreador to convince the rest of the Camarilla to actually put it into practice. It's not my place to say that the Kindred wouldn't exist today without our guidance. It might have been said, and who am I to argue? Regardless, the Toreador were finally able to fully blend with the mortals without an overzealous Tzimisce splitting someone in half for an imagined slight.

As for the rest of the age, it was glorious. Artists, thinkers, and *oh*, the printing press. You'll hear Toreador brag about Embracing some of the most iconic artists of the period, but I truly doubt anyone was ever stupid enough to risk that kind of exposure. The most well-known artists were institutions, managing stables of apprentices who were themselves incredibly gifted. Quite a few masterpieces were the work of many hands, under the direction of the genius whose name lives on. I'm sure any number of those gifted apprentices were Embraced by admiring Toreador.

As populations grew across Europe thanks to advances in health and hygiene, the Kindred population also exploded. It was quickly becoming clear that the children of Caine had outgrown their world.

The New World

It is lucky for everyone involved, then, that explorers discovered the Americas. Well, except for the native inhabitants. Christopher Columbus may not have been the first European to set foot on the new continents, but like Elvis and rock and roll, he certainly popularized it. Quite a few Kindred traveled on with the new widespread colonization and exploration efforts, and a significant number were Toreador. A new land, with vast empires of people who created entirely different forms of art, held novel philosophies, and harbored new creatures and experiences. Just like Africa, the Toreador found an incredibly rich vein of humanity where the other Europeans (both Kindred and kine) saw resources to exploit and obstacles to convert or bowl over. It was like a flame to a moth! The Toreador couldn't resist.

Early Toreador moved among the vast empires of the native peoples, learning from and integrating with the Mississippian cultures, the Iroquois League and the Ojibwa in the north, and the Nahua peoples of Mesoamerica. I spent months one evening listening to an old Toreador ramble on about a lost empire in the Amazon, but I'll be honest, I don't remember much of what he said. The Toreador were soon horrified as illnesses from Europe obliterated large swaths of civilization on the continent. The puritanical settlers and their incredibly stifling social values also horrified them. Not enough to return to Europe, of course, but enough to give them a strong sense of Dark Ages *deja vu*.

Over time, the colonies built up, and took on their own identity. The American Revolution cut a swath through the Clan, as young Kindred in the colonies chose to support the revolution, while elders resisted it. Both sides were fascinated by the enflamed passions of the kine, and neither could deny that the world was more interesting after the smoke cleared.

The fire of American passion made for a turbulent few centuries. Not long after the Revolution — to a Kindred, at least — the American Civil War ripped the country in half, and again the Toreador found themselves torn. Because of our deep involvement with mortal society, many Kindred found themselves unable to reconcile their loyalty to mortal friends or family from one side with their sire's demands on another. Older Kindred felt echoes of the same passions that drove the Anarch Revolt, and tightened their hold on their childer... that inflamed things and caused small eruptions of outright war between the Camarilla and the Sabbat on the same battlefields mortal brothers fought their siblings. Immortality doesn't necessarily convey the ability to learn from the past, darling.

The Twentieth Century

It's easy to point to 1900 as the next big shift, but the truth is, things changed almost a decade before that. The World's Columbian Exhibition in 1893 was really the beginning of the modern era. The fair's glorious white city introduced the world to artists, poets, serial killers, and inventors hawking everything from the Ferris Wheel to phosphorescent lamps. It truly began the American love affair with spectacle. Chicago at the time was a utopia for the Kindred, as the flow of humanity into and out of the city for the fair made it incredibly easy to hide and hunt. Chicago's Kindred still burnish the reputation their city built during that summer.

As time passed, the entire world followed the example of the big cities who competed for that fair. They industrialized, marginalized, and depersonalized everything while demanding more and more, newer, faster innovation. The people demanded immediate gratification, and they got it. The beginning of the century brought malaise and disillusionment to the Toreador, because they feared that the anonymous big cities would crush out the spark of humanity. But they were wrong. It drove people to build bigger, louder, and to create more dynamic expressions of humanity's beauty. They took those very tools of automation and turned them into platforms for art and self-expression. Granted, humanity also clamored and fought through a Great Depression, two World Wars, and any number of smaller ones, but they also embraced free love and made it possible for anyone to have their voice heard. Which brings us to now, doesn't it?

The Latest Trends

This is the age of the Toreador. And aren't you so lucky to be here for it? There is no other Clan more suited to the twenty-first century. Culture has become democratized so completely that a well-placed word on a social media network can transform someone completely. One could elevate anyone to celebrity or plunge him or her into an abyss of ridicule or obscurity at a moment's notice. At the same time, the cycle of mortal memory spins more and more quickly, hurtling forward at breakneck speed. A superstar can be forgotten if she doesn't make the news for a few weeks. Trends are measured in minutes. Regimes rise and fall so rapidly that the corpse is cold before the news can cover the story. At the same time, culture has become defined by this strange atemporality. The memetic tide of the internet washes up vanished flotsam on a daily basis, bringing viral attention to forgotten artists and musicians. Suddenly a song from the '30s is a top ten hit, and the kids are all sharing animated gifs of Bogey and Bacall. Just as quickly, nobody remembers that song, and we're all singing a remix of a parody of a Korean pop hit that came out this morning. It all moves at a whirlwind pace that hopelessly baffles most elders, leaving them completely out of touch. They can't even begin to cope with the strange culture the kine are wrapped up in. But to us, the world is finally catching up to how we've existed for centuries.

We Walk in Beauty

The Toreador are alone in the Kindred world. I'm not saying we're better than the other Clans (even though of course we are—have you *talked* to them?), but when Caine was passing out his lovely little punishments, he apparently chose not to include us. In fact, Caine gave Arikel a *blessing* because she was the only one who didn't join in the murder of the Second Generation: the Toreador never lose their taste for human beauty. Combined with our preternatural senses, it can be a bit of a problem, because it can be a little distracting, but let's weigh our options, shall we? We could be twisted by the Embrace into looking like someone parked a taxi on our faces, or we could be incredibly distracted by a beautiful mortal at the club.

I'm sure it's different for you, but it's hard to describe the sensation I feel when I run across something sublime. Whether it's a beautiful person, a work of art, or a brilliant song, it's like tunnel vision. The rest of the world melts away, until only that thing exists. I suppose it's irritating to the idiots I was talking to a moment ago, but that's not important. I can't even remember their names. I just know I have to move with the current of the music, the flow of sound around me is so substantial that I can almost see it. If I squint, I *can* see the swirls of the sounds spiraling through the air. The arpeggio keeps unfolding, expanding out and folding in on itself like aural origami. I dance, and the world shrinks to the point and counterpoint of the rhythm. Nothing else matters. Then the song is over, and I find out the dance floor is empty and my friends are trying to keep a determined hunter from blowing my head off, and I don't even know why.

Wearing the Mask

Most Kindred play at being human in some cursory way. They avoid drawing undue attention, preserving the Masquerade in the most convenient ways possible without descending into the morass that comes from maintaining relationships with mortals. They remain with the herd of humanity without becoming part of it. The Toreador cannot abide such distance. The beauty of life, the genius of humanity, can't be seen at arm's length. We blur the lines between predator, lover, family, and prey.

Most Toreador maintain a constant presence in the world of mortals. I would go so far as to say most of us consider mortals to be more authentic, trustworthy, vital, and constantly surprising than the Kindred. Except maybe the junkies. They're almost exactly like a Lick, except they won't mean to get your haven raided at two in the afternoon. Which won't make you feel better when you're awkwardly burning in front of a squad of well-built men in uniform, but there it is.

Quite a few Toreador build these elaborate mortal identities, entire lives that they can step into for a few decades. They surround themselves with lovers, friends, and acquaintances who remain unaware of the Toreador's, shall we say, "darker predilections." Others return to the families they had before the Embrace, binding their spouses and children with little sips of blood to keep them close and maintain secrecy. It's basically impossible to cohabitate with someone without him or her knowing you're essentially a corpse during the day. If you try and keep secrets like that, you will come home to a drug intervention, if you're lucky. Others view their web of mortal relationships as works of art. They create these carefully orchestrated stories, precisely manipulating their social circles to create an effect or reinforce a theme.

At the same time, the kine are a mirage, a romanticized ideal made more beautiful by nostalgia and our supernaturally heightened senses. The Beast curled in your chest is more than just a ravening hunger for blood. It is an *amplifier*. Our passions burn like phosphorous and our disappointment is a frozen, bitter pill. There is no baseline state for most Toreador; we exist in the peaks and valleys of emotion. Every moment with mortals is an invitation to pain, guilt, and depression, so we love them until something breaks, and then we hurt, and then we beg for more.

The point is, darling, mortals are love and beauty and all the things that shine brighter than the sun we'll never see again. They're a drug. And the really interesting thing is that they also *contain* a drug. But don't mix those drugs. I know I'm wasting my time here; you'll have to learn this one yourself. Don't feed on the people you love. It will be too much, and you'll get lost in it. The worst K-hole you've ever been in — that fluttering, unfolding feeling, the displacement and the way things become other things that are somehow both things? When you come to and find yourself covered in your boyfriend's blood and his spark has been snuffed out and you can't help but lick the blood off your hands?

I'm not one to say "I told you so," but you'll wish you listened to me.

Disco Bloodbath

The Kindred are a strange lot. The paradox of a social animal transformed into an apex predator makes them fiercely territorial but also unable to walk away from the only creatures able to relate to their existence. The other Clans Embrace for all sorts of reasons. The Ventrue might Embrace a promising young business major, or a wandering Gangrel might choose a girl who held her own in a bar fight in Idaho or something. But the Toreador, we pick the artists, the misfits, and the interesting or gorgeous people. Our garden is full of pretty and poisonous flowers.

When the other Kindred want to cut loose, they turn to us, because we throw the most *spectacular* parties. Nobody wants to go to a party at the local Tremere chantry, dear. They pretend that they're above mortals, *beyond* them, but underneath it all they want to be one of the popular kids like everyone else, and they'd do just about anything for an invitation to one of our get-togethers. They just want to feel that wildness course through them again. Imagine your entire existence is a black and white photograph, desaturated and pale. The only real color is pulses of hot red, pumping from a vein. To someone whose nights are that pallid, Toreador festivities are absolute wonderlands of psychedelic color. They're little wooden boys who just got invited to Pleasure Island.

Here's the secret, darling. Our parties aren't *just* sybaritic displays of hedonism. If you aren't careful, you'll find yourself with an ass's tail, yes you will. The lush, lavishly decorated halls of the Toreador salons are their own battleground, no less deadly than a back alley or a gladiator's pit. The wounds inflicted may not bloody the combatants, but they can be just as fatal. Because, for a group of lethal killers, the Kindred are shockingly averse to actually fighting. It's always fascinated me how quickly mortals throw their lives away over ridiculous, stupid things, and how jealously elders guard their every precious night, despite existing for three or four mortal lifetimes. I know, I've heard the argument "they have more to lose." But I disagree. Scarcity creates value. That's why everyone wants reservations to Dorsia, my dear. Because they can't get them.

You have to understand. Even in a city like London or New York, the Kindred scene is an incestuous, tiny little thing. It's like living in a small town. Everyone knows everybody else, and while the dead may travel fast, gossip is faster. The worst — or best! — thing about a party is that you can lose the fight before the night's even begun. The first attack is a crisp little envelope or a glossy flyer. Invitations are sent, and dreams are crushed. Being left out sends a message, doesn't it? Exclusion is bad enough, but being left out when everyone else you see makes a

point of asking you if you're going to the party? It lets you know where you stand and lets everyone *else* know where you stand.

It may seem like a small thing, but in a society as insular as ours, it can very effectively leave you out in the cold. Other Kindred turn their backs even if they don't know why, just to avoid getting cut loose themselves. The blade can cut the other way, too. If you don't invite the right guests to your party, or some shining star you invited doesn't bother showing up... or worse, schedules a party for the *same night*. I know, it's complicated and terrible and *completely unfair*, but you'll end up just as fucked. The point is the Toreador party scene is as effective a way to play the fun little prestation games as any Elysium or Primogen intrigue. Throw the right party, orchestrate the right moment between two Kindred, and then make sure they know that you know that it wouldn't have happened without you. They'll both owe you favors you can cash out in your own time.

It's customary for a host to provide refreshments for her guests, of course. Even that can arm you if you're observant. Watch the guests and see which vessels they prefer. You can learn a lot about someone based on the way they treat the kine, and which ones they choose to drink from. Especially the Ventrue, with their picky little dietary restrictions. Being able to procure rare or illicit delicacies or being able to control the supply can be a significant advantage all by itself. But for Caine's sake, don't try to use it as an opportunity to slip some of your blood into the supply. A paranoid Tremere *will* test the blood, and you will get caught. You won't succeed in binding your entire party, and the reputation you'll acquire is far less valuable than the things you can learn when Kindred let down their hair.

Guilds and Clan Hierarchy

If you put two vampires in a room for any length of time, a pecking order will emerge. There's no such thing as an equal relationship among the Kindred. The best you can hope for is détente. Beyond the wider social structures we built in the Camarilla for all Kindred, all the Toreador in a given city are part of a guild, even if that guild is called "fuck your guilds."

On the other hand, I wouldn't call that pecking order exactly *stable*. What's *de rigeur* today is utterly *passé* tomorrow, and that includes who is calling the shots. Socializing is just another game to many Toreador and, really, many of us don't put a lot of work into it. Basically, there are two kinds of Toreador who are allowed to appear invested in Kindred political games: The very old and the very young. The old have lost touch with mortal society, so they feel most comfortable around their own kind. The young are fascinated by the vast new world of intrigue and excitement



that they've discovered and they consider it *serious business* indeed — oh my, I didn't mean to yawn. Of course, some of us know that it's basically high school or nightclub scene politics with weirder stakes. The players rarely change, so the game gets boring after a while. Especially when there's a constant stream of new and unpredictable mortals to play with.

If you insist on paying attention to the guilds and you want to join in their reindeer games, here's the secret. Don't look so desperate, darling. Nobody likes desperation. You can't just wander around with drink tickets and drugs and gather a trail of adoration. Those days are gone. Guilds are hard to nail down because we like it that way. The more utterly obtuse and arbitrary we seem to the other Kindred, the more they underestimate us and write us off as flighty, flaky little dilettantes who are utterly harmless and beneath their notice. You'd be amazed how many Kindred are so invested in their own superiority that they fall for the same lies over and over for centuries. It would be funny if it weren't so absolutely dreadful.

Where was I? Guilds. Guilds are artist collectives and cliques of Toreador, microclimates of ever-shifting alliances and cults of personality. They aren't organized in the strictest sense. Well, that's not true. Better to say that they aren't organized in any consistent way. One might be Lady Agatha's Sunday Social Club with a Grand Dame and a strict hierarchy based on the seating arrangements at her tea parties, while another might be a book club of bloodthirsty suburban soccer moms vying for status under the guise of choosing the month's reading. Dear me, I think I just frightened *myself*. It helps to come up with a catchy little name for your clique if you want to gain a reputation. Something that sticks in the mind and boils down to the core of it without losing anything essential. New York has its Dolls, because of course it does, perfect little plastics with strict fashion guidelines and feeding rules. Atlanta has an excellent hip-hop collective called the Undaworld Art Society, who gain status by signing brilliant new musicians. Chicago has a group of artists dedicated to veganism — *I know!* — called the Slaughterhouse Five.

There are usually multiple guilds operating in the same city, with overlapping memberships, making art, throwing monthly parties, raves, gallery openings, and balls, and generally trying to outdo one another. The only time a city's guilds tend to work together is when they're involved in the yearly Grand Ball. The Grand Ball is held in a different place on each continent every Halloween because we *do* love our camp, darling. It's like a failing marriage; *heaven forbid* our city look torn apart by fractious infighting and politics when guests come over.

Low Lights and Trick Mirrors

It's so easy to dismiss the Toreador as just artists, or socialites, or put them into some other box that makes things simple. The truth is harder to comprehend, particularly for Kindred who have a vested interest in pretending it's not their fault they've fallen away from the kine. Much easier to pretend that the Toreador are deluded creatures, fools playing at their parlor games and mawkishly aping the spirit of humanity, than it would be to admit that the so-called degenerates might still have some semblance of their living spark.

Humanity's saving grace is that it can create and appreciate beauty for its own sake. We — and I include Kindred and kine in that — are the only creatures on the planet that we know for sure can stop and appreciate the beauty of the world. A lion doesn't stop to appreciate the flowing agility of the gazelle. The shark never pauses to consider the sinuous shimmer of a school of fish. Though we as a species have also wrought terrible destruction, we can create as well. We appreciate the sublime beauty of that which we have destroyed. We make monuments to the lives we take, the lights we shutter forever. We have the capacity for regret, and the amazing ability to find joy in the grief of loss.

One of the reasons that we as a Clan have become so intrinsically tied to art and artistry is that art is beauty. It doesn't seek to reproduce a thing exactly. Art distills its subject to the bare essence. It distorts fact into truth. Art is an expression of our humanity and our grace. It's philosophy and communication. Art is humanity, and it's the center of everything we do and everything we are. I don't just mean actual, directed art, like sculpting, painting, poetry, or music. There's nothing wrong with expressing yourself through whatever medium you choose, but that's so little of what it means to be Toreador. It's merely one language that you speak. There is art in *being*.

Let's take Marilyn Monroe as an example of what I mean. She was a brilliant, beautiful, shimmering light. She was an icon, a goddess. The incarnation of glamour, poise, and seductive grace. She wasn't a human being; she was a work of art. The person behind the mask may have been a simple human with foibles and flaws, but when Norma Jean *became* Marilyn Monroe, she was literally transformed. The art in her was immortal. When the flesh, bone, and minutia that make up a life are swept away by time, the art remains. That is the true humanity; the soul of us is what remains when the transient is gone.

Somewhere in the last century, everything has turned inside out. The ivory towers have cracked, and all the

lunatics have taken charge of the asylums. Art has finally gained at least the *illusion* of freedom. Everything has been democratized in the purest sense of the word. Everyone, from the richest silver-spoon debutante down to the lowliest spray-painting street rat can access the same avenues to express himself or herself. The internet is — at least, ostensibly — a relatively level playing field among the mortals, but only the Nosferatu and the Brujah seem to have half as many truly tech-savvy young Kindred as we do in their ranks. A girl in her bedroom can play the guitar and gain a worldwide throng of followers. A wave of social media attention can follow a graffiti artist's trek across a country in a crowd-sourced aggregate portfolio of photography.

And the art can be freed from the shackles of the person, or tied even more closely to them, according to the whims of the artist. It's wonderful for us, because we can still release our art; still *connect* with those who understand it, without having to physically *be* "the artist." It's very good for the Masquerade. Nobody knows who is behind the account posting that intricate harpsichord music that reminds us so much of the baroque masters. Isn't it amazing how like Michelangelo this painting seems? It's almost as if the master himself taught the artist. A Toreador can remain active, vital, and present as a procession of usernames over time without anyone ever seeing her face. One vampire could become an entire art movement without anyone blinking an eye.

It can be very difficult to keep up that beautiful facade. Look back at the brilliant goddess we talked about before, and what happened to poor Norma Jean. It's worse for the Toreador. We feel everything too keenly, thanks to the ravenous thing that keeps us going. Our senses are too potent. We hear every word spoken behind our backs, feel every noxious eye turned toward us. The only thing people love more than an icon to worship is the destruction of that icon. It's hard to pretend everything is perfect when your hand is kissed by lips still dripping with the poison that so recently flowed into you. At your best, you float on a haze of adoration, but don't think for a moment that your admirers won't tear into you like a pack of wild dogs with the slightest provocation. We dance on the razor's edge. It's easy to slip up, and nobody will be there to help catch you. Many Toreador aren't as perfectly adjusted as I am.

But don't forget that there can be a beauty found in the depths as well.

A Few Words about the Black Sheep

Imagine you have a bunch of kids with daddy issues. Now imagine you give those kids a loaded gun, drop them into a society that makes Lord of the Flies look like a hippy commune, and teach them that they're all trying to impress the ultimate deadbeat dad. Mix that with the world's least hygienic fetish club, and you've got the Sabbat.

It's not something you hear people discuss in Elysium, but the Toreador were actually instrumental in the formation of the Sabbat, too. What can I say? We contain multitudes, and artists are nothing if not passionate about their beliefs. The *antitribu* I know remind me of Jackson Pollock, disappearing during a dinner party to strangle an art critic under the dinner table.

Don't look so scandalized, my dear. *Of course* we still keep in touch with the Toreador who choose the "Sword of Caine." They're welcome at our Grand Balls and carnivals. If you're quite well behaved, maybe I'll take you with me next time I go to this wonderful little coffee house, and we can listen to them debate politics for, *oh*, hours. Philosophically, they're a little odd, but the *passion* is positively sex, darling. I mean, yes. They're sadistic and their art is on the visceral side, but they aren't animals. Some of them wear the most elegantly beautiful suits while they carve their victims apart, mind first.

Some of the most interesting thinkers are outsiders, skirting the edges of "proper" society or abandoning it altogether. It's good to step outside your comfort zone from time to time. It helps to keep perspective, as long as you remember that they *are* still religious extremists who will gladly Embrace or kill your entire neighborhood if they think it will get them closer to the answer to "What Would Caine Do?"

And who knows? Maybe someday a few of them will come play with us in the Camarilla, and bring their lovely ideas with them.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Anonymous Celebrity

There is power in celebrity. You can have a hand in shaping your world without the formal recognition of a Prince or Primogen. But by remaining anonymous, you can also avoid the target that inevitably marks leaders. Your art is ephemeral, even Masquerade-breaking if it falls into the wrong hands. Your mobile app has been passed to many of the tech-savvy Kindred in the city, an augmented reality app keyed to GPS coordinates. When the app is used at a flagged location, a ghostly 3D tableau may be viewed through the smartphone's screen. Some are events of historical significance to the city's Kindred, while others are critiques or parodies of various personalities within the local vampire scene.

Bull Dancer

Performance art has always been your love. Dancing is the way you learned the language of your own body, the subtle words of movement and fluid grace. The gifts of your Clan have revealed an entirely new vocabulary, and you can speak more eloquently than ever without ever saying a word. You can seduce an entire room into obeying your every whim, or slip effortlessly through fighters who misjudge your lithe, wiry body.

Chronicler of the Fallen

You've been fascinated with cultures and civilizations since before your Embrace. You know in your heart that it's your *raison d'etre* to catalog and record the anthropological histories of the world's peoples as they rise and fall through the centuries. Noddist lore fascinates you, but no more than the isolate cultures of the Melungeons or the Pre-Colombian Amazonian empires. You want to know about everyone's family histories, mortal and immortal, and you'll go to extreme lengths to discover them.

Cutting Edge

Sometimes you disgust yourself. You look in the mirror and see the mortal you were before the children of Caine lifted you up, made you one of them. But you're working on that a cut or a graft at a time. Sometimes it feels like a constant struggle as your body rejects or heals over your changes. The Tzimisce have the right idea, but they need vision. If you can only learn their power, you'll finally shed the last vestiges of the mortal you were, and become the work of art you *know* lies inside.

Guardian

They think you're dead. They're right, but that doesn't mean you won't watch over them. Your little sister took it hardest. She's making your mom's life even harder than it should be, with you gone. But it's not right for them to be drawn into the world you exist in now. Now that you know what goes bump in the night, you can't leave them to fend for themselves. The neighborhood looks out for your family. That's nice. So you do what you can to look out for them, too. You'll fight for this territory, to keep monsters like you from preying on *your* people. But it's tempting, isn't it? They're right there, and it would only be a *little* blood...

Old Guard

The world was your oyster, once. There was a time when the jet-set elite came from all over to attend one of your debauched parties. They spent hundreds of thousands on art *you* discovered, fought to sign bands *you* found. Your galleries and music venues were legendary once. Of course, you never *created* art. Your artists and musicians — your projects — *they* were your creations. You were kingmaker and trend hunter. But the internet changed what that means. The old world is crumbling, and people are forgetting how much they owe you. You're on the edge of irrelevance, and you're desperate to turn back the clock.

Party Monster

You're the brightest light at the biggest parties. You know everyone, and everyone *is quite sure* they know you. You're so witty, so beautiful, so *amazing* and *fabulous* and about a hundred other adjectives that people use when they describe the person they met last night. If only they could remember your *name*. You rely on your Presence to get you the attention you never got in life, but it fades as soon as you're gone and then so do you. So they don't remember you the next time they see you, and it *hurts*, so what happens next isn't your fault, not really.

Political Vandal

The world is a constant struggle between progress and stasis. The elders invest in stasis, and the Prince and his lackeys are obvious tools. Your graffiti and paste-ups are inscrutable to the kine, but wickedly inspirational to the Anarchs who see them before the Sheriff has them painted over. Nobody knows who you are, and your sire (the Toreador Primogen) wants to keep it that way.

Propagandist

You were a film student when they took you. It wasn't planned. You were just one more shovelhead piece of fodder,

but somehow you survived. The Sabbat keep to their own version of the Masquerade, of course, but you found a way to get the story you see every night. You document the oppression of the Antediluvians. You help show the righteousness of the Sword of Caine through your videos. They're popular among the Sabbat, of course, but their real purpose is as recruiting tool and weapon. You sneak them to Anarchs or set them up to play across public screens in Camarilla cities before an assault. You sow fear and discord and maybe, just maybe, open some eyes.

Publicist

You grew up with the internet, so the strange new patterns of socialization that utterly baffle most Kindred are second nature to you. When you were alive, you specialized in helping the public forget celebrity meltdowns (or making sure they remembered, depending on whom you were working for). Your sire originally turned you into a ghoul to bring her up to speed on the modern world, but you convinced her to Embrace you, and now you help her to find slip-ups and advantages she can use in her political chess games against other elders in the city. As long as your star keeps rising along with hers, everything is fine. But you've been keeping your own files on her just in case. Other Kindred have begun to look to you to help massage and spin situations to their advantage, Sooner or later, you know you're going to have to strike out on your own. It's just a matter of looking for the right opening.

Merits and Flaws

Indelible (1 or 2pt. Merit)

Whereas other vampires' bodies return to the state they were in at the Embrace each evening, any body modifications you get after the Embrace remain as they are until you actively spend a Willpower point to return your body to its *tabula rasa* state. This Merit applies to changes as simple as dying or cutting your hair to modifications as complicated as tattoos, piercings, or even small implants.

If the Merit only allows for cosmetic alterations, it is worth 1 point. If it allows for more utilitarian alterations, such as RFID implants that activate certain electronic devices, then it is worth 2 points.

Impressive Restraint (2pt. Merit)

When you haven't eaten, it can be torturous to be near mortals. The pounding thrum of blood through their veins does not leave you nearly as tempted as it might other Kindred. When opportunity presents itself, the difficulty of all Self-Control rolls to resist hunger are made against a -2 difficulty. Characters on Paths of Enlightenment that require Instinct cannot take this Merit.

Master of the Masquerade (2pt. Merit)

There are many small tics, nervous habits, and autonomous bodily functions (like breathing) that Kindred simply forget to do. They can be unnervingly still or forget to breathe, particularly when they think they're alone. You never let down your guard. The act of breathing remains unconscious habit to you, and you never lapse into that eerie statue-like stillness, even when transfixed or concentrating. Consequently, the difficulties of all Social rolls are lowered by one when interacting with mortals. This Merit does not allow you to eat food or benefit from the blush of health (V20, p. 480) — those Merits are still required to be a true master of the Masquerade.

Slowed Degeneration (5pt. Merit)

Your Humanity is strong and can more easily withstand the Beast's assaults. You gain two additional dice on any Conscience roll. This degree of moral resilience allows a well-behaved vampire to lose Humanity at a much slower rate than would otherwise be possible. Only vampires following Humanity may take this Merit, and the Merit is lost forever in the event that the vampire takes up another Path of Enlightenment.

Tortured Artist (1pt. Flaw)

Nothing is ever good enough for your work. No matter how much praise is lavished upon you, you can only see the flaws and mistakes. This leads to long periods of ennui, which makes your artistic work irregular at best. Further, you throw yourself into business arrangements and social situations with intensity, which often leads to heartbreak, which leads to the pain and passion that fuels your next work. You are at +1 difficulty on Social rolls in which you are being praised, complimented, or treated with respect.

Private Life (3pt. Flaw)

You have a completely separate life that no other Kindred know about. It may be your mortal family that you have turned into ghouls, or a YouTube channel that you use to talk in metaphor about your frustrations with Kindred society. If discovered, this could risk other vampires accusing you of breaching the Masquerade (if Camarilla), consorting with humanity instead of being a superior vampire (if Sabbat), or just overall paranoia and suspicion on why you're keeping such deep secrets.

Discipline Powers

Star Magnetism (Presence ••••• •)

This power allows the Kindred's Presence to carry over onto photographs or video, whether digital, video tape,

or even film. It even carries over to paintings or drawings, if the portrait is an accurate representation. The vampire may consciously turn this power off, but it will otherwise snap into effect whenever a camera turns toward the Kindred.

System: The representation resembles Awe, and the effects are permanent. Anyone who sees an image may spend a Willpower point to resist the effect until the next time he sees it again.

Combination Disciplines

Bliss (Dominate ••, Presence •••)

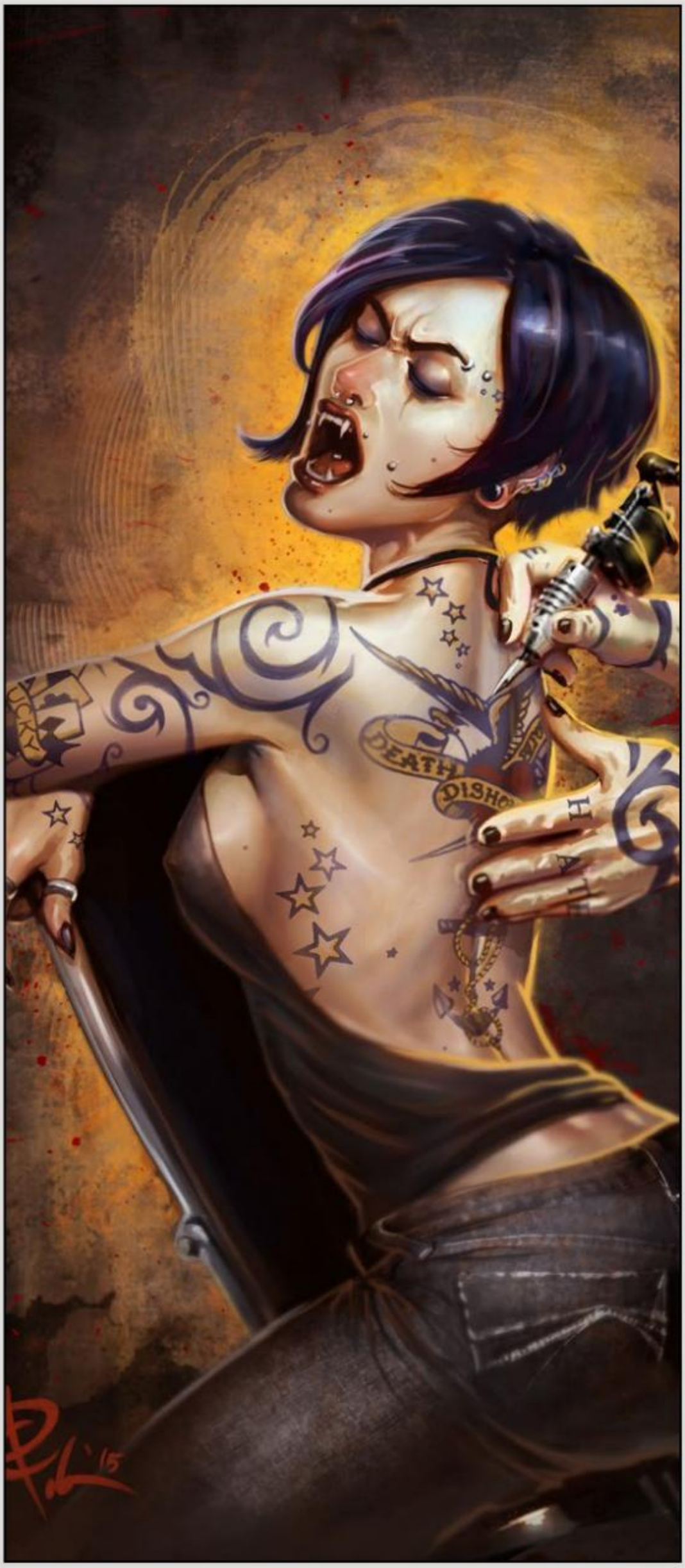
Many Toreador claim their Clan escaped the curses that afflict their brethren, and that they alone were blessed. Those who learn the secret of Bliss are the loudest making this claim.

Any Toreador who regards a scene or work of great beauty is prone to myopic obsession. This trance is the antithesis of the ugly fury of the Beast. Those familiar with the power of Bliss can recall beauty almost as intimately as if it were before them and use this as a reservoir of inner strength. The recollection of past happiness serves as a bulwark when threatened with the irrational desires, frenzies, and fears of the Beast. Further, the Kindred may project this sense of pleasure upon another, calming them from the throes of rage or frenzy.

System: To use this power, a Toreador needs to deliberately enter a trance while watching, listening to, or looking at some work of art or embodiment of beauty. The duration of this trance is determined by the duration of the art: The Toreador sits enthralled until the song ends, the dance is finished, or the piece of art is covered. (Few choose to use this power with paintings for that reason.)

Within one scene after the trance ends, the player makes an Intelligence + Empathy roll. If the roll is successful, the vampire may temporarily increase her Self-Control, Conscience, or Courage by a single dot, up to a maximum of five dots. This increase lasts for the remainder of the night. The difficulty of the roll is equal to double the Trait's current rating, so a vampire with Self-Control 4 has to roll an 8 to gain another temporary point of Self-Control. Only one Virtue can be increased at a time. Furthermore, the source of the trance has to be appropriate for the Virtue. Looking at David's "Oath of the Horatii" or listening to the first movement of Holst's "The





Planets" could bolster one's Courage, but not Self-Control. Bliss is not lost on those who follow Paths other than Humanity, though the source of inspiration must take the Cainite's altered worldview into account.

When a Kindred uses Bliss to steel the resolve of another, the Toreador must roll Wits + Expression to activate the power. Additionally, difficulties for using Bliss on someone other than oneself increase by one. For example, if the target's Conscience is currently 3, the Toreador's target difficulty is 7. Botching any Bliss roll results in the loss of a Willpower point. The target must cooperate with the Toreador, entering a kind of guided meditative state of their own, often focusing on a work of art created for the purpose by the Kindred activating Bliss. If successful, the target gains the benefit instead of the Toreador.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

Devil's Mark (Presence •, Vicissitude ••)

Among the Sabbat, a growing number of Toreador *antitribu* who have learned the secrets of Vicissitude have discovered a way to infuse their own Presence into tattoos and body modifications placed upon others, Cainite and mortal alike. This is a relatively recent invention, developed by a nomadic pair of Toreador antitribu at the tail end of the twentieth century. In the nights leading up to a war party, packs get inked and pierced, covered in symbolic body modifications invoking Awe, Dread Gaze, or even Majesty. Raucous parties tend to coalesce around the ritual, as each member gets marked, and the pack gets more and more hyped and psyched up for the raid. The artist must invest her own blood into the process, whether that's by bathing her tools in it or mixing it into her inks, so it's considered good form for the pack to provide sources of blood for the artist during the revel, since she is investing so much for their cause. The modifications themselves are often elaborate and are themselves sources of pride for the packs and artists alike. Each piece of art is designed to unite the pack while complementing the individual, and packs will

travel to find well-known artists just so they can sport an Elektra tattoo, or a set of silver crown piercings by Mikhail.

System: To place the Devil's Mark, the artist must make an extended Dexterity + Expression roll every hour (difficulty 7), requiring a number of successes equal to twice the level of the Presence power being imbued. For example, marking a subject with Awe would require two successes, while Dread Gaze would require four successes and Majesty would need a total of 10 successes. The process of creating the Devil's Mark costs one blood point, plus one point for every invocation she wants to imbue into the body modification. If the subject is a vampire, the modification heals as normal when the "charges" are expended. If the subject is a mortal, the tattoo or piercing remains, but loses its vampire puissance.

Alternately, a vampire subject can choose to spend a point of permanent Willpower to make the modification relatively permanent, giving him access to the specific Presence effect as if he had learned the Discipline power itself. However, another application of Vicissitude or severing of the body part will remove the body modification and the power from the vampire.

The artist applying the Devil's Mark must know the level of Presence being imbued, and may only grant access to powers up to level five. The body modification itself is the focal point of the Presence evocation, so must be visible to the target of any use of the Presence powers imbued. Also, the target can't use anything that would dull or neutralize the pain of the procedure.

This power costs 9 experience points to learn.

Doubletalk (Auspex ••, Celerity •, Obfuscate •)

The Toreador are talented diplomats and politicians, but the Kindred who uses this power may literally hide an entirely different message within their speech. When a Toreador uses Doubletalk, she conveys an entirely different message between and underneath another sentence spoken normally. To most listeners, it looks and sounds like normal conversational placeholders and body language. But for those who know what to look and listen for, it is possible to hold a secret conversation in plain sight, *behind* an innocuous interaction.

System: When a character speaks in Doubletalk, the player rolls Intelligence + Expression (difficulty 6). If the roll succeeds, the character may seamlessly insert a phrase into her conversation. A failure means the character can't be understood. A botch means the character accidentally spoke her phrase aloud.

The listener then rolls Perception + Subterfuge (difficulty 6). If the roll succeeds, the character may understand the intended message. At the Storyteller's discretion, this difficulty may be modified for circumstances — it's more difficult over the phone or in a noisy area, and impossible in text messages. A failure means the character heard nothing, while a botch indicates that he completely misinterpreted what the character said.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Haunting Seduction (Dementation ••, Presence •)

The Toreador are seductive, impressive creatures. When they're around, they can be the only thing that matters in the world. But when they leave, their Presence fades, and that's just not acceptable to some of the Degenerates. Dementation may merely unlock the door to the mind's inner hallways and free what's inside, but enterprising Toreador have discovered how to ensure that *they* are the whisper that haunts their target's thoughts.

In many ways, the Haunting Seduction is similar to the Dementation power The Haunting (**V20**, p. 148). Its effects occur mainly when the victim is alone, and mostly at night. However, the effects take on the tone of an almost maddening, seductive obsession. The subject may feel the light brush of a hand that he *knows* belongs to the vampire, or hear the vampire's sibilant whisper just behind him. The Storyteller should let her imagination run wild when describing these sensory impressions; the victim may well feel as if he is going mad.

System: After the vampire speaks to the victim, the player spends a blood point and rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty of her victim's Perception + Self-Control or Instinct). The number of successes determines the length of the sensory "visitations." The precise effects are up to the Storyteller, though it is highly likely that the visions will affect the difficulties of any social interactions between the vampire and her target the next time they meet.

Successes	Result
1	One night
2	Two nights
3	One week
4	One month
5	Three months
6+	One year

This power costs 9 experience points to learn.

Scalpel Tongue (Presence •, Celerity •)

Catty repartee is both an art and a vice among the Kindred of Clan Toreador. Those who cannot compete effectively in the arena of cruel wit are unlikely to earn the respect of their Clan members. Toreador higher up the ladder, then, must have the ability to scathe others with words if they are to maintain their positions. Scalpel Tongue mixes the same quick thinking that guides the body as it moves at accelerated speeds with the Toreador's prodigious social aptitudes, allowing the Kindred to immediately generate a barbed quip so stinging (due to the emotion-enhancing effects of Presence) that it shames the target into silence. Of course, the Toreador themselves are so constantly surrounded by the vicious wit of their own Clan that they inevitably develop a thicker skin. They may play up the melodrama of insult and offense, but even the sharpest barbs come to wash over them like water off a duck's back.

This power has a subtle downside: if another Toreador detects that she had to use a Discipline to come up with such a stinging retort (such as the user of Scalpel Tongue botching her roll), it could have a negative impact on how others in the Clan perceive her. Why would she need to use *powers* if she didn't have an inferior wit? In such a case, the user will have a +1 difficulty on Social rolls against other Toreadors for the rest of the night, including future uses of Scalpel Tongue.

System: Roll Wits + Empathy against a difficulty of 7. If the user of this power does not know his target well, difficulty is increased by one, due to not knowing what buttons to push to achieve the greatest verbal impact. The barbed comment stings the target into silence for one turn per success, or double that if the target is not a member of Clan Toreador. Spending one Willpower negates this effect.

This power costs 6 experience points to learn.

Soul Painting (Auspex ••••, Presence ••)

The ancient Toreador art of "painting souls" flourished briefly in the early 1300s, but with the loss (and presumed Final Death) of Katherine of Montpellier, the technique was thought to be gone forever. In recent nights, Katherine has returned. Roused from an ages-long torpor, she has agreed to teach a few worthy students the knack of painting a portrait of a being's inner nature. A few enterprising Toreador have attempted to adapt her principles to other expressive media, including music, song, and even acting.

Art has long been held to be a doorway into the soul. Usually it's the soul of the artist. In this case, the painting can expose the nature of the person portrayed. The message conveyed is powerful, subtle, and — when successful — undeniable. Falsehood cannot be portrayed through Soul Painting, for even the artist does not initially know what the image will reveal.

To create this type of portrait, the artist needs to study the subject for a full, uninterrupted hour. This can be done in a sitting, of course, but (due to the sensitive nature of the portrait) it's more often done from recalled observation. Looking not only at the minute details of appearance and carriage, but also at the subject's aura, the painter forms a conscious insight. This alone is not sufficient, however: the painter must give himself over to a kind of creative fugue, setting aside his preconceptions completely, in order to make a soul portrait.

The portrait must be painted in a single setting, and interrupting a soul painter while she works is as difficult as rousing a Toreador from a more mundane fit of artistic absorption. It generally takes 10-12 hours to create the picture, though more complex efforts may take longer — Katherine's portrait of the Archbishop Monçada reputedly took over one thousand hours — but if successfully completed, it reveals a great deal indeed.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty 6). If the roll yields even a single success, the painting (or other work) captures the subject's Nature in the work itself. For each additional success, the player may opt to illustrate any one of the following: a rough gauge of Humanity (or Path, which usually won't create a traditionally flattering work), Willpower, Self-Control, Conscience, Conviction, Instinct, or Courage.

Anyone with the Soul Painting power can immediately recognize every insight portrayed in a portrait. Those who lack the power may (at the Storyteller's discretion) be required to make Perception + Awareness, Empathy, or Crafts rolls to "decode" the portrait. The difficulty for such attempts should be low, however; the whole point of the power is the exposure of these hidden, abstract concepts.

Note that Soul Painting does not necessarily make the artist a skilled artist — it is quite possible to have a crudely executed portrait that nonetheless communicates the subject's personality. Such a ham-handed painter is unlikely to have learned this power from the mistress herself, though.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Under the Skin (Auspex •••, Presence •••)

The Kindred of Clan Toreador are natural critics. With insight and zeal they analyze and deconstruct art, culture,

and politics. Some studied Toreador possess the ability to do the same with their peers, reading them like texts and making obvious their failings of personality. The Cainite using this power analyzes the personality of another, finds its weaknesses, and then uses the force of his presence to make light of those weaknesses and hammer on them like a battering ram. The results can be quite dramatic.

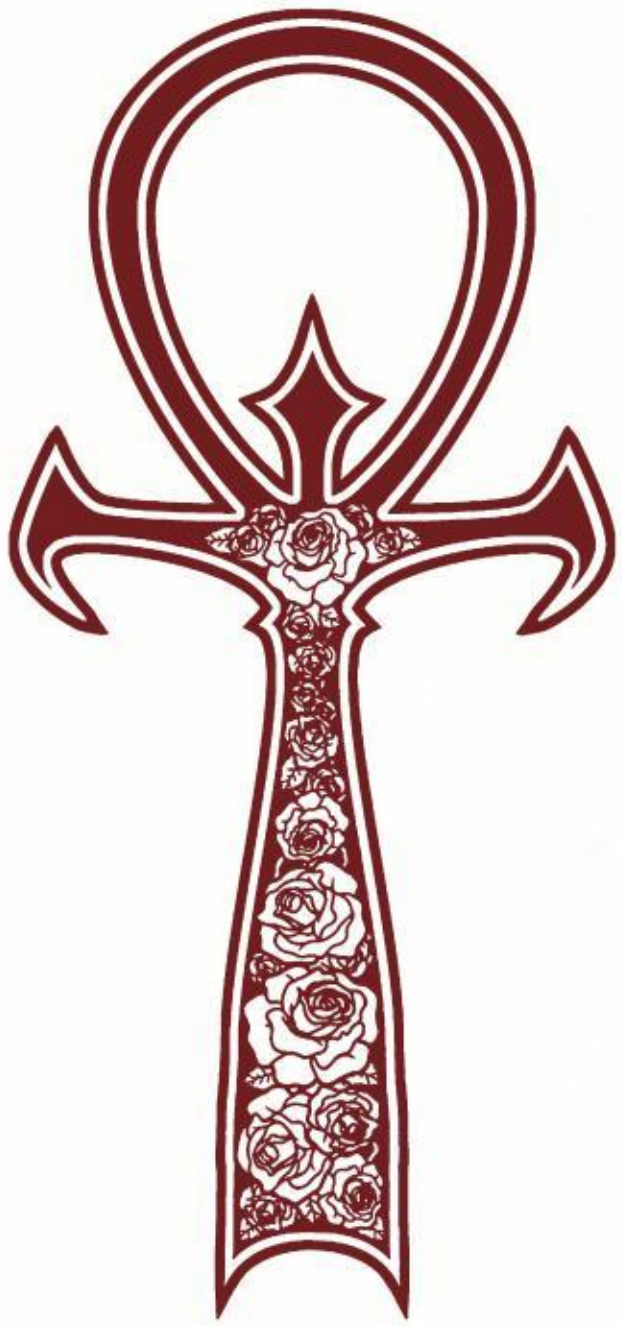
While this power is similar to Scalpel Tongue, it's much more devastating. That one stings; this one draws blood (and possibly a lot of it).

System: The Toreador must interact socially with his target for a number of consecutive turns (2-5 turns is a good rule of thumb, at the Storyteller's discretion) before this power can be activated. After that warm-up, roll Wits + Perception against a difficulty of 6 as the character begins his systematic analysis of the target's psyche and self-esteem. The results of this assault are listed below.

Successes	Result
1-2	Target is rendered utterly speechless with embarrassment and rage, and broods for the remainder of the scene. (One die penalty to all Social rolls)
3-4	Target storms out in a rage. (Two dice penalty to all Social rolls)
5	Target becomes violent, either toward the Toreador using this power (jumping over the table to attack, for example) or toward herself in a fit of self-loathing. (+1 difficulty to rolls to resist frenzy)
6+	Target enters frenzy. (+3 difficulty to resist frenzy)

The target may spend a Willpower point to lessen the effect by one category (e.g., from 6+ to 5 or from 3-4 to 1-2).

This power costs 18 experience to learn.





TREMERE

"From end to end with labor keen; and here,
poor fool, with all my lore I stand no wiser than before."
— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust

EXIT INTERVIEW

Elliot was barely conscious as he was dragged down the corridor. It was no doubt a stylishly appointed building, but all Elliot was getting to see was the carpet. He was only standing because a ghoul was holding him painfully under the arm, but that wasn't the part of his body that hurt the most. He was beginning to think that trying to call up a demon had been a bad plan.

The ghoul heaved Elliot through a door and dropped him into a chair that faced a large oak desk. Matthias stood behind the desk, looking out over the city through the glass walls of the office. He was impeccably dressed as always, his pinstriped three-piece suit accentuated with several rings and a necklace bearing powerful occult symbols. He turned to regard Elliot, and dispassionately indicated his neck. While at least two of Elliot's fingers were broken, he did his best to sit up and straighten his tie, even though it was a little slick with his blood. The price of disobedience at this stage would be worse than the pain he felt. With another almost imperceptible nod of the head, Matthias dismissed the ghoul and settled down behind the desk facing Elliot.

"Now, Magister," asked Matthias. "Where do you think you went wrong?"

"I would venture to suggest the summoning of a demon was a mistake."

"It was certainly inadvisable. As was using it to tear apart a Toreador Harpy and allowing it to roam free across the city."

"I apologize to you my master and to my brother and sister mages of Clan Tremere."

"I'm sure you do. But that isn't really the point is it?"

"I've learnt the error of my ways," Elliot blustered. "I will never break the laws of the code again."

Matthias gazed levelly at Elliot and waved for him to stop. Elliot froze, with half a word still falling from his mouth.

"You are not here to offer me meaningless platitudes. If you continue to do so, we can defer this interview until you have been debriefed more thoroughly."

Elliot shuddered to imagine returning to the seventeenth floor. He thought they had already done to him all they could think of, although he was not entirely surprised to discover he was wrong.

Matthias sat back in his chair and regarded Elliot for a moment. "I still don't think you quite understand what you did wrong, or why you must be punished."

At that, Matthias walked over to a nearby case and took out an ornate silver goblet. The smell of powerful blood from it was heady, making the thirst rise in Elliot. Matthias put the goblet on the desk in from of Elliot. It was another chain set to wrap around him more strongly than any steel.

"You are correct that we take a dim view of such illegal magical practice. But you removed an annoying Toreador and recapturing the demon was good practice for the apprentices."

"Then what was my crime if not that?"

"You got caught," smiled Matthias. "Now drink."

THE HISTORY OF HOUSE AND CLAN

So you think you know all about Clan Tremere? How we are a Clan of secrets, the canker at the heart of the Camarilla? You know how we give up our free will to the masters of Vienna in return for the secrets of corrupt blood magic. You think you know us? Think again. It is we who built the Camarilla and we who keep it functioning. In less than a thousand years, we have gone from a renegade bloodline to a respected cornerstone of the most powerful vampire organization in history. Imagine what we could have done if we had begun with the advantages all the other Clans have squandered. Imagine what we will achieve in another thousand years.

HOUSE TREMERE

But I get ahead of myself. We should begin with history, because just like any other Clan, we Tremere understand that where we have come from is almost as important as where we are going. Contrary to the popular belief of the iconoclastic Kindred, we do not date our beginnings to the fateful night we became vampires. We began as House Tremere, a cornerstone of the Order of Hermes, the most powerful organization of mages in Europe. We had the power to break the rules of reality itself; and used it along with our fearsome reputations as miracle workers to do as we pleased.

Sadly, nothing lasts forever. The people began to lose faith in our magic, as science became their new god. In some places, they rose against the magicians they had lived in fear of for so long. Many magicians tried to weather the storm and hide; others controlled weather and storm to make war on the people to them into submission once more. We saw the inherent problems with both approaches, but realized that if we were to survive into a new age we had to act.

We studied the problem for a long time, as we knew that no challenge could defeat us if we focused ourselves and our power upon it. The solution took years, and several of us died in failed experiments with forces few dared to trifle with. The other magicians began to shun us, frightened of what we might do next. I think many of them were frightened we would succeed and take the last vestiges of power for ourselves. Whatever the reason, they were fools and cowards. Only the Tremere refused to follow magic into obscurity, and we eventually obtained the reward for our efforts.

One of the many plans we pursued was the secret of immortality. We knew of the existence of vampires, and sought a way to filter the longevity from the vampiric curse. It was finally one of our most powerful mages, Goratrix, who developed an elixir that would change our very nature. He distilled it from the essence of captured vampires (primarily Gangrel and Tzimisce, we were to learn). He presented it as the solution to our problem, and gathered the other high-ranking mages to prove his discovery. Suspiciously, while there were several of us there to witness what followed, none of them recorded a single moment. It is said each participant had to give up something of their soul for the potion to work, and terrible atrocities were committed that night.

Whatever the truth of the meeting, several emerged from it not just as immortals, but also as vampires. Some say Goratrix tricked his peers and simply fed them vampire blood. Others say that he did not attempt to distill immortality, as he craved the powers he had seen the vampires wield. While it may not have been the expected result, it quickly became their new agenda. Those who were already vampires set about converting the rest of the order.

Tremere propaganda will tell you the Clan as a whole decided to become vampires. But how many lies are we supposed to believe? Plenty resisted the new policy, but few had the power to stop it. Many questioned the motives of the original vampires. Were they acting to preserve their house, or simply making a naked attempt to claim more power? Was their only option to become Kindred, or were they trying to make themselves vampire-magicians? Did they even know they would become vampires, or was it their plan all along? While some old Tremere insist their ascension was a survival attempt by a dying house looking to save its members, it may be just as true to say it was a coup by seven mages (now elders) to create their own Clan of vampire servants.

Strangely, Goratrix's elixir has never been heard of since. Some say he destroyed his notes of its creation, others that when he became a vampire he could no longer create it. Whatever the truth, vampirism spread across the Clan very quickly. Those already converted either hunted their own to Embrace them or sought out old vampires to steal their heart's blood and power. Eventually, House Tremere was no more, and the Tremere bloodline of vampires had been born. It was the beginning of a war that nearly destroyed us.

You see, the other vampire Clans were very nervous of an entirely new group of vampires that appeared practically overnight. We knew little or nothing of their society, traditions, and gentlemen's agreements. We also hunted down elder Kindred to steal their power, and as such,



we made a brutal entry into Kindred society. It was no wonder Kindred society pushed back. With the creation of the Gargoyles, the Tzimisce and Gangrel joined to hunt us down. We completely underestimated our opponents and the strength of their response.

Many of our enemies had been alive for hundreds of years, and had considerable resources to draw on. Fortunately, our inexperience in the ways of the Kindred proved an advantage. We came at them in ways they didn't expect, and used powers they had never seen. We fought like mages, not vampires, but even then, we lost at least half our number in the first few years alone. So it became necessary to organize ourselves. If we were to survive, we needed to know our leaders' orders would be obeyed without question. The merest hesitation or debate might prove critical. We replenished our numbers with those from outside our house, other mages and petty magicians, and enforced almost brutal discipline on these recruits. This ruthless insistence that the Tremere would survive, whatever the cost, was the reason we still exist to this night.

Eventually, a grudging détente was forced on all of us. It was clear that even we could not purge the world of vampires, but it became equally clear our new bloodline was here to stay. The vampires tired of the fight and eventually began to give ground. We in turn moderated our behavior. We became subtler. We expanded quietly and avoided treading on the toes of the other Clans. They came to believe we had chosen to restrict ourselves to a small domain and were no longer an expansionist threat. As we began to consolidate, our elders moved our plans to the next phase.

NEW CLANS FOR OLD

It was clear to us that the only way to gain any respect from the other Clans was to become a Clan ourselves. We reasoned that if we had the blood of one of the Third Generation, the other Clans might be forced to accept us, or at least take pause in their dealings with us. However, what we really needed to do was destroy one of the ancients and make it look like we were doing the other Clans a favor.

While we had taken down several ancient elders, to destroy an Antediluvian was another matter entirely. It had been done before — at least so the Brujah insisted — but it would be our most difficult project yet. As we had with our adaptation to vampirism, we took our time and planned carefully. Our best target was Saulot of the Salubri, who were both weak and despised. The combination of

generally eschewing much of vampire society and seeking enlightenment gave them an arrogant air that annoyed the other Clans.

So, as we searched for Saulot's resting place, we fanned the flames of anti-Salubri sentiment. We pointed out how their apparent healing abilities were a way of stealing the souls of those they were supposedly helping. We claimed their Golconda was a lie, one designed to make others think the Salubri were somehow better than the rest of us. By the time we eventually found Saulot, the hard work of destroying him was already over. His Clan's reputation was in tatters.

You will hear all manner of reports of how that encounter played out. Some say Saulot actually swapped bodies with our eldest and thereby took control of our Clan. But this is a fantasy of the traitor Goratrix and his *antitribu*. If Saulot did consume our greatest, why was his first order for us to extinguish his entire Clan? That seems very unlikely, doesn't it?

The destruction of Saulot once more shook vampire society to the core. For the second time in our history, we had done the impossible. The other Clans were dumbstruck, but could no longer deny us the respect we had earned. They no longer stood united against us. Some still called us usurpers and diablerists, but others respected us for destroying the demonic Saulot and his followers. Many of the elders of the other Clans simply felt that our ascension to Clan status gave us the right to amnesty. Nevertheless, we still had many enemies, and they began to gather their forces against us. Having learned their lesson from their last attempt to destroy us, they plotted carefully in secret. We in turn braced ourselves once more to defend all we had built. But before the opening moves could be made in another vampire war, the Inquisition changed everything.

THE AGE OF FIRE

It came as a complete surprise to us. For too long we had been focused on surviving the attacks of the other Clans, and we never expected humans to prove a threat. Against their forces we were doubly damned, sought out as both monsters and sorcerers. Many of us burned before we could go to ground. Ironically, had we not been preparing to defend ourselves from the other Clans, we might have been wiped out. Luckily, the other Clans were similarly occupied, making them unable to capitalize on our weakness.

While the Inquisition was a difficult time for us, we weathered it better than most. We were used to powerful enemies trying to eradicate us, and we had systems in place to ensure our survival. We hid away our most important lore and dug ourselves in as far from humanity as we could find. Then we waited. Unlike the other Kindred, we did not see this as a war to be won, or feel any need to reassert our control on the kine. Instead, we took a step back and waited for our enemies to pass by. While the Toreador might claim the Masquerade was their idea, we were putting it into practice many years before.

Unfortunately, we still took losses. A few errant Tremere who rankled at their position in the Clan used the opportunity to leave us. These traitors decided to put their own needs above the Clan, and have since suffered for their temerity. It saddens me to think that any Tremere would be such a coward as to turn their back on the Clan that had given them everything. However, some of our errant members joined the Anarchs simply to survive. As chantries fell, those who escaped the devastation were often unable to find their way back to another Clan stronghold. It is unfortunate they were left behind, but better they perished than betrayed us.

As the Inquisition destroyed more vampires and the Anarch movement grew, it became clear that something needed to be done, and clearer still that we would have to be the ones to do it. While ignoring the other Kindred and surviving on our own would have been preferable, it was simply not viable. The humans hunted us fanatically, and the Anarchs knew how to fight us. The vampire Clans needed unity. The problem was they all hated each other. None of them were willing to trust each other, and alone they were going to be taken down one by one.

During all of this, our greatest loss was one of our own elders. Goratrix, whose work had granted us immortality, defected to the Anarchs. He claimed the leadership of Clan Tremere was corrupt. He spread a ridiculous rumor that our founder had been possessed by Saulot, and been forced to move his real spirit to Goratrix's body. Have you heard anything more desperate or arrogant? Unfortunately, Goratrix was well respected in the Clan, and the Salubri were well known as soul stealers. Naïve apprentices fell for his lies and rhetoric and joined his banner.

Nearly a quarter of us (albeit apprentices and a few ancilla) seceded, and took many of our secrets with them. Of course, this defection of the weak and vulnerable did not weaken us as a Clan all that much, but it was a loss of labor we could ill afford at the time. Not only were we dealing with human fanatics and vampires, but also mortal mages came against us in retaliation to our so-called "corruption" of their order. We called this fight

the Massasa War, and even in the modern era, it is an old fight that has never truly ended. We needed allies at a time when we were despised by almost every other supernatural creature. But our solution was simple: we decided to play the villain.

We approached each Clan in turn with flattery. We pleaded with them to help us, told them that we were not able to protect ourselves in the same way as a mighty Clan like them. Our begging inflated their egos and made them wonder about an alliance with another Clan. We quickly offered our safe places as neutral meeting grounds, which the other Clans accepted to keep their own secrets. Once we were the host, it was easy to get a seat at the table. Then we built an alliance based on hating us, but there was only one thing the various Clans agreed on: that we Tremere were not to be trusted. What we suggested in each discussion united the Clans in their disagreement of us. So we simply pushed for what we did not want and watched the others fall over themselves to deny it to us. Each debate we lost made us look weaker and less threatening, and united the other Clans more. Given our reputation, it is almost disappointing that we only managed to unite six of the other twelve Clans in a mutual loathing of us.

By the time the Camarilla was fully formed, we were the lynch pin of the alliance. We nailed our colors to the Camarilla mast by enacting their orders to curse the Assamites, at once proving our power and gaining the wrath of one of the most dangerous Clans in existence. With one act, we proved our loyalty as much as our need for allies. While each Clan was busy taking the credit for being in charge or inventing the Traditions, we busied ourselves with actually running the organization. By the time the others noticed how entrenched we were, it was also clear they needed us. As no one wanted to admit their reliance on the Tremere, no one brought it up as a problem. With seven Clans working together, there was little we could not achieve.

Vampires quietly sunk into the shadows, and the Inquisition turned on the Anarchs. Sadly, they responded by forming the Sabbat (no doubt at Goratrix's behest), but frankly we couldn't deal with everything, so we had to let that one pass. However, we could not allow any renegades to exist outside the Clan. The secrets they knew were too dangerous in the hands of any non-Tremere. We gathered and drew on our greatest and darkest powers. They would burn, and take our secrets with them. We prepared another great ritual and marked all the traitors so all would know them for what they were. Then we sent our power into each mark and burned them all to dust.

With the formation of the Camarilla, vampire society became far more organized. This allowed us to get on with our work in peace, leaving the others to their petty disputes. Of course, the kine have always proved a mild nuisance. They have started wars, led revolutions, and created weapons far too dangerous for them to handle. We have continued to work in spite of the efforts of others to maintain peace and civilization for all. Sadly, the other Clans see this, as you may expect, as naked manipulation. I'm not sure which is more insulting; that they misread our intentions, or think our plans are so simplistic they can see them for what they are.

A NEW ERA OF THE OCCULT

After years of tireless work, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were when our perseverance finally began to pay off. A new wave of interest in the occult gripped Europe. It came initially in the shape of Theosophy, the Golden Dawn, and Aleister Crowley, but later as the Wiccan followers of Gerald Gardner. New mystic organizations were born, grew, splintered, and grew again. The rise in occult research allowed us to infiltrate several groups of educated men and women who also made useful witting (or unwitting) research assistants. The quality of our apprentices grew exponentially. More interestingly, the kine often came upon intriguing twists and reinterpretations of old magic, which were of great use to our studies.

As the age turned, these groups of mortal magicians moved beyond the gentleman's clubs and spread to the rest of their society. Tarot cards appeared in newsagents, and teenagers began to read books on how to be a witch. Audiences flock to séances, spiritualists, and magic shows. The briefest search across the Internet reveals hundreds of New Age, spiritualist, neo-pagan, and hermetic cults. Even some music celebrities have declared to be followers of Kabbalah or Aleister Crowley. While it is all cheap tricks and a pale shadow of our skills, it shows how far we have dug our claws into even mainstream culture.

It has not been easy though. Goratrix has left a legacy of young Sabbat who insist they understand the power of Thaumaturgy. You may have heard their ridiculous claim to be surviving Tremere *antitribu*, but that is clearly not true. We burned them all, every last one. Would you prefer to suggest the Tremere make mistakes, or that I am a liar? I thought not, so let us continue. We continue to do our best to undo the damage these amateurs cause whenever we can and destroy the perpetrators. While tiresome, these Sabbat-infiltrated groups all fall eventually. They have always

been easy to uncover, because they are motivated by power and not knowledge or understanding. They seek only to use magic as their tool. If we have ever used our power for ourselves, it has been so we might survive. When the last lights of the world blink out and eternal darkness finally consumes us all, Clan Tremere will be there, watching.

MODERN MYSTICISM

PYRAMID SCHEME

So, let's talk about pyramids. After all, it's probably the only thing you really know about Clan Tremere. You have been told that the pyramid is solid as stone, ruthlessly enforced and based on lies and blood magic. You've been told that at the bottom are the apprentices, and at the top are seven elders and Tremere himself. You've been told that they brook no insubordination, and stultify in a system designed to keep the elders at the top and the neonates and ancilla at the bottom.

The truth is, of course, somewhat different. After all, if the Clan was as rigidly policed as many believe, there would never have been any renegades. Tremere organization, while still strict by many Clans' standards, is very different from what most people suspect. The Tremere have cultivated these misconceptions by simply refusing to address them. The other Clans "know" the Tremere are both devious and strict, and this basic assumption left to run rampant has built most of what is "common knowledge" about the Tremere. There is, of course, a structure to Clan Tremere, and that structure is based on a pyramid model. Not only is this a solid and enduring structure, but because pyramids have great occult significance. The existence of Clan Tremere to the modern era should be proof enough of its stability.

As it favors order, Clan Tremere has an array of titles to keep the younger Kindred happy. Each wields advancing power, but also requires a level of responsibility beyond most Kindred titles. Those with power are expected to see to the safety and betterment of all the Tremere under their charge. Their domain must grow and prosper, or they will be seen to be squandering Clan resources. This doesn't mean they need to explain themselves or put their decisions to a vote, however. Voting wastes time. Better to put the most competent in charge and let them do as they see fit. Clan Tremere is an unashamed dictatorship, but it would insist it is an enlightened one as its leaders work for the betterment of all. It may seem draconian, and it is, but it works.

There are seven titles in the Clan: Acolyte, Apprentice, Magister, Regent, Pontifex, Lord, and Councilor. Each Tremere is recognized by the position they have earned. There is no shame in being at the bottom of the pyramid, but there are rewards for being at the top of it. Being at the bottom also has the advantage that no one covets your position. However, if you see that as an advantage, you are certainly not a true Tremere.

Within each level are seven degrees to allow more social mobility without running out of promotions. Numbers have power, and for us, seven is the most powerful of all. Advancement in degree is often a mark of experience and knowledge as well as prestige. You need not reach the seventh degree of one level to advance to the next. If there is a space for a new Regent and you have the right skill set as a third degree Magister, then you may find yourself a first degree Regent. Of course, this doesn't happen often, as no matter how enlightened the Tremere like to think they are, they are as devious and underhanded in politics as any other Clan is.

At the bottom of the pyramid (but above the ghouls and Gargoyles) are the Acolytes. These are Kindred not fully released, and as such rarely gain degrees. Among the Acolytes are also counted a group we refer to as the Trimira. These are Kindred of other Clans who have proved their loyalty, and have drunk our blood as initiates of the Tremere — originally a group of Ravnos and Nosferatu who understood an ancient Indian blood magic called Sadhana. They could never be fully part of the Clan, but we were pleased to accept their loyalty and skills. Nowadays, the term has spread to include several agents and Caitiff who often work as deep cover agents on our behalf inside Clans no full Tremere could infiltrate.

When officially presented as part of Kindred society, a Tremere becomes an Apprentice. Many never rise higher than this, but you would be warned not to underestimate a seventh-degree Apprentice. They have earned their status serving the Clan and advancing their magical studies. The title of Magister (from the Latin for "teacher") is granted to the Tremere who run their chantry and educate the Apprentices under the direction of their Regent. It is also a title granted to older and more distinguished members of the Clan who have not sought power but instead have become trusted advisors. Magisters tend to oil the wheels of the Clan, organizing training and seeing to disputes and punishments. Magister has also become a term of respect to an elder Tremere or a teacher.

The Regents are each master of an entire chantry, often making them the de facto leader of the Tremere in a given city and possibly a member of the Primogen. Moving up to a national level are the Lords, who are responsible for several chantries. Their jurisdiction often ranges over an area the size of an American state. Above them are the Pontifices who rule entire countries. There are usually seven Lords for each of the seven Pontifices. Both Lords and Pontifices often have their own staff and household, usually basing themselves in a chantry for convenience. Many Regents rankle at having their boss running a separate department in their domain, but to complain would bring their loyalty into question. Finally, the Council of Seven rules the Clan worldwide from their stronghold in Vienna.

LOYALTY

However, what the Tremere value most is not their structure and bureaucracy. They realized long ago that even the best system is no use without one vital ingredient: loyalty. Clan Tremere expects all its members, no matter what their position, to remain loyal to the Clan. Loyalty to Sect or Prince pale into insignificance beside the dedication they must show their brothers and sisters and the agenda of the Tremere. The Clan comes before all else, and no treachery can truly be a betrayal if it serves the Clan. This might seem terribly oppressive, and sometimes it can be, but there are some significant advantages. While all are expected to give their absolute loyalty, they get something in return: the loyalty of Clan Tremere.

This loyalty means that no matter where a Tremere goes in the world, they can knock on a chantry door and be given sanctuary. While no vampire trusts his own kind implicitly, a Tremere can trust his Clanmates to a level no other Clan can even dream of. You may be expected to toe the party line, but when you make a stand, the entire Clan stands with you. There is no discussion, no platitudes that they would like to help but their hands are tied. Clan Tremere stands behind each and every member as long as they stand for the Clan. Even the lowest neonate has the hand of the Clan's most powerful elders on their shoulder at all times.

From loyalty comes unity. While the other Clans might joke about the Tremere being identical cloaked figures following their elders, few can deny the Tremere get things done. We are the mystical might of the Camarilla. We have faced demons on their behalf. We destroyed our renegades in a single night. We even cursed an entire Clan at their behest. Any one of these feats would prove that our unity makes anything possible.

The Clan as a whole has an agenda, and expects every member to work towards it. Now it may seem unfair to the young neonate that they remain a cog in the great machine. However, the party line insists that they imagine the power they will hold when they are the one setting the agenda. With experience comes wisdom, and with wisdom comes power. It does not always work, and while we prize loyalty, we also prize ambition. Our unity means little if we cannot use it to move forward. So the rule is simple: if you are going to put your hand in the cookie jar, make sure you don't take them all, and never get caught.

So if loyalty is so important to the Tremere, how do we enforce it? The simple answer is the blood bond. Given the Tremere's intimate understanding of Kindred blood, it seems natural we should use it to bind the Clan together. In the early days of the Clan, we often practiced full blood bonding of apprentices to masters, but this proved counterproductive. There is such a thing as too much loyalty, and many good apprentices were lost protecting their masters when all of them might have escaped together. A full blood bond makes the thrall too eager to please, and Clan Tremere wants Kindred willing to serve, not slaves.

So the Tremere developed a few rituals to create a lesser form of blood bond, one that makes the Clan itself, rather than an individual the object of dedication. Upon Embrace, each new Tremere must drink from a cup containing a mixture of blood from the seven elders. In fact, this blood need only come from seven elder Tremere — the Council of Seven are rather wary of handing their blood out to every blood mage in the world. The head of each chantry knows the ritual that transubstantiates the blood mixture into "the spirit of the Clan," and every neonate feels special drinking from the mighty Council of Seven. The ritual does more than bind a neonate's loyalty, however; it acts as a powerful reminder that the lowest member of the Clan has a part of the ruling council inside them, and so the mystery is maintained.

However, despite all this emphasis on loyalty and devotion, individual Tremere have much more freedom than most Clans believe. Each is encouraged to go out and serve the Clan in their own way, although some might be commanded to assist on the plans of their elders. Unfortunately, a Tremere in a coterie of non-Tremere will eventually have to choose where their loyalties lie, and they had better make the right choice.

SECRET ORDERS

While the Tremere might be unified as a Clan, there is still plenty of space to politic amongst ourselves, as long as it does not damage the Tremere agenda. In fact, a certain amount of infighting is even encouraged, so each Tremere

The Code and Oath of the Tremere

I, [initiate's name], hereby swear my everlasting loyalty to House and Clan Tremere and all its members. I am of their blood, and they are of mine. We share our lives, our goals, and our achievements. I shall obey those the House sees fit to name my superiors, and treat my inferiors with all the respect and care they earn for themselves.

I will not deprive nor attempt to deprive any member of House and Clan Tremere of his magical power. To do so would be to act against the strength of our House. I will not slay nor attempt to slay any member of the House and Clan except in self-defense, or when a magus has been ruled outlaw by a properly constituted tribunal. If a magus has been ruled an outlaw, I shall bend all efforts to bring such magus to justice.

I will abide by all decisions of the tribunals, and respectfully honor the wishes of the Inner Council of Seven and the wishes of my superiors. The tribunals shall be bound by the spirit of the Code of Tremere, as supplemented by the Peripheral Code and interpreted by a properly constituted body of magi. I have the right to appeal a decision to a higher tribunal, if they should agree to hear my case.

I will not endanger House and Clan Tremere through my actions. Nor will I interfere with the affairs of mundanes in any way that brings ruin upon my House and Clan. I will not, when dealing with devils or others, in any way bring danger to the Clan, nor will I disturb the faeries in any way that should cause them to take vengeance on the House and Clan. I also swear to uphold the values and goals of the Camarilla, and I will maintain the Masquerade. Insofar as these goals may conflict with my goals, I will not pursue my own ends in any way that would endanger the Masquerade. The strength of the House and Clan Tremere depends on the strength of the Masquerade.

I will not use magic to scry upon members of the House and Clan Tremere, nor shall I use it to peer into their affairs. It is expressly forbidden.

I will train only apprentices who will swear to this code, and should any of them turn against the House and Clan, I shall be the first to strike them down and bring them to justice. No apprentice of mine shall be called magus until he first swears to uphold the code. I shall treat my apprentices with the care and respect that they earn.

I concede to my elders the right to take my apprentice should it be found that my apprentice is valuable to an elder's work. All are members of the House and Clan and valuable first to these precepts. I shall abide by the right of my superiors to make such decisions.

I shall further the knowledge of the House and Clan and share with its members all that I find in my search for wisdom and power. No secrets are to be kept or given regarding the arts of magic, nor shall I keep secret the doings of others who might bring harm to the House and Clan.

I demand that, should I break this oath, I should be cast out of the House and Clan. If I am cast out, I ask my brothers to find and slay me that my life may not continue in degradation and infamy.

I recognize that the enemies of the House and Clan are my enemies, that the friends of the House and Clan are my friends, and that the allies of the House and Clan are my allies. Let us work as one and grow hale and strong.

I hereby swear this oath on [current date]. Woe to they who try to tempt me to break this oath, and woe to me if I succumb to such temptation.

can be tested to hone and improve their skills. To gain allies and further their individual agendas, many Tremere join secret organizations within the Clan dedicated to either a particular purpose or simply self-protection or aggrandizement (depending on your point of view). I will tell you of some of the most renowned, but there are plenty more. They are called "secret" for a reason, yes?

THE UNBOWED MUNDANES

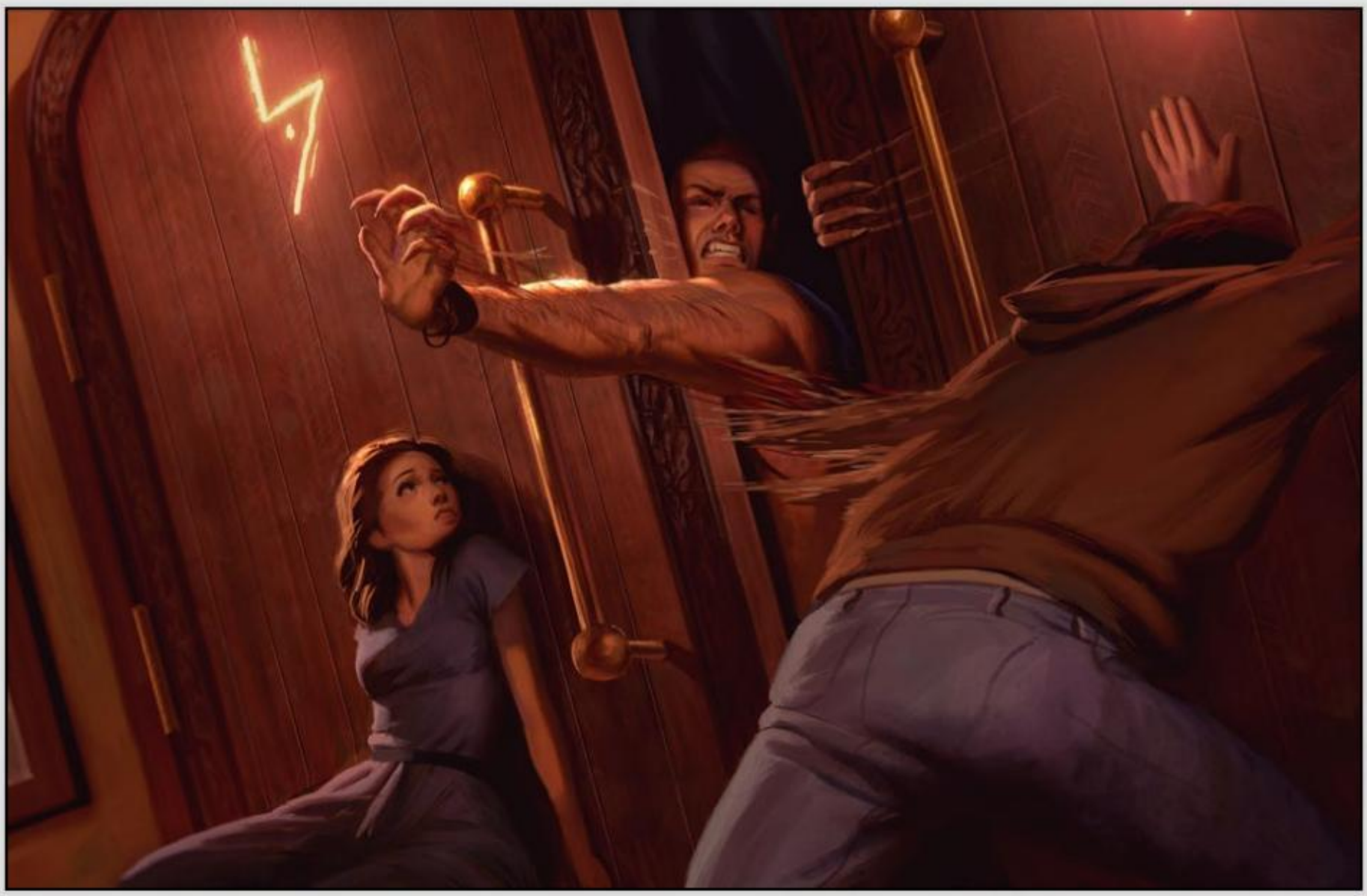
One of the sad truths of Clan Tremere is that members are often passed over in favor of those with greater thaumaturgical ability. The higher echelons of the Clan consider the traits of a good sorcerer (will, intellect, and dedication) to be the ideal Tremere archetype. Despite the stereotype, the Clan is not exclusively made up of mages and the magically adept. Plenty of Tremere Kindred either lack the aptitude or simply do not take to Thaumaturgy. They are indignant that their contribution to the Clan often goes unrewarded. Unfortunately, the elders (unsurprisingly) are prejudiced against non-magicians, believing those who cannot master Thaumaturgy are simply not trying hard enough.

The Unbowed Mundanes are a group dedicated to righting the balance between those with and those without Thaumaturgy. They even count some thaumaturges among their ranks who agree with their goals. After all, they claim, Clan Tremere is about more than just magic. It is about loyalty and survival.

THE COVENANT

It is a little known fact that one of the few Clans that the early Tremere actually got on well with were the Cappadocians. Who are they? Suffice it to say that there were other necromancers before the Giovanni. Regardless, both of our Clans recognized that necromancy and Thaumaturgy bore a few similarities; and both had much to gain from sharing a little of their knowledge. When the Giovanni rose up against their masters, we took the opportunity to steal some of their lore and even a few of their ghouls. Don't give me that look. We are pragmatists by nature, and saw no reason to support the underdog when gaining favor with a clear winner was an option.

To manage the lore we had stolen, the Covenant was formed. Its members seek not only to master the necromantic arts, but also to finding the missing link that will connect it to Thaumaturgy. Then, having crafted a new gestalt discipline, they will have gained even more power for the Tremere. While the Kindred of the Covenant all practice Necromancy, it should be pointed out it is no easier for them than any other Discipline outside our Clan's natural inclinations. It is a hard path, and few have



mastered more than the lowest levels. While they have access to secrets the Giovanni would kill to see buried, they are not the masters of the power they wish they were.

THE THIRD EYE

Few secret Tremere societies are actually outlawed, but the Third Eye is one of them. Membership is punishable by death, so its members have to be almost fanatical to join in the first place. The ethos of the Third Eye is simple: Tremere made a huge mistake in committing diablerie upon Saulot. In fact, the entire creation of Clan Tremere is an unnatural mistake that will be corrected sooner or later. The Third Eye believes Clan Tremere is damned, and will pay very soon for its many crimes. House Tremere should have accepted its fate long ago, and the time it has stolen is an offense against the natural order. The Third Eye work in secret to follow the peaceful ways of Saulot, and try to educate the other Tremere to the burden they now carry to seek enlightenment. They also work directly against the Clan, claiming the Tremere must dismantle the Clan and try to make amends for all they have done. If they do not, a far more terrible fate awaits not only the Tremere but also everything they have touched.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Archivist

The Tremere are not only the most organized Clan, but they also tend to keep the most meticulous records. Over several hundred years, the Clan archives spread over several libraries across the globe. They contain enough secrets for several lifetimes. You are one of the Kindred that stand guard over these secrets. They need to be managed and maintained, even incorporating improvements like scanning ancient scrolls onto digital media.

It may not be the most exciting life, but sometimes your skills are required outside the library. Newly located records need to be verified and collected properly. Stolen texts need to be tracked down and refilled. You may also be required as a consultant, acting as a living repository of the secrets you have read.

Chantry Keeper

The chantry is more than just a repository of lore. It is a sanctuary, a fortress, and a home. Someone needs to see to the bricks and mortar that shelters the Clan. You make sure that needed improvements are made and

THE "DEATH" OF THE ANTITRIBU

The Tremere *antitribu* are rare, but contrary to Tremere propaganda, not all of them were marked or destroyed. Theoretically, any Tremere of true lineage who drinks of the Vaulderie gains a mark similar to a "T" branded in their forehead, which can only be observed by other Tremere. Even more theoretically, any of those who gain the mark suddenly die due to the Tremere curse. Yet there are some who have avoided the mark, and some with the mark who have avoided destruction.

The Tremere *antitribu* see the Sabbat in the same way the Tremere see their Clan, and have no qualms about teaching Thaumaturgy to any who ask. How many *do* still exist is up to each Storyteller's individual chronicle, but they are usually tasked with countering the tactics of their opposite numbers, since they are the only ones who really understand their capabilities. They work as intellectual shock troops, and the chance to seize a chantry and all its secrets is one that few *antitribu* can ignore.

Many of the surviving Tremere *antitribu* are of the Telyav, a rare bloodline that defected to the Sabbat mostly to survive (see **Rites of Blood** pp. 35-36 and **V20**, p. 438). Others are similarly far enough from pure Tremere lineage, which is how they avoided the betrayer's mark. However, Tremere with the mark do exist, as do vampires who simply claim to be Tremere (or believe themselves to be). Like many things in the Sabbat, who is or isn't a Tremere is a chaotic mess.

Life in the Sabbat is hard for the Tremere *antitribu*, and not dissimilar to a cop locked up in jail. To the Sabbat the Tremere are the enemy, more so than the Ventrue or any other Camarilla Clan. Everything the Sabbat stands for – freedom, sharing with your pack, anarchy – is absolute anathema to the Tremere. Many of the Sabbat take that distrust and outrage out on the Tremere *antitribu* in their midst. And so, even in the Sabbat, the Tremere are the villains acting as the glue to hold the Sect together....

magical protections are organized. For you, the chantry is more than a building; it is almost an extension of yourself. You know every corridor, every room, every secret passage and tunnel.

But taking care of the chantry does not mean you never leave it. You must have a hand in the city planning departments and be able to whisper in the ears of politicians to ensure its security. You are responsible not just for a building but the foundation of the Tremere in a city.

Cult Leader

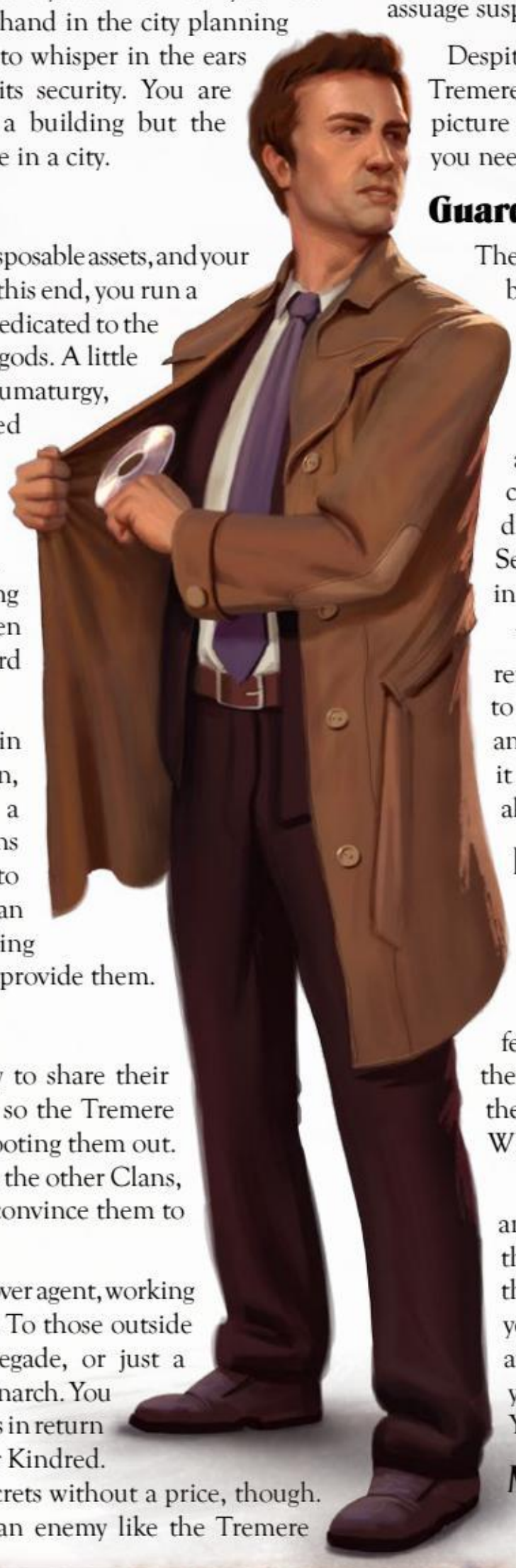
Every Clan needs a few disposable assets, and your job is to procure them. To this end, you run a small but intimate group dedicated to the worship of long-forgotten gods. A little showmanship, a little Thaumaturgy, and you have convinced them you have divine or demonic power. When you mix a little blood into the communion cup, they soon become willing servants to the Tremere, even though they have never heard the name.

Your cult might contain outsiders and the forgotten, but could easily include a few politicians and scions of the wealthy looking to experiment. When the Clan needs a favor or a few willing victims, it turns to you to provide them.

Face

Few Kindred are happy to share their secrets with the Tremere, so the Tremere have had to be subtle in rooting them out. It is your job to get close to the other Clans, using deceit or charm to convince them to share their secrets.

You might be an undercover agent, working a dangerous double bluff. To those outside the Clan, you are a renegade, or just a knowledgeable Caitiff or Anarch. You are willing to give up secrets in return for sanctuary among other Kindred. You do not offer these secrets without a price, though. You tell them that with an enemy like the Tremere looking for you, you want something valuable in return. Sometimes your allegiance is more obvious, and you put a face on the Tremere when they wish to negotiate with the other Clans. You remain charming and open to gain their trust, and put a spin on recent Tremere plots to assuage suspicions.



Despite appearances, your loyalty is only to the Tremere. Quite often you don't know the whole picture (to allow you plausible deniability), but all you need to know is your part in it.

Guardian of Secrets

The Tremere keep their lore in vast libraries, but entrust their secrets to very few. There are plenty of things the Tremere do not want the other Clans to know. Many are magical secrets, the keys to understanding the higher levels of Thaumaturgy. Others are the locations of valuable artifacts or deep cover agents. You may simply guard a hard drive you have vowed never to investigate. Several Tremere are trusted with each secret, in case something happens to one of them.

You have been given such a secret, and must remain vigilant against those who might seek to steal it. The nature of the secret is up to you and the Storyteller to decide. How dangerous it is to you or the Clan is something you will also need to decide.

Hunter

Magic doesn't really interest you. Clan Tremere is more than just a group of magicians, and that is where you have pledged your loyalty. However, some don't feel the same way. There are those who spurn the gifts the Clan gives them or selfishly put their own needs before those of the Tremere. When they try to run, you hunt them down.

Unlike many Tremere, heightened senses and street skills are far more useful to you than Thaumaturgy. With an array of contacts throughout the city, you'll easily know where your quarry goes to ground. Sometimes you are used as a bodyguard or an enforcer, but you truly excel in the chase and the capture. You are the shadow haunting every renegade.

Magical Technologist

Many of the Tremere stay mired in the old

ways or hocus-pocus and mumbo jumbo. You are looking to apply magic in new ways, enchanting machines and connecting the occult to the Internet. The elders of the Clan see your work as ridiculous at best and abomination at worst, but tradition blinds them. What you are working on may change the face of magic.

While your skills in Thaumaturgy are advanced, you are also a creature of science. New advances are being made at a startling rate, and any one of them might prove the key to transmuting sorcery into a new form of science. While the elders will never understand, you are gaining support from many of the younger Kindred. Soon, when you have real proof of the potential of your work, you might be able to force the elders to place power in more enlightened hands.

Manipulator

Structure is important certainly, but no structure works very well if people stop following orders. You are here to ensure loyalty, through compulsion if necessary. Not everyone is enlightened enough to know that unquestioning loyalty is the best way to benefit everyone. This goes double for the kine. Where a Masquerade breach is likely or a new political officer decides to make a few unwelcome changes, you step in. It is not for your personal power, though. You are simply here to make sure the gears and cogs of the great machine keep turning.

You are a master of Dominate, and few can meet your gaze without feeling your compulsion. A quiet word is all you require to make anyone follow your lead. Some accuse you of being a Ventrue, but you are not a leader. Instead, you see yourself as a servant, making sure the human and Kindred parts of the system function as they should.

Necromantic Thief

If there is one thing the Tremere despise, it is other people keeping secrets from them. This is doubly the case for magical secrets. While it is a distinctly different ability, Necromancy has far too many similarities to Thaumaturgy to be ignored. What makes this more frustrating is that the Giovanni are very good at keeping secrets.

While it is a hard path, you have chosen to delve deep into those secrets. If the undead will not teach you what you know, you will drag the knowledge from the dead themselves. The Giovanni are not going to help you, but you are not afraid to get your hands dirty searching for answers. For you, the line between blood magic and death magic is becoming more and more blurred. Soon you will discover their true connection and open new worlds of power for Clan Tremere.

Sorcerer

You are a vampire that dreams of being a magician. From a young age, you studied the occult, but with limited success. Unfortunately, your dreams of magical power constantly eluded you, but a vampire saw your potential and appreciated your dedication. As a newly Embraced Tremere, the power of Thaumaturgy is finally yours. The lore at your fingertips as a member of the Clan is truly humbling. Having eternity to study it somehow doesn't feel like long enough.

You have little or no interest in politics; all you really care about is learning more magical secrets. Your only Discipline is Thaumaturgy, and that is all you need. The secrets of the universe are finally yours for the taking.

Merits and Flaws

Embraced without the Cup (1pt. Merit)

For some reason you did not drink the blood of the elders when you were inducted into Clan Tremere. More dangerously, it may have had no effect on you. As a result, you are not bound to the Clan the way most Tremere are. Should it be discovered, it will usually be corrected, but one might almost believe there was some purpose to this lapse, as the Tremere don't make mistakes. Perhaps the Clan has a special task in mind for you, one where you might be forced to act against the Clan to maintain a cover....

Secret Society Member (1pt. Merit)

You have found and joined one of the many secret societies in Clan Tremere. Your character must be suitable to join, such as having Necromancy to join the Covenant. You might pick one of the societies listed here or create one of your own. In most cases, your society membership should be kept secret, but your allegiance to it is not considered a crime. While your society expects you to uphold its tenets and agenda, they can also be counted upon to back you up and help you increase your power within the pyramid.

Keys to the Library (1-5pt. Merit)

You have one of the most sought after positions in the chantry: a librarian. It is one of your duties to catalogue and maintain the magical lore kept in your chantry. This means you have complete access to it, and get to decide who can see it and who can't. A vast array of rituals and Thaumaturgical knowledge resides here, making it simple to learn many of the secrets of magic. No matter how restrictive your chantry, you have complete access to the library for research. The cost of this merit is the same as the chantry's Library rating (see pp. 221-222).

Outside Haven (2pt. Merit)

You maintain your own private haven outside the chantry and Tremere control. Most Tremere are expected to rest in the chantry, where the Clan can keep an eye on them. However, you have been trusted with a little more privacy. This might be because you have already proved your loyalty, or perhaps because they are testing it.

Unmarked Antitribu (2 or 5pt. Merit)

While you are part of the Sabbat and a traitor to House and Clan Tremere, somehow you remain unmarked by the *antitribu* curse. You are not easily recognized as a renegade Tremere, and the magic that burned so many of your brethren cannot target you. Further, other Sabbat members cannot judge you at a glance. Those of the Telyavelic bloodline can purchase this Merit at 2 points, while other Tremere pay 5 points.

Quartermaster (3pt. Merit)

You are one of the Kindred responsible for maintaining and organizing the chantry's mundane supplies. You may take anything from the chantry's stores as defined by the chantry's Stores rating. While you will have to return or replace anything you borrow, you have access the whole range of equipment appropriate to the size of the chantry. This might range from assault weapons and explosives to advanced medical and scientific equipment.

Arcane Curse (1-5pt. Flaw)

Because of either your studies or someone else's, you suffer from a magical curse. It might be an aversion or allergy, or even a strange magical effect. The level of the flaw depends on how debilitating the curse is. Curing the affliction may be impossible, or require some sort of quest or advanced research.

Flaw Value	Example Curse
1 point	A minor oddity, such as an animal feature or strange eye color
2 point	A noticeable problem, such as your magic having a strange taint or pattern that makes it instantly recognizable, or that plants wither in your presence.
3 point	Something problematic, such as people sickening in your presence or animals attacking you.
4 point	Concerning handicap, such as developing another Clan's weakness.
5 points	Potentially deadly, such as moonlight being as dangerous to you as sunlight.

Cloistered (2pt. Flaw)

You have spent almost all of your undead existence in the halls of the chantry, making Kindred society rather new and confusing for you. You suffer a -2 dice penalty to any social interactions with those outside the Tremere.

Betrayer's Mark (3pt. Flaw)

Even though you are loyal to House and Clan Tremere, for some reason you are branded with the mark of the *antitribu* (see the sidebar on p. 216). It might be that you have returned to the Clan after leaving the Sabbat or that you unwittingly or as part of an undercover operation took part in the Vaulderie. Whatever the reason, the mark makes other Tremere wary of you. You will have to go that extra mile to prove yourself, and few among the Clan will trust you with positions of power and responsibility.

Bound to the Clan (3pt. Flaw)

You have done more than just drink from the blood of the elders. Whether as punishment or by choice, you have become fully blood bound to Clan Tremere. You cannot act against the Clan, and find everything you do works in the service of the Tremere. You might not like it, but you can't help yourself doing it. Of course, now you are bound to the Clan, you cannot be bound to another individual. Many older Tremere have this Flaw, as it has been common in the past to completely blood bind new Tremere.

Mage Blood (5pt. Flaw)

Your blood is so tied to magic that you find you are unable to use any Discipline apart from Thaumaturgy (and for Kindred who are not Tremere, it is still paid for at out-of-Clan rates). While no path or ritual is barred to you, you may not gain any dots in any other Discipline.

Thaumaturgically Inept (5pt. Flaw)

Something about you refuses to respond to Thaumaturgy. Magic just doesn't work for you. You cannot take any ability in the Thaumaturgy Discipline or any of its paths or rituals. For a Tremere this is doubly difficult, as skill in Thaumaturgy is often the key to position within the Clan. While some willingly choose to ignore their thaumatugical studies and serve in other ways, ineptitude is never excused. Only Tremere can take this Flaw.

Combination Disciplines

Blood Sight
(Auspex ••, Thaumaturgy (Path of Blood) •)

This power allows the user to analyze the potency and type of any blood they touch to a higher level than A Taste for Blood (**V20**, p. 213). They can determine which supernatural creature it might come from, and the relative potency of the being in question.

System: The user of this power must touch a small sample of the blood they wish to analyze. They then make a Perception + Medicine roll at difficulty 6. If they are successful, they can identify if the blood is human, animal, or supernatural. With two successes, they can also determine the type of supernatural being in question, such as vampire, lupine, mage, etc. If they gain five successes, they can also determine the relative power of the person in question, such as a vampire's Generation and possibly Clan, or how strong a lupine is. In addition to this, up to one hour for each success, the power user will know if they touch the person the blood came from.

This power costs 9 experience points to learn.

Chain of Slavery
(Auspex ••, Dominate ••)

By looking a target in the eyes, the user of this power can see if a target is under the influence of Dominate, and who controls him or her. They must be able to make eye contact with the target, and if they can, the image of the Dominator forms in their mind.

System: The user of this power must be able to make eye contact with the target (**V20**, p. 152). They then make a Perception + Empathy roll, with a difficulty equal to the controller's Willpower. If successful, they get a glimpse of the target's controller, which becomes more distinct the more successes they roll. With only one success, the image might only appear male or female. At three successes, it is a blurred but recognizable form, and at five successes, it is clear and distinct. If the target is not Dominated or the power user fails the roll, the result is the same: no image appears.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Theft of Will
(Dominate •••, Thaumaturgy (any path) ••••)

This power allows a vampire to take control of any magical effect nearby, such as a ward or enchantment. Effectively, the power user becomes the caster of the spell for all intents and purposes. This power doesn't grant the ability to detect magic or recognize it, although the power user need only know the magic is there to take control of it. Some magicians have laid cursed enchantments that lie in wait for someone to try to take control of them without knowing what they are.

System: The user of this power must know there is a magical effect nearby that they wish to take control of (such as with the use of Thaumaturgical Sight, below). The ritual that created the effect must also be one level below the power user's own Thaumaturgy level. It costs one Willpower point to use this power, and requires a Stamina + Occult roll at a difficulty equal to the original caster's total Willpower. If the roll is a success, the power user effectively becomes the caster of the spell, although this does not change the duration or strength of the effects.

This power also only works on Thaumaturgy effects. The Storyteller may allow it to apply to Necromancy or other mystical powers at her discretion.

This power costs 21 experience points to learn.

Thaumaturgical Sight
(Auspex ••, Thaumaturgy (any path) •)

With this ability, the user can see magical auras. In much the same way as Aura Perception (**V20**, pp. 135-136), she can see a halo of crimson over any magical items or effects. This sight extends to all Kindred blood magic, although some might show a different color of aura. Generally, the stronger the magic, the brighter the aura will be, but is it hard to gauge the relative power of any magical effect.

System: This ability is used in much the same way as Aura Perception. The user stares at the item or area in question for a few moments and makes a Perception + Occult roll (difficulty 8). For a single success, the power user can determine that magic is present. If she gets three successes, she can recognize the ritual or path in question, as long as she knows it herself. For five successes, she can recognize any thaumaturgical effect, regardless of whether she has seen it before. If the effect in question is beyond her skill or knowledge, the user will still gain an impression of what it is designed to do. Should the power user also wish to use Aura Perception on the target, she must take a new action to do so.

This power costs 6 experience points to learn.

Rituals

Ascension of the Blood (Level Two Ritual)

As the Tremere have plenty of blood rituals that require ingestion, it has become useful to be able to remove some of its inherent qualities. This ritual "purifies" the blood used in it, so it does not count as drinking from an individual for the purposes of blood bond.

System: The ritualist prepares a special chalice into which she puts as much of her blood as she requires. With at least one success, the blood in the chalice can no longer create a blood bond and is safe for anyone else to drink. Of course, the blood still looks the same whether the ritual is a success or the Tremere is simply lying.

Brotherhood of the Cup (Level Three Ritual)

Sometimes the Tremere need to enforce a limited form of blood bond on an agent or even one of their own, so a variation on the Ascension of the Blood ritual was developed. With Brotherhood of the Cup, a Tremere can impose such a bond, but one designed to inspire loyalty to the Clan as a whole rather than an individual.

System: While no Tremere would admit it, this ritual bears a concerning similarity to the Vaulderie. In addition to the ritualist, it requires at least four other Tremere (although tradition requires a total of seven) to put their blood into a chalice. Anyone who drinks from the cup becomes blood bound, but to Clan Tremere and what they perceive to be its goals. The effect lasts for one hour for each success gained on the roll. Once the ritual wears off, so do the effects. This does not count as having drunk once from any of the Tremere who conducted the ritual.

Sanguine Trail (Level Three Ritual)

By touching a target she believes to be blood bound, the user of this power can trace the target's regnant and anyone else connected to him by such a bond. A thin red thread appears to stretch out from the target and connects to anyone he has a blood bond connection with, whether they are master or servant. This does not work on vampires connected by Vinculum, as the bond is too diffuse.

System: If the ritual is successful, the caster can see a connection between the target and anyone he is blood bound to. If multiple bonds are in place, the power user can see one for each success she makes. If she achieves five successes, she can also see which direction each bond goes, revealing who is bound to whom.

The Chantry

There are few things more important to the Tremere than their chantry. It is a home, a base, a stronghold, and an archive. The chantry is the first thing the Tremere establish when they establish a presence in a city, and they will defend it to their last blood.

It is rare for any two chantries to look alike. Not only do the buildings themselves vary, but they also reflect the personality and goals of the members of the Clan in that city. Some are city skyscrapers, while others are ancient manors on the edge of the city. Some are modern, whereas others have seen centuries. A few have remained as they are for years, but many have been redecorated several times at the whim of their masters. A few of the ancient ones are actually systems of caves, and there are stories of young Tremere creating virtual chantries online.

A chantry is described using a series of traits. The appearance can be almost anything, and sometimes the smallest and weakest-looking chantries are the most ancient and powerful. The Storyteller should pick ratings for the chantry in their city for each of the traits listed below. While each trait goes from 1 to 5, Storytellers might grant ratings up to 10 for truly ancient and impressive chantries. As a rule of thumb, the total number of points should be around twice the amount of Tremere living in the city. While the chantry is for the Storyteller to decide upon, they should take into account the needs and desires of their Tremere players and work with them to create something their characters can be proud of.

Guardians

While each chantry has magical defenses, it often needs mercenaries to run its mundane defenses, such as with Gargoyles. Such military strength has often proved useful outside the chantry in the service of the Tremere.

For each point the Storyteller assigns to this Trait, the chantry has one supernatural guardian (such as a Gargoyle or a mystical construct) or five ghouls. They will all be loyal to the Tremere Clan and ready to die to defend the chantry.

Library

It is a poor chantry that has no library. While each may have a powerful collection of rituals and magical lore, the best libraries contain a wealth of mundane knowledge as well. For many Tremere, the library is the most important place in the chantry. A chantry with an extensive library will never want for members.

A Library may not contain any rituals of a higher level than its rating, although how many rituals the Library



contains at each level is up to Storyteller discretion. When allowed to do occult research in the Library, a character may add the Library's rating to their dice pool.

Research

As well as a library, many chantries offer facilities for magical research and experimentation. In some cases, these laboratories resemble Frankenstein's lair, while others are covered in occult symbols with great pentagrams inlaid in the floor in silver. When a Tremere is able to use their chantry's facilities, they may add the Research rating to any dice pool used to create new rituals or thaumaturgical powers.

- The chantry has little or no room for any laboratories. Members must build their own.
- •• Those looking for lab space might easily find an unused room with some basic supplies, but all it really offers is peace and quiet.
- ••• There is a properly equipped laboratory in the chantry, but you will need to share its resources and time.
- •••• The chantry has several laboratories, but not enough for everyone. Each member has the use of one until they have completed a project, at which point they must wait their turn again.
- ••••• All Tremere in this chantry has a basic laboratory, and there are several well-equipped research centers for more advanced projects.

Sanctity

The Tremere guard their secrets carefully, and a chantry is a tempting target, but many contain a wide variety of defenses, both mundane and mystical. This rating shows how hard any assault of the chantry might be. In general, the difficulty of any Security or related rolls attackers make while infiltrating the chantry are increased by the Sanctity rating. This represents the quality of the defense they must overcome.

- A few guards are pretty much the building's only defenses.
- •• All the guards are well trained and professional, and several basic wards are placed and maintained around the building.
- ••• The building itself has also been augmented with toughened glass, steel layers in the walls, and security stations.
- •••• The chantry is a fortress, inside and out. It has been designed to survive a siege.

••••• There are so many magical protections in place it is hard to even find this chantry, let alone attack it. Inside the building itself works against the attackers, changing corridors and shifting like a maze.

Stores

The Tremere recognize the need for resources beyond magic. Many Chantries keep a stock of mundane items, such as weapons, computer equipment, medical supplies, and even stationary. This rating also details the amount of money the chantry has to spend at its members' request, which grants a level of Resources for the chantry (not its members!) equal to this rating. However, all expenses must be in the service of the Clan, and just because the Clan has the money, it doesn't mean it will bankroll just anyone for any reason.

• The chantry doesn't have any equipment of its own, but may be able to offer a little financial assistance.

•• The stores of the chantry stock a good variety of items commonly found in any store. Its weapons are restricted to melee weapons and small caliber pistols and rifles.

••• This chantry has an extensive collection of items found only in specialist stores. It also has a variety of non-military grade weapons and explosives.

•••• The stores here are very extensive, and the chantry will often buy items on request. Its arsenal contains military-issue weapons and ordinance. There are also several black market and illegal items kept here.

••••• There is little you can imagine that cannot be found here or sourced by its caretakers. It is also the repository for some extremely valuable and unique items, such as paintings by the old masters. It may even be the place several dangerous and powerful magical items are held for safekeeping.





Tzimisce

"Well, as I was saying, it costs a lot to be authentic, madam.
And one can't be stingy with these things, because you are more authentic
the more you resemble what you've dreamed you are."

— Agrado, Todo Sobre Mi Madre

The Hospitality in Clay

With the ghoul's corpse at my feet, I knew I was dead. Because, years ago, the Countess had vowed to end me, and the spirits of the angry earth hear her promises.

Had the Cardinal sent me to die? A gift-wrapped soul to squeeze the juices out of? He said it would be a fine gesture, an old enemy welcoming her to the new world. I was the one, the only survivor of my pack, or any of the other packs for that matter. All that prestige, but it was just dumb luck. My Romanian nights. The bad nights. The kind of hell you can only enter by pissing off an ancient, entrenched Fiend. I still wake to blood sweats in the day, pulling the grave dirt over myself like a safety blanket.

I drove up the long driveway, in disbelief that a creature like the Countess could uproot and move to New England. We never actually beat the crafty Koldun. One night, she offered peace and to play nice with the Sword of Caine. She had a very specific list of demands. We agreed to every one.

Approaching the manor, I caught memory fragments, thought I recognized trees, stones, brickwork, and statues. I could smell it — in the potted plants and garden — soil from the old country, aeons of blood and loam. That's the thing about earth: it smells like birth and decay, and you take on the dreams of those who died in it. The Countess was the land, and she had brought it with her, piece by piece.

I waited for a servant to formally invite me inside before stepping over the threshold. Old memories haunted the manse. In the dining hall, I found a woman weeping. Mortal. Dinner. Then I found a dead man on the luxuriant carpet, throat vacated. I recognized him, a revenant ghoul, the Countess's favorite.

A door burst open. "My lady, come quickly!" a voice called out. Another familiar face, Janos. We had flesh-ripping history. We flashed mutual fangs.

"Greetings."

I flinched. Didn't see her enter. Just a gust of wind, and then her stark face, cheekbones raised like guillotine blades.

"Countess," I stammered. When did I learn to bow? She was resplendent in her frock coat. I felt suddenly self-conscious in my leather and body mods. I'm a child of the night. A badass skin-flaying, fang-kicker. Wherefore this fucking shame?

"He killed one of yours, in your own home," Janos said.

A deadly dark eyebrow arched. The rest of her was statue still, except those long, powerful fingers. Her hands never stop moving. She looked at me. Through me. Dying moths fluttered under my skin.

Then she looked at Janos.



"No," she said. "That is not what happened."

"He killed Mircea!"

"That is two lies, Janos."

Her grandchilde's mouth opened. Closed. Then he whispered, "I did it for you, Baba. Now we can kill him."

"That is not what must happen now."

"No..." Janos looked hurt. "I am your blood. He is the enemy. They killed so many. Him, him, him!" Janos foamed, knife in hand, and leapt at me.

Then the Countess was there, shielding me, the knife in her chest. Her face was still, but the rats raged in the walls, the wind shrieked, and the windows blackened with thousands of leathery wings.

Janos cowered. "No, Baba. Don't kill me."

"Shhh," she said, a finger on Janos's lips, and he froze. "I honor enemies with death, not trespassers." She then whispered old words into his ear. I heard the name "Kruchina." Janos wept, full-bodied sobs, till he was nothing but blood tears and blood snot.

The Countess swallowed Janos with her eyes and said, "Go now and tell Ficko to give you thorough tenderness." Janos's head darted about in terror as his Judas limbs carried him away.

The lady of the manor then gently took my arm, pulled out my chair, and sat me down at the dining table. She placed the living girl before me.

"He was right," I said. "That was a perfect opportunity to kill me."

"You are my guest," the Countess said, as if explaining gravity to a child who dropped a toy down a deep well with no echo. "Perhaps one day we will honor one another, but for tonight, I will sacrifice every drop of my blood and every pound of my flesh to protect you."

Taking her seat, she opened an ornate music box. It played a twinkling Romanian lullaby. Inside was a handful of the ancient earth. Praying, she opened her wrist and bled upon the soil. Then, she began to eat.

My smartphone vibrated and burned in my pocket, but I dared not answer it. Outside, something howled. Somewhere, Janos screamed. That's when I knew I was dead. Sooner or later. The Countess keeps every promise.

She looked up from her supper of crimson clay. "Are you not hungry?"

Lexicon

Azi Dahaka: Persian name of the three-headed dragon of the demon Ahriman. To the Tzimisce, it is the Metamorphosist's Holy Grail, an enlightened and ultimate state of being, possibly brought on by extensive use of Vicissitude.

bogatyri: "elder valiant champions," or a reference to Tzimisce's quest-knights.

boyars: nobles or nobility.

knezi: a lesser landowner than a Tzimisce voivode. Knezi supplied the main fighting force against the Clan's elders during the Anarch Revolt. In the modern nights, it is a title for any Tzimisce who makes claim to nobility. As such, it is no longer as respected as it once was.

koldun: Tzimisce spellcrafters who employ elemental and spirit magic.

manse: a Tzimisce aristocrat's keep or place of power from which he rules. In modern parlance, a manse may simply be an opulent (or especially morbid) haven.

szlachta: although the specific term means "gentry," szlachta are soldiers, spies, bodyguards, and protectors of the Tzimisce. Modified to serve, these ghouls are tough, smart, and deadly.

tirsa: land or domain.

voivode: typically, a Tzimisce landholder or lord, but the term is strangely nebulous. Tzimisce of any significant power or territorial holdings often use this title, though young Clan members shy away from such epitaphs.

vozhd: a fading practice among contemporary Tzimisce, vozhd are lobotomized amalgamations of many lesser ghouls. Through Vicissitude and Koldunic rituals, the ghouls become one entity with the simple duty to maim and destroy whatever stands in its way.

zadruga: "joint family," whereby all the relatives of the ruler live together under strict familial bonds. Also, the ancient name for revenant families, still used tonight by elder Tzimisce.

zulo form: a Tzimisce's monstrous form, brought on through an advanced understanding of Vicissitude. The Fiends employ this shape in battle or to intimidate their enemies.

Weaving History

Awaken, interloper.

Awaken.

No need for that. It is already over. You are a joy to work with. Watch as I caress your ribcage… it gapes like a nocturnal flower aching for the pollinator bat. Watch as I pollinate.

Awaken, interloper.

Awaken.

Even the dead can faint, it seems. That is a physiological impossibility, but you and I are so far beyond impossible.

No need to struggle. Your bones have already been removed. No structure or ego to resist the humiliation of gravity. I find the sensation like a dull nostalgia, the ghost memory of some distant mollusk ancestor — dreams of gills and tentacles floating in the womb.

Do not flinch from the lamprey mouths. Their kisses will cleanse.

These muscles… no longer necessary. Your eyes and ears remain. You must witness. I will teach you what it means

to be Tzimisce. We are the wisdom of the dark earth, and we do such things! We travel to the furthest regions of experience, places more than demonic, more than divine. We slough off our humanity to achieve something wondrous. We alone among the dead can achieve change. We can become yesterday, now, and tomorrow.

Let me put you upright. You look so fitting, hung upon the wall. This face — I shall smooth it over. Let me liberate you from identity, like looking into a mirror so long your face becomes a stranger, like repeating a word until it is an alien thing crawling on the tongue.

You are not alone. I have grafted you to your fellows. To each of you, I teach interlocking fragments of our lore. Do you see? I weave a historical tapestry. When complete, it will sing the layered chronicle back to me as I walk down the hall.

I will illumine your flesh. Are you Blue Blood stock? Such fine vellum. Does this tickle? I scrawl names upon your flesh, and the letters rise in bas-relief. See? I recite the old names:

Yorak

Byelobog

Gallod

Demdemeh

Triglav the Three-Headed

Kartarirya

The Dracon

What? You have forgotten your name? That is because I took it. I ate it. You have no need of it anymore. You are the Tapestry. Now, I will teach you your vertical slice of history. I write these words: "The Primordial Nights."

The Primordial Nights

His name. Her name. Its name. Lost. Names are as useful to it as tombstones are to the dead. The names are only for our benefit. We call it the Eldest. We call it the Shaper.

Some say our history begins in the Carpathians. The misty glens. The pine-shrouded crags. That is not the history for you to absorb.

Focus on the sun-blasted south — betwixt the Tigris and the Euphrates. There the Eldest dwelt as a mortal. It was a seer and dream interpreter of some repute. In the realm of lucid dreams, the Eldest first learned to shape itself and the world, first gained the title of Shaper.

Ynosh the Lawgiver, first childe of Caine, desired to rid himself of the chaotic impurities that fettered him to the Beast. Ynosh called for this mortal oneiromancer, one who had interpreted the dreams of kings, to be his vessel. Ynosh focused the most protean and primordial seeds of his flesh and spat them into the Shaper. The first great experiment. Ynosh had planned to immediately destroy his creation, but, on further inspection, saw nothing outwardly monstrous. The Shaper was no more debased than any of its undead siblings. The Shaper had been internally fluid, and now found its flesh too ran like hot wax. From the Beast, it took the gifts of intuition, whim, expression, imagination, and growth.

The Shaper was welcomed, but kept apart from its siblings. It saw that they were static. Doomed. It had a vision, saw that mortals, though weak, could grow, would eventually overtake these so-called demigods, this stagnant afterbirth of Caine. It also foresaw how its hunger would worsen. Animals, humans, Cainites — eventually nothing would sate it. This disturbed the Shaper. It must unshackle itself from the Hunger.

The Eldest wandered the earth, spent a mortal age in meditated seclusion, flying through shapes both fantastic and terrifying. It developed the core ideas that evolved into our transhuman philosophy. It Embraced childer, not out of loneliness — in itself it contained all the company it needed — but to create more eyes to witness the mysteries of creation. It invested itself in its progeny. It became legion.

Then came the Deluge. Others of the blood will say the Eldest hid up in the mountain crags during the Flood. They are wrong. What did the Eldest have to fear of water? Into the depths it dove. Its body changed. Its mind changed. It learned to glide through the blackness, adapted to survive the crushing depths that strangle the sun. It learned to catch prey, to summon the creatures it could not catch, and commune with the creatures it could not kill. It discovered new levels of insight from the things that live at the bottom of the abyss. In that fathomless womb, it gestated, and it emerged changed. I saw this in dreams.

Eventually, the Shaper came to the Land Beyond the Forest. It Embraced Yorak, who was not the first childe of the Eldest, but who was first among Fiends in the Carpathians. We wove our spells among the early Phyriges, Illyrians, Thracians, Avars, Wends, and other inhabitants of the Baltics, the Balkans, and Russia. The Slavs worshiped us.

What happened next? Sweet interloper, that is for another slice of the Tapestry to know. For now, focus on the name Kupala.

Kupala

Kupala is the name, and the name has a thousand mouths, and the mouths jabber blasphemies and secrets

in the soil. The Eldest favored the lands of Yorak, but it did not know why. Something whispered to it. Something caressed its dreams, tickled its atrophied gifts as a seer. The Shaper practiced its old mortal oneiromancy and learned to talk back to the spirit of the mountains, the great beast known as Kupala.

There are legends that gods, or perhaps the shape-shifting wolves, did battle with the demon, folded the very earth over it. The Carpathians formed the gargantuan sarcophagus that contained Kupala. The being taught the Eldest sorcery, and the Eldest taught its childer, and so rose the kolduns. And whether that magic bound or freed Kupala is still a point of vicious contention in our Clan. Is it a demon, a dead god, an alien intelligence, or the ghost of one of the Eldest's personalities, evacuated and birthed under a mountain? The argument continues, and the Sabbat Inquisition waits in the wings, ravenous for even a sign of infernalism. Yet they dare not make the accusation above a whisper, for it was the Kupala's Night that allowed our Sect to exist at all.

Immaculate Conception and the Holy Ghost

Another section of the tapestry contains the prayer of a Child of the Dracon, offering that religious faction's perspective on Kupala and koldunism. I shall read it now.

"I pray to you, O Dracon, the First Childe, the Holy Ghost.

"The third mouth of Azi Dahaka whispers to me the Dream of Constantinople. I have read the books of the Library of the Forgotten and fear the Keeper of the Faith and her Watchers. I keep the icons of the Akoimetai.

"Holy Ghost, ignite my blood, inspire my soul — my flesh, your flesh — my tongue, your tongue — as I speak the story of the Immaculate Conception. Samiel, childe of Saulot, of the warrior line, did declare holy war upon all black magic and demon-kind. In his hubris, he mistook our Progenitor as something merely infernal. They did battle. Samiel slaughtered the Eldest with flaming sword, and the Eldest tore Samiel's skull from his head. Both perished.

"The Shaper did not fall into torpor, did not fake its demise; these are the words of unbelievers. For the one who walks the Way of All Flesh, there is no death. The progenitor survives in the seed implanted in its progeny. The Dracon was chosen, first among childer, and on Cyprus, he felt the Eldest awaken and grow within his belly. After birthing it, the Dracon nurtured the fetal Antediluvian and smuggled it back to the Carpathians. He placed it in the care of the Methuselah Yorak, who wrapped the babe in swaddling viscera, deep within the bowels of the mountains.

"The torpid embryo slept and grew in the befouled soil, and the demon Kupala whispered in the Eldest's ear. Centuries of that poison whisper. And our wayward Clan siblings' mastery of koldunic ways became stronger. That is why the Children of Dracon do not touch the fetid magics of Kupala. They are not a gift of the Shaper.

"Holy Ghost, ignite my blood and show me the Divinity Within. Holy Ghost, inspire my hands to mold Heaven on Earth. O flesh everlasting, O flesh ever changing, confirm me, for the Dracon. Amen."

Split With the Old Clan

At an indeterminate point in our history, prodigals among the ancient line rejected the way of metamorphosis. They avoided all use of the fleshcrafting art, and even claim to have predated it. They called themselves the "Pure Clan" or the "Old Clan," depending on the translation.

One story says that they discovered the Discipline of mutable flesh was itself a sentient disease, a demonic, possessing force from some incomprehensible dimension. Nonsense. Tripe.

The story I believe — that is to say, the story I believe they believe — is that these prodigals discovered that the Way of All Flesh was not a secret taught to us by the Eldest, but was the Eldest itself. We are the flesh of its flesh.

This is heresy among the Sabbat, but an entertaining historical perspective, no matter how deluded. According to the Old Clan, the Eldest placed its seed in us, could reap the knowledge gained from any of us, devouring us from afar. The ancient Metamorphosists would have said that this is not a loss but a blessing, to return to the gestalt of One Flesh. To use the art was to commune with the Shaper and receive its wisdom. Whosoever of the Fiends should attain a new breakthrough, in the understanding of our existence, might cause the Eldest to rise within and take form.

That is why the Old Clan tiptoes away from the mutable art. They felt something staring from behind their eyes. They startled at the phantom tingle and rogue twitches in their limbs. Fearfully, they avoid triggering the enlightenment that they believe will stir a sleeping Antediluvian within their breast.

My apologies, interloper. I laugh. I laugh! You do not comprehend. Within our history, we know that the Tremere

took their first vitae from the Tzimisce. If the Old Clan's fanciful paranoia is true, then the Eldest swims beneath their skin too. They the apple, and it the Conquering Worm.

The Dark Ages

Yorak changed the game. The wise Metamorphosist realized that politics and kingly matters lay outside his expertise. The other Cainite Clans intruded upon the Land Beyond the Forest with their own mortal catspaws, but rather than stemming the tide of the incursion, Yorak and the koldun chose to Embrace the influential members of regional tribes and tasked them with the duties that they themselves had no interest in.

Yorak understood that the wandering Hunnic, Slavic, and Gothic tribes would eventually become the new landholders. He had seen the pattern play out in ages past. By Yorak's direction, Triglav the Three-Headed Embraced Shaagra, and she heralded the Tzimisce practice of claiming stock from noble families and tribal leaders. She was the first of the new breed, Fiends like Radu, Vladymir Rustovitch, and Dracula. Fiends who played the game of crown and scepter better than their sires. The other Clans came expecting cackling sorcerers and incomprehensible Metamorphosists, but we had shattered that mold.

The Dark Ages begot our golden age. Rome crumbled, and we stalked the shadowed wreckage openly. We sat in our castles unafraid and proud, lords and ladies of the night. Our experiments reached new heights. We bred revenant families, and our influence waxed even in the midday sun.

Imagine us then, striding boldly over the land. The kine hung garlic, made wards, and said their prayers. All useless against us. Imagine us. Princes and monsters. Majestic. Terrible. The kine sent us blood offerings. Imagine those nights, the heady nights, the nights of plenty, when all of our bellies were distended. We had to bleed ourselves to make more room! But just as adversity can sharpen, prosperousness can dull. Complacency was the doom of our elders.

The elders spawned too many childer to take care of the tasks deemed mundane. Brood clashed with brood. Domains ruthlessly violated—one of the few transgressions we bother to call a sin. When the elders went to war, they sent the young, chained by the blood bond.

Then came the ash-sucking Usurpers. Covetous of our blood, envious of the magic humming in our land, the Tremere stole immortality and power. The elder Fiends foamed. The elders sent the young.

Enemies came from all sides. Ventrue from the West. Mongols and Gangrel from the East. Assamites and Turks from the South. Teutonic Knights from the North, who brought the burning faith that inspired the kine to renounce the old gods.

Again and again, the elders threw more of their progeny at a problem until it was solved. They cowered in their castles while we fought. They gorged on blood while we spilled vitae. In their decadence, they abused kine until even their cowed, mortal thoughts turned to fire. In their neglect, they stretched the blood bonds that held us until they strained.

Slowly, our resentment built. The elders anchored loyalty with many hooks, and freedom took a long time in the planning.

Kupala's Night

It happened on a night of a swollen, pregnant moon. The sky was ready to burst. Conditions were just right. The fire of the Inquisition burned. Patricia's Anarch Revolt raged. News of the diablerie of the Lasombra Antediluvian spread. The Methuselah Byelobog, weakened from a battle with mortal witch hunters, fell to the fangs of Lugoj Blood-breaker, the first voice of Tzimisce dissent. With all of these events aligned aright, and the maddeningly potent heart's blood boiling in his belly, Lugoj hatched a plot of maximum audacity.

It was a perfect night. Kupala's Eve. Night of immemorial sanctity. Lugoj and his ally Velya the Flayer (later called the Vivisectionist) summoned the Clan's youth to a festivity. Their memories grown feeble, the elders could not recall the night's full significance, and they acquiesced.

We met in the Carpathians. There was a great bonfire. Scores of sacrifice stood bound, like a writhing forest. We all wore our zulo forms, camaraderie in the transcendental flesh. Lugoj stood, with his back to the fire, and held aloft something precious. He said these words:

"This is Kupala's sacred fire-flower, just as the legends say. The search was long and teeming with perils, but the night has no peril as great as we. I found it. Deep amid a holy place of the shapeshifters, I found it. Do you remember what the legends say of this flower?"

We remembered. On that night, of all nights, the sacred flower gave one the authority to bind or free spirits. We howled its name. Kupala! Kupala! We asked but for one favor. Freedom. Bathed in blood, Lugoj leapt through the fire. We all followed after.

The blood bond shattered. When it becomes necessary to utter four words, can you even grasp their significance?

The blood bond shattered. That was the first of the auctoritas ritae. Though the Sect would not form for some time thereafter, that was the night the soul of the Sabbat was born.

Diablerie of the Eldest

Did I say audacity earlier? I invite you to consider true, elemental audacity — the act of reaching out and eating one's own mythology. Imagine swallowing a star. What did it taste like, Lugoj? I would like to ask that, but he lays in the sleep of ages somewhere.

A tome titled *Librum Terram* mentions an ancient monastery that lies far above the town of Sernog, between two spurs of the eastern Carpathians. Cryptic passages mention a "great beast" with "dreams made of flesh and flesh made of dreams." It was here, on the desecrated grounds of the Sernog Monastery, that Lugoj Bloodbreaker and his band of ravening Anarchs came hunting for the Eldest.

Down they went, through a trap door beneath the altar, below the monastery and into incarnate nightmare. The shapes they must have seen. Servants wrought by the hands of the Shaper itself. The battle was vicious, but in the end, Lugoj drank the heart's blood of the Eldest, childe of Ynosh, childe of Caine.

I can only imagine the scene. I was not there, though I have conversed with a few Fiends who were, including Velya and Lambach Ruthven. In point of fact, he was there on Kupala's night. He was there for many things, many great moments. Yet he rarely speaks of any of it. Ask Velya about the Anarch Revolt, and he will pontificate the night away. Ask Lambach about it, and the craven stammers, shivers, and mutters, "I'm being a good lad," as though his tongue might betray him. He travels the world with no purpose, as though chased. A mind decayed by time and turbulence. Historic greatness wasted on a wretch.

Formation of the Sabbat

I must grudgingly admit that the Camarilla was effective in its earliest iteration. It is a surprise they did not wipe us out in the first nights of our newly achieved freedom. We did it to ourselves. We had hunted our elders too effectively, killing or driving away the most powerful members of our Clan. Enemies poured in to fill that vacuum.

Fortunately, another Clan faced similar troubles. We met with the Lasombra on the island of Mallorca. Ideology was discussed, plans made, and, in the end, the Sabbat was formed. Where the Lasombra brought structure and cohesion, the Tzimisce gave the Sabbat its soul. We shared our rites and developed new ones. We refined the Vaulderie and stitched this monstrous Sect together.

The Fiends learned from their earlier mistake and invited what elders remained into the new Sect. A few even joined. Others remained independent, buying off their privacy by giving their revenant families to the Sabbat. We ceased hunting our own elders. We had so many other targets, after all.

Who Was Dracula?

Vlad Tepes. The Impaler Prince. Son of the Dragon. Son of the Devil. Voivode, hero, mass-murderer, romantic figure, savage noble, infernal beast, celluloid villain, Fiend. A thousand faces. Were he of another blood, those faces would be too incongruous to exist in the same person. But he is one of us. Every version of him might be true.

He rose from the seed of the eldest of revenant lines, the Basarab, the lineage of Dacian royalty and Roman legionnaires. Brilliant warriors, ruthless strategists; they were beautiful. Even in breathing, they were near equals to a Cainite. Then came Dracula. He murdered several of us on his road to power, forced the Embrace through torture. The ingenious mortal who taught immortals fear. We had to wipe out his entire revenant line as a lesson. A controversial figure among the Tzimisce, the perfect vampire and the frightful aberration. We admire his audacity, and we condemn it.

Did he know what he was doing, whispering into an Irish author's ear, that night on the dying end of the nineteenth century? Was it boredom, impulse, or methodical design? Whatever his purpose, he worked a subtle and potent art. He broke the shackles of his identity. He tore away the fetters of his homeland and made the entire world his haven. He ascended from a hungry corpse to a devouring zeitgeist and gave birth to the modern age of Cainites.

The Modern Fiend

Azi Dahaka

As a rule, with a few notable exceptions, Tzimisce do not tend toward devoted piety. Why worship some distant god when you can craft yourself into one? Not really a deity. Not really a dogma. Azi Dahaka is the symbol, fetish, and focus of the Clan's transcendentalism.



From the Dracon to Illuyankas, Dracula to the Leviathan, dragons are woven deeply into our mythology. What the kine fear, we aspire towards — not the literal, physical form, but what the dragon represents as harbinger of transformation. We quest for the transcendental, walking the sinuous spiral of Azi Dahaka's coils, gazing into its many mouths and eyes. Where chaos and forever meet in motion, that is where we will find the dragon's beating heart, and we will drink deep.

Metaphor made manifest. Riddle made flesh. Azi Dahaka is the chiropteran cherub of our godless, alien spirituality

Two Handfuls

We are the Tzimisce. We are the deathless lords of man and beast. Spirits tremble at our evocation. Yet, we pay fealty to two handfuls of dirt. How did this happen?

Noddists cite myths in which Caine curses our entire line. Koldun believe it is a debt owed to the spirits of the land. Proud Fiends insist this is neither curse, weakness, nor indebtedness, but a symbol of their connection to the homeland. But which homeland? The world spins, and now every patch of soil calls out to one Clanmate or another. This soil might come from home, their grave, or from some patch of earth otherwise meaningful to the Cainite.

I have another theory. We travel the far vistas of sensation and thought. We leave behind all things familiar — the sun, palpitation, human morality, even our identities and forms. Perhaps the soil is our concession, our one allowed anchor when we sail out into the Dead Water and explore the outer regions of contemplation. Perhaps the Eldest was wise in imposing this rule on his children, as he sent them off to the terrible, alien stratospheres. What would our inward journey cost us without this precaution? Maybe the Malkavians merely forgot to take their two handfuls with them.

Heart and Soul

The Lasombra are the heart of the Sabbat, and the Tzimisce its soul. It is said so often that it becomes a nasty platitude on cold tongues. What does it mean? The Keepers give the Sect structure, such as it is. They make sure the Sword of Cain survives. The Fiends ensure that continued existence has worth. We attend the higher

ideals of unlife, the intellectual, and the spiritual. The Lasombra tend to be Ducti, Cardinals, and Archbishops, while we tend to fill the roles of Prisci, pack priests, and advisors — as a general thing.

We gave the Sabbat its basic social unit, small packs of roaming Cainites united in Vaulderie. The first crude packs formed in Eastern Europe, when young Tzimisce first defied their elders. We invented the process that would later become the Vaulderie. Our pack structure is responsible for the unity of a Sect of predators suited to isolation. Ponder the significance of that. Think about what constitutes the Sabbat, this flapping aviary of horror. The unlikely marriage of Keeper and Fiend, the raging *antitribu*, all the darling bloodlines, the blood-magic-spawned oddities — that we could sculpt a society from this masque of freaks is a miracle. Our miracle.

Fiendish Enlightenment

Eternity is a very long night, and we wrote the deeper questions for monsters to ponder. When the Sabbat was born, we found the ways one might stifle their Beast while still becoming inhuman. Those who did not follow Metamorphosis borrowed the philosophies of other Cainites, perfecting them into the Paths of Enlightenment.

Most Sabbat vampires wallow in the gore-slimed ruins of their former Humanitas. Our whelps are no different. However, there is a seed in every Tzimisce Embrace, a slight advantage, a deep inclination towards illumination beyond human breath. We know that a human is not a truly sentient thing, only the clay that can be refined into something more. There is an itch in our breasts for something other, and we will expose our innards just to scratch.

The Path of Bones: A number of Tzimisce scholars follow this philosophy, though they call it the Path of Death and the Soul. To transcend the limitations of the Hunger and the Beast, these Fiends seek to understand the vast wisdoms hidden in the moment between life and death.

The Path of Caine: While we are not inclined to bowing before father figures, the Noddists' scholarly pursuits in discovering the limits of vampirism does entice some Fiends. The next step is stepping past those limits.

The Path of Cathari: While the Albigensian reliance on a spiritual duality and obsession with tempting mortals seems like a waste of time to many of our Clan, sensation beyond mortal limits does offer entire continents of inner exploration. Sometimes, the temple of excess is the temple of knowledge. Some Exsanguinists take up this path, drowning their hunger by inundating the Beast with every other vice.

The Path of the Feral Heart: While it lacks obvious depth, this path does offer the purity of simplicity. One might explore the nature of being a Cainite from the lowest hierarchy of needs on up. We fashion ourselves dark lords, but we make fine Beasts.

The Path of Honorable Accord: The pageant of alien nobility. What could be more archetypal? The tenants of this path fit well with some of our more ancient traditions of hospitality and conduct. The Old Clan, the Neofeudalists, and some knights of the Dracon find enlightenment here.

The Path of Lilith: Pain and tribulation are the thorny steps to insight. For the Bahari of our Clan, Lilith is less a literal figure to revere and more of an ideal to aspire toward; one of many faces of the Azi Dahaka.

The Path of Night: We usually leave the Lasombra to root about in the lowest depths of human sin. Yet there is the occasional Fiend who joins a Keeper packmate's journey into nihilism. We are ideally suited to tormenting mortals without killing them.

The Path of Power and Inner Voice: Those would-be voivodes who do not find enlightenment as Knights find expression as Unifiers. To be master of man and beast. To make one's underlings quake at your command. What hierarchy remains in the modern Tzimisce Clan is based on personal power and mastery.

Hierarchy, Mouth to Tail

Our Sect and our modern Clan was born in anarchic fury. However, our hierarchy did not die in the fires of Kupala's Night; it was only redefined. Some of our elders who survived the Anarch Revolt later joined the Sabbat. Ancients who slept through the entire fray occasionally awaken. The more things change, the more they stay the same. Our formal structure is not complex, but it is tightly bound in heritage and based and respect for wisdom and merit.

Many a Fiend calls herself "voivode," but this is not to be mistaken for *the* Voivode. This is the most powerful active Tzimisce in the world. When the Ancient went into slumber, Yorak was the first Voivode, and the mold was cast. A potential Voivode must have the endorsement of the Clan elders and must display advanced understanding of Koldunic Sorcery and a Path of Enlightenment.

The zhupans carry the more immediate power through the Clan. They are the wisest, though not necessarily the

oldest. Knowledge and demonstrated ability in battle proves the worth of a zhupan. Other Tzimisce often heed their suggestions, and it is considered rude to ignore a zhupan outright. As per the old laws, one must awaken the zulo shape before attaining this rank.

Factions among Fiends

The Old Clan

Do these oddities know something we do not? What do they think they know? Are they a rare breed holding on to some ancient ideal, or a senile branch of paranoid radicals? Their kolduns are as potent as any, so they do not fear the influence of Kupala. They reject Metamorphosis and all of the arts of fleshcrafting. They refuse the Vaulderie for fear of impurities swimming in the blood. Yet, they are family, and the Sabbat has a tense détente with these old Fiends of Eastern Europe. They are selfish, isolated monsters, but it would be too much trouble to root out such entrenched ancients or force them to change their behavior to better fit the modern Sect's ideals. Better they act as monster to our foolish enemies who step into their demesnes.

In manner, the self-titled Old Clan are like the Fiends of the Dark Ages, post Shaagra's Embrace. The voivodes. The night princes. Scions of a monstrous nobility and cold, vicious honor. They rule in the medieval fashion, each domain containing a single vampire noble and her brood. Rumor says they can play the strings of the blood bond like a harp, manipulating the subtle emotional effects it brings out in their childer and servants. Their traditions are a throwback to a glorious age, but their time is over. They know it. Yet some are not content to go quietly into history. They Embrace young childer, fresh minds, sending them out of the ancestral homes in the Land Beyond the Forest and into the wider world. Are they trying to make contact with the future? Are they even flexible enough to succeed? Or do they enact a more mysterious agenda?

Children of the Dracon

Metamorphosis takes on many odd forms, but none as strange as when seen through the stained glass window of piety. The Children of the Dracon are a monastic order of Fiends, tracing their roots to Constantinople and claiming descent from the first childe of Tzimisce. Flesh is their prayer, sculpting their sacrament, and they seek to find the divinity hidden within themselves and others. Heaven on Earth is just a nip and a tuck away.

The Children of the Dracon reject the influence of Kupala; even refuse to take part in any ritae they believe has ties to koldunic practices. Clan elders do what they can to shield the Children from the political backlash of this refusal. The knightly order exists to atone for some past sin of the Tzimisce. Politically, they act contrary to nearly every major decision of the Clan proper, always sitting as angels or demons upon our shoulders. Their elders prefer the Children to remain active in the Sect, rather than cloistering themselves. The order produces many templars and no few members of the Sabbat Inquisition.

Children of the Dracon often come from the Obertus revenant family. The training is rigorous, and begins while they are still mortal. They travel the globe, learning the 12 legacies of the order, returning to their monastery of origin for the Embrace. If the initiate is an Akoimetai, the scholarly wing of the order, he is entrusted with one volume from the Library of the Forgotten. If a knight, he must carry a letter he is forbidden to open, sealed by the mark of the Dracon himself or some other elder Fiend. Monasteries dot the globe, and often serve as the haven for the local Children.

The Romanian Legacy Foundation

Somewhere, there is a girl scarred with an Anglicized name. She grows with a trace of our blood coursing through her veins. She is talented, intelligent, a prodigy. She is disturbed, prone to bouts of depression and fits of rage. Neighbors find the mutilated bodies of local pets. She had tried to carve something out of them, something she cannot name.

Despite her haunted life, she grows into a natural leader, a fiery brilliance. Yet she is unfulfilled, still cannot find the nameless thing she sought in the flesh of all those dogs and cats. She finds the right classified advertisement or internet site — a nonprofit genealogical organization. After submitting her family tree, she is selected to attend a convention, which leads to a private party at the estate of a distant relative. The scene is a bloody bacchanalia — much of the decadent, much of the terrible. She is unafraid. This is what she sought. Before dawn, when the ceilings drip with gore, she is Embraced. The next night, she is assigned a sponsor and introduced to the society of the Damned.

That is the work of the Romanian Legacy Foundation. Its board of trustees include names such as Bratovitch, Obertus, Grimaldi, and Zantosa, and is composed of Cainites who came from our revenant houses. The Foundation keeps the families in touch, hosts gatherings,

and welcoming revenants into undeath. Such chosen are given something more than a spade to the head and a shallow grave. Not everyone who carries our blood knows it. The Foundation scours the globe for our wayward babes. Globalization has spread the seed of our Clan far, and this new millennium has revealed an exciting harvest of such delicious fruit.

Neofeudalists

Behold the fiendish Don Quixote. A broken anachronism to some, a folk hero to others. Most likely, a bit of both. Not a faction in the strictest sense, but an ideal, an attitude that can bleed into the other factions. It creates strange camaraderie. The Old Clan Fiend and the Metamorphosist, normally at each other's throat, find grudging respect and native pride when they acknowledge their mutual neofeudalist leanings.

The neofeudalists seek a return to the nights of kings and serfs. They claim vast domains, sire large broods, are the most gracious hosts, but demoniacal to any who trespass uninvited. As a point of honor, they are self-sufficient from the Sabbat, whom they are at odds with nearly as often as the Camarilla.

On the cutting edge of today, few espouse this ideal. Fewer still actually live it. Even fewer survive it for long. Seeing such an exemplar causes something resembling admiration to squirm in our wormy hearts. However, nostalgia, even for something so majestic, is still a pathetic, atrophied organ of humanity. Kiss the vestigial hand growing out of your cousin's head, if you must, but know when to break it off.

Exsanguinists

The Eldest explored the terrible vistas of possibility, stared into the transcendentally grotesque, and the only thing that disturbed it was the Hunger. Immortality is relative, and if we truly want to dance with eternity, the Hunger must be conquered. The Exsanguinists understand this. They know that feeding the Hunger only deepens it, only erodes and widens the ravenous well inside us, until all that we are is nothing.

Unlike other blood cults who gorge on gore, the Exsanguinists practice feeding abstinence. This Metamorphosist offshoot has developed ignoblis ritae to avoid drinking blood for as long as possible. They teach meditative techniques. They throw themselves into distraction. If they can increase the length of time between each feeding, perhaps they can unlock the secret to transcend the curse.



They are perpetually on the edge of frenzy. I would not recommend them as pleasant company.

The Oradea League and the Tzimisce Antitribu

Semantics make for a tedious game, but the Tzimisce, by and large, do not bother with terms like "*antitribu*." Though our personal visions, and even our symmetries, may differ, a Fiend is still a Fiend. Most belong to the Sabbat. The rest, particularly the elders, are apolitical.

Not even the Oradea League bandies about the word "*antitribu*." They are an alliance of ancient Tzimisce, powerful fiends who survived the Anarch Revolt. They maintain their feudal lands around the Romanian city of Oradea. A pledge of unity ensures that an outside force attacking one these puissant monsters will face them all. The League has refused to submit to either the Camarilla or Sabbat.

There may be some few individual Tzimisce who have joined the Camarilla. But in a Clan of monsters of such individuality, this notion does not aggravate our vanity as it does the Lasombra. Likely, the motivations of a Fiend walking in the Ivory Tower would be very personal, specific, and temporary, to make them stomach the company of the Warlocks. Perhaps there are Fiends there in hiding. Perhaps they wear faces that are not their own.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Barker

"Step right up!"

You used to travel from town to town, a peddler of the bizarre and grotesque. Ever the showman, your macabre charm brought in the audiences to gaze upon your freak show attractions. Occasionally, you took their blood. Sometimes you kept an audience member and added them to the menagerie.

These days, you lead a more stationary life. You've opened a House of Oddities in the city. Your creations hide in plain sight. This modern world celebrates the grotesque. The gawkers come to you. Why just last week, a small band of thieves tried breaking into your place. The look on their faces when the pickled punks leapt out of the jar to defend you...? Well, that was just priceless.

"Safe home, dear friends, and come again!"

Foreign Exchange Student

You have recently arrived in a new country. You carry the soil of your homeland, but you seek to transcend it. Just as the koldun of the old country commune with the spirits of the earth there, you seek to find the voices in this new soil. You research the lore of this new place. You meditate on the ebb and flow of its energy.

You commune with these new people also. Through Auspex, you peer inside of them. You taste their emotions. You pluck out their joys, fears, character quirks, and idiosyncrasies. You bury these concepts in your brain. You perform mental grave robbery, taking the spare parts to the laboratory in your skull, trying out each intangible trait, grafting them to your psyche in varying combinations. Every night, you let loose a new creation, a new you. Let the other Fiends play at their crude patchwork of flesh. You construct Azi Dahaka in the mind.

Foundation Recruiter

The blood of the revenant families has spread so far and so thin. The right talent and genes can surface almost anywhere in the world. The Romanian Legacy Foundation sends you out to find the descendants of the revenant houses who are now far beyond the ancestral lands. You maintain a Foundation website. You give presentations in hotel convention rooms. You follow emails, birth certificates, genealogy studies – the nearly invisible trail of Tzimisce blood that spans the globe. You conduct interviews. When you find the worthy, you bring them in, saving them from the fate of dying as exceptionally talented mortals.

Lost in the Ivory Tower

The Camarilla took the city. Everyone was destroyed, all of your packmates. Only you remain. Desperate, you took on the face of one of the Ivory Tower Kindred who died in the battle. You tasted his heart's blood and touched just enough of his memories. Somehow, in the chaotic aftermath, the ruse worked.

But what now? All you know is the city. Outside are the Lupines and death. How long can this insane farce continue? You fall deeper and deeper into this stolen identity, Sect, and Clan. The nights go by, and Vinculum is a distant memory. This was only supposed to be a temporary solution.

Old Clan New

You are of the Old Clan, the recent Embrace of an ancient sire. You were chosen because you were born in

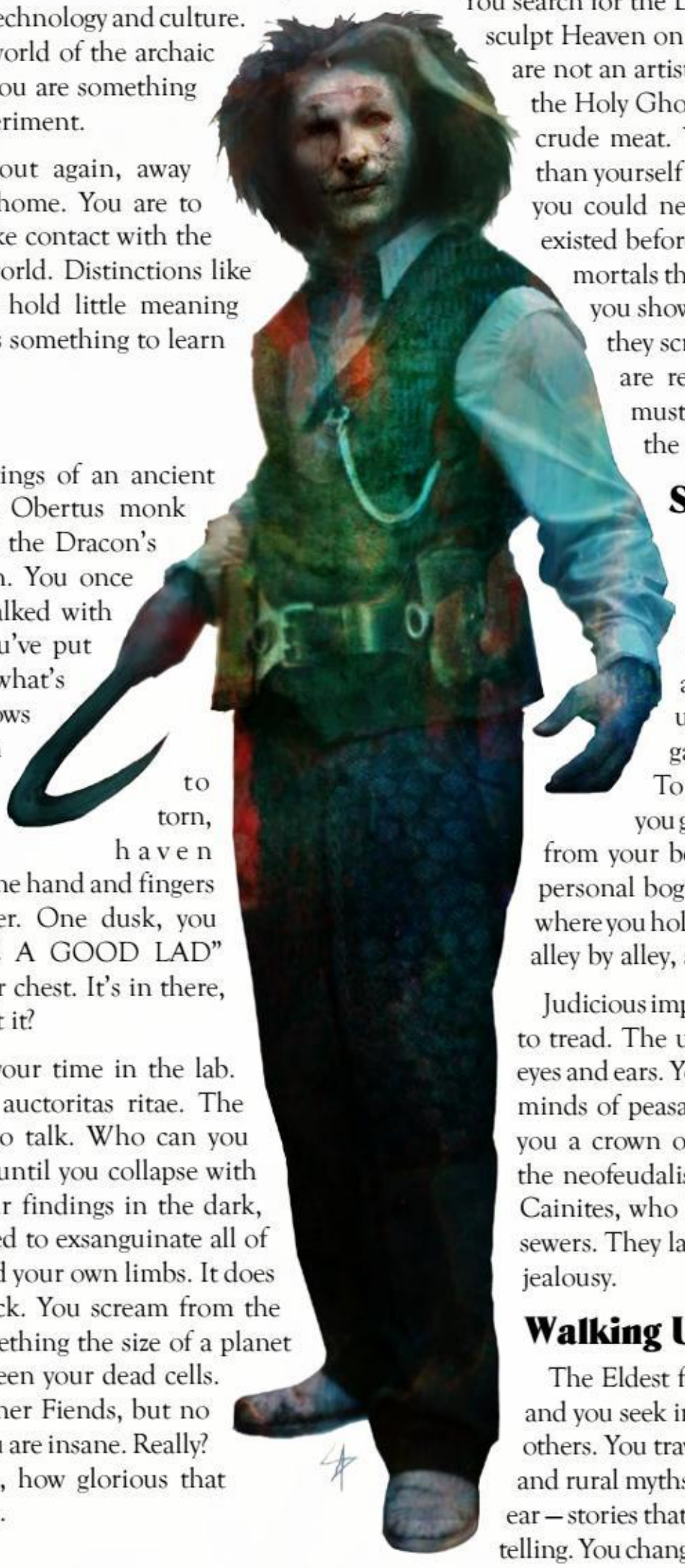
the homeland. You grew up on the old ways, but your curiosity hungers to see the world beyond. The Oradea League realized that history had passed them by, and so they Embraced you. They are so much older than you are, but you are given a measure of respect for your knowledge of modern technology and culture. Walking between the world of the archaic and the cutting edge, you are something new. You are their experiment.

Now you are sent out again, away from your Romanian home. You are to help the Old Clan make contact with the wider, contemporary world. Distinctions like Camarilla and Sabbat hold little meaning to you. Perhaps there is something to learn from both.

Paranoid Fiend

You've read the writings of an ancient of the Old Clan. An Obertus monk preached to you about the Dracon's immaculate conception. You once talked to a guy who talked with Lambach Ruthven. You've put it together. You know what's going on. But now, it knows that you know. It began in small ways. You woke to find your clothing torn, things in your haven rearranged, a knife in one hand and fingers missing from the other. One dusk, you found the words "BE A GOOD LAD" flesh-scrawled into your chest. It's in there, watching you now, isn't it?

Now you spend all your time in the lab. You've missed several auctoritas ritae. The others are beginning to talk. Who can you trust? You experiment until you collapse with the sun. You write your findings in the dark, so it won't see. You tried to exsanguinate all of your vitae. You removed your own limbs. It does no good. No going back. You scream from the hyperawareness of something the size of a planet greasily slithering between your dead cells. You try to warn the other Fiends, but no one listens. They say you are insane. Really? Do they think so? Oh, how glorious that would be if it were true.



Scholar of the Akoimetai

You grew up among the Obertus. You learned the 12 Legacies and were Embraced a Child of the Dracon. You travel the world, in study and pious contemplation. You search for the Divinity Within. You attempt to sculpt Heaven on Earth in the flesh. Your hands are not an artist's hands, but when inspired by the Holy Ghost, you can find godhead in the crude meat. You tap into something bigger than yourself and are able to shape symmetry you could never have imagined, forms that existed before dreams. Sometimes you show mortals this primeval iconography. When you show them your celestial face, when they scream and sweat blood, then you are reminded of why angels always must preface their visitations with the words "Be not afraid."

Shabby Voivode

You are the land. You claimed a particularly opulent mausoleum in the city cemetery as your manor. You took in the homeless as your subjects. Democracy had used and discarded them, and you gave them something more pure. To the few exceptional transients, you gave the sacrament of your blood, from your bent chalice, making them your personal bogatyri. You control the city park where you hold court, but your demesne grows alley by alley, shelter by shelter.

Judicious impaling taught the gangs where not to tread. The urban birds and beasts are your eyes and ears. Your word is law in the hearts and minds of peasants. Your loving subjects made you a crown of barbed-steel thorns. You live the neofeudalist ideal better than your fellow Cainites, who hide in penthouses or skulk in sewers. They laugh at you, but it must be from jealousy.

Walking Urban Legend

The Eldest found transcendence in dreams, and you seek inspiration in the dark dreams of others. You travel the country, collecting urban and rural myths — stories passed from mouth to ear — stories that live, crawl, and evolve with each telling. You change with the stories too, fashioning

yourself into the monsters. You are a hook-handed killer. You are the bleeding woman who appears in the darkened mirror. You are the chupacabra. You enact the gory legends, enriching the dead water soil in the nightmares of the kine.

Sometimes you focus on one legend, refining the minutia of its image as you travel. You find Metamorphosis through the nuanced regional differences you discover from town to town, forced evolution along the road.

Scary stories are fun when you're dead!

Weaver

You wield your bone shears with the gentle grace of an artist. The miracles you can work with human leather. The osseous jewelry. The bioluminescent gown. The still-living great coat, kept alive with vitae, covered in eyes that still blink. The flesh and bone coffin you designed for the Archbishop herself that lovingly opens for her, every dawn, with the deliberation of a Venus flytrap.

For all the Sabbat's talk of transcending human customs, they still preen like demon peacocks when they gather. Shock and awe. You give that to them. You are in high demand. You give them post-human fashion — post-mundane. Not just garments; you give them designer ghouls and designer selves. The packs strive to be monsters, reach for freakishness, but many do not have the skill to truly transform. The poor dears. Why should the Fiends be the only ones to experience Metamorphosis? Your Clanmates are so self-centered. You were always extroverted. You want to share. You want to give.

Merits and Flaws

Bioluminescence (1pt. Merit)

Perhaps through biological expertise, or perhaps by unlocking something primordial within, you have accessed the secrets of bioluminescence. Using the Vicissitude, you may grant yourself (through Malleable Visage) or others (via Fleshcraft — both as per **V20**, p. 241) the ability to emit a soft glow. With muscle control and practice, you can control the color and pattern of the illumination. This can light a soft glow in the dark, create beautiful displays, or even act as a primal form of communication. Some Fiends grant their ghouls or childer bioluminescence, developing an eerily nuanced and wordless language with their thralls and broods. Only characters with at least one dot of Vicissitude may purchase this Merit.

Pain Tolerance (2pt. Merit)

Maybe you are a badass or shut off your nerves through Vicissitude. Maybe your sire put you through so many intricate hells that it would be tough for anyone else to compete. Maybe it just turns you on. Regardless, at Hurt or Injured, you suffer no wound penalties, though you still suffer full penalties at Wounded and below. You must have a Conviction or Courage rating of 3 or more to take this Merit.

Dracon's Temperament (3pt. Merit)

You emulate the ideal of Azi Dahaka within and without, to levels visceral and abstract. Your psyche flows with the permutable nature of change. Like the protean Dracon, you are a whirlwind of temperaments. This is not multiple personalities. You are one identity shown through the prism of ever-shifting Natures. No anchor fetters your sense of self. You can be any you.

At the start of each story, you may choose one Personality Archetype to function as your Nature, spending the rest of the story perceiving the world through that perspective. You also regain Willpower according to your new Nature and may be affected by other effects or Discipline powers as per your new Nature as well.

Haven Affinity (3pt. Merit)

You are the land. The land is you. The home soil calls to you. You give to it, and it gives to you. Your connection to the earth of your prime haven grants you an extra die to all dice pools when operating there. It also acts as a mystic beacon, allowing you to home in on its location with a standard Perception + Survival roll (difficulty 6), +1 difficulty when a state or country separates you; +2 if you're halfway across the globe. This applies only to your primary haven.

Revenant Disciplines (3pt. Merit)

The blood of your revenant family runs deep, deeper than the Embrace. The Disciplines that were innate to you as a ghoul have remained so as a Cainite. At character creation, select the ghoul family from which you hail (**V20**, pp. 503-506). Instead of the Tzimisce's standard complement of Animalism, Auspex, and Vicissitude, you draw from your three family Disciplines for your starting allocation (though you may buy other Disciplines with freebies, as normal). You trade in the entire set of Tzimisce Clan Disciplines for the set of revenant family Disciplines, for the purposes of in-Clan Experience cost.

Promethean Clay (5pt. Merit)

Your flesh ripples and molds itself to your preternatural will, almost before you consciously invoke the change. The difficulty to use any Vicissitude power on yourself is two less than normal, and you may activate Vicissitude powers

reflexively at your full dice pool while taking other actions. Powers that require multiple turns to activate still require the usual duration. The change simply occurs without conscious direction. As a final benefit, you need no physical sculpting to use the first three levels of Vicissitude on yourself, as your flesh undulates and extrudes to its desired shape. Only characters with at least one dot of Vicissitude may purchase this Merit.

Unblinking (1pt. Flaw)

Your eyes do not close. Ever. Perhaps you have left your humanity too far behind to upkeep such habits, or perhaps you fleshcrafted some form of transparent eye-scale or nictitating membrane. Your quirk probably makes astute observers uncomfortable, adding +1 to the difficulty of friendly social interactions with humans, Kindred on Humanity, and others with mortal sensibilities.

Ancestral Soil Dependence (2pt. Flaw)

Your flesh yearns for a homeland you have never seen. The voice of Kupala punishes your day sleep if this yearning is not met. The soil from a place important to you as a mortal will not suffice; in addition, you require two handfuls of the tainted Eastern European soil of the ancestral Tzimisce homeland. This Trait mostly commonly manifests in the childer of koldun and the branch of the Clan thought to be descended from Yorak. It can even manifest in childer sired generations after their ancestors relocated. Characters Embraced in Eastern Europe can't take this Flaw (they're already dependent on the local soil).

Faceless (3pt. Flaw)

You have escaped the tyranny of physical self-identity. Call no face your own. Every sunset, you awaken to a new visage, an amalgam pieced together from memory and dream. Your features, ethnicity, even gender become fluid things while you sleep. While this Flaw exemplifies the extreme ideals of Azi Dahaka (and should impress most Metamorphosists), it can cause complications for vampire concerned with maintaining recognition, reputation, or a mortal alias.

Every sundown, the player rolls one die and is subject to the results on the following table:

Roll	Result
1	No change.
2-3	Minor changes, somewhat recognizable.
4-8	Unrecognizable by even those closest to the character (such as her packmates or sire). Ethnicity and gender may change.
9-10	Total metamorphosis. Tentacles, bone spikes, or other inhuman features may appear.

This Flaw affects some Backgrounds (**V20**, p. 110). Without a stable face, Alternate Identity and Fame cannot be maintained. Backgrounds like Allies, Contacts, Influence, and Status might be complicated by the lack of a solid identity as well. The vampire can use Malleable Visage and a mirror to reconstruct her true face from memory, but this requires at least three successes at difficulty 8 to make her recognizable, and five successes for a flawless copy.

The Mistaken Identity Flaw (**V20**, p. 450) cannot be taken. Other Merits/Flaws may be affected, at the Storyteller's discretion. Characters must have at least one dot of Vicissitude to take this Flaw.

Privacy Obsession (3pt. Flaw)

Perhaps it is a trait carried in the blood. Perhaps your strict sire carved this lesson into your mind and flesh. Either way, you carry the Tzimisce respect for privacy to extremes. You must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) to enter another being's dwelling without being invited, though you can go to fiendishly clever lengths to garner an unwitting invitation. When disturbed in your haven by an uninvited guest, you must make a Self-Control or Instincts roll (difficulty 7) to avoid frenzy.

Revenant Weakness (3pt. Flaw)

You were once part of a revenant family. Following the Embrace, you suffered both your Clan's weakness and your revenant family's limitation (**V20**, pp. 503-506). The Storyteller might let you manifest a weakness from a lost or destroyed revenant line. This could add mystery to your background and allow for a bit of genealogical detective work, certainly making you a curiosity to the Romanian Legacy Foundation.

Consumption (5pt. Flaw)

There is something hungry inside of you. But what is it? Portions of the Antediluvian? Your Vicissitude gone horribly wrong? Whatever it is, it is active, acting like a cancer, devouring you from the inside out. Your very blood is wrought with corrosive, flesh-eating bacteria. At the beginning of each evening, you suffer one health level of lethal damage that cannot be soaked nor healed with blood. The only way to counteract the effect is by ingesting one-tenth of your body-weight in flesh to supplement your depleted carcass. Whether you kill and devour the skin from humans or raid the biohazard containers of liposuction clinics for siphoned fat, you need your ration of human flesh in order to survive. If you try and ingest this macabre meal before damage is done, you'll simply vomit it out like any other food — this does not impart the benefits of the Eat Food Merit.



Discipline Powers

Eye of the Szlachta (Animalism ••••• •)

Many Fiends can possess the lowly beasts of the wild, but some few can ride any ghoul who shares their blood. By locking eyes with her ghoul, the Fiend can transfer her soul into the creature. Although some Tzimisce consider such intimate contact with their servants distasteful, sometimes it is necessary to calm a rampaging vozhd in a disposable vessel. More than one Fiend has faked their death in the body of a cleverly fleshcrafted ghoul.

System: Use the system for the Animalism power Subsume the Spirit (**V20**, pp. 131-132).

Flesh Bond (Animalism ••••• ••••)

At this level of Animalism, the vampire develops an extraordinary bond with the "lower" creatures. She can now physically merge with animals, becoming one flesh.

System: With a roll of Stamina + Animal Ken (difficulty 7), the character can absorb smaller animals into his very being. She may release the animals at will. Each creature thus absorbed forces the character to spend one of his blood points for every five points in the animal's blood pool (see **V20**, pp. 388-391, for some examples); a character can thus bond with 20 rats — each of which is worth 1/4 a blood point — by spending one of her own blood points. The vampire cannot feed to regain any blood points spent in this manner until the character releases the animals. At any time, the character can ingest the absorbed creatures, acquiring their collective blood pool. The exsanguinated corpses of the animals are then spat out of the vampire's body.

While the character cannot physically absorb a larger creature, she can meld his body with such a creature by making a successful Stamina + Animal Ken roll (difficulty 7) and spending one blood point. Thus, she can merge her body into that of a charging Kodiak bear and move around during the day within it. Note that the character has no control over the animal with which she has merged unless she has also used Subsume the Spirit (**V20**, p. 131) upon it.

A successful use the Aura Perception (**V20**, p. 135) upon a character or creature who has "riders" will notice an unusual tinge to the subject's aura.

Ecstatic Agony (Vicissitude ••••• •)

Pain is transformative. Pain awakens primal potential in the tortured flesh. A Fiend with this ability delights in every slash of the blade and caress of bullet, transmogrifying agony into physical prowess and incredible displays of Caine's Gifts.

System: After spending two Willpower points, the character becomes empowered by pain. Add his wound penalties to all non-reflexive actions involving a Physical Attribute or use of a Discipline. As the character heals, this bonus wanes. Treat Incapacitated and Final Death normally. This power lasts for one scene.

Kraken's Kiss (Vicissitude ••••• ••)

The Fiend's face erupts into a mass of tentacles, a foot in length and similar to that of a squid. These tentacles can be used to grasp and constrict a foe. Moreover, in place of a squid's suckers are rows and rows of fanged, drooling mouths, permitting incredibly rapid blood drain.

System: The vampire spends a Willpower point and rolls Stamina + Medicine (difficulty 8). Success enables formation of the tentacles with no loss of sensory abilities. The tentacle mass can be used in melee (difficulty 5; Strength +2 damage). A successful hit indicates a grab. Feeding begins on the same turn as the initial grab, and for each success scored on the attack roll, one additional blood point can be drained from the victim each turn, as dozens of mouths bite and suck. To break the grip, the victim must score three more successes than the vampire in an extended contest of Strength.

Combination Disciplines

Birth the Vozhd (Animalism ••••• •, Vicissitude ••••• •)

While the creation of vozhd was once the sole province of koldunic ritual, Tzimisce who have mastered both fleshcrafting and control of the Beast Within can build vozhd as well. This power requires at least 15 ghouls (although 20 or more is preferable). First, the Tzimisce fleshcrafts the ghouls together, forging the bodies into a single entity. The Fiend feeds the corporate mess a concoction of the intermingled blood of the ghouls, creating something like a Vinculum among them. This bond in place, the Fiend uses Animalism to coalesce the minds of the ghouls into one insane and imperfect Beast that drives the vozhd to crush or devour everything in sight.

System: After the Tzimisce collects enough ghouls, roll her Intelligence + Medicine (difficulty 9) to determine how quickly she constructs and "masters" the vozhd. With one success, the process takes as long as a year; with five, it might only take a month. The Fiend can make further Vicissitude modifications to his creation; raise the difficulties of such Discipline rolls by two to reflect the size and complexity of the creature. Botches result in a nonviable dead creature or a frenzied, uncontrollable vozhd. Also note that vozhd, driven by their flawed Beasts, are notoriously difficult to control. Raise the difficulty of all Animalism rolls involving a vozhd by three.

This power costs 36 experience points to learn.

Body Armory (Protean •••, Vicissitude •••)

This power enables the vampire to form wicked weapons from her own body. The vampire may create sword blades, axes, and even spiked mauls. These weapons do terrible damage to their targets. Many Tzimisce make sword-arms, knife-bladed knuckles, and the like, but more dramatic implementations are possible.

System: This power costs two blood points per weapon (though larger weapons like two-handed swords and great axes cost four), and the player must roll Dexterity + Medicine (difficulty 7). Each weapon takes two turns to form (larger weapons take three turns). Weapons created in this manner cause aggravated damage.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Chaining the Beast (Animalism •••, Dominate •)

As lords of the land, able to influence the minds of humans and animals alike, the Fiend gains special insight into controlling and cowing even the Beast. The Tzimisce can now Dominate a frenzied vampire more easily.

System: This power allows the player to use the Dominate Discipline (see **V20**, p. 151) on a vampire suffering frenzy or Rötschreck and ignore the normal penalties for doing so (**V20**, p. 297).

This power costs 16 experience points to learn.

Ears of the Bat (Auspex •, Vicissitude •)

The vampire grows long, pointed ears and achieves echolocation, much like a bat. She can "see" in pitch

darkness and that sense extends 360° around her, leaving no blind spots for would-be ambushers to exploit.

System: The player must spend a blood point and roll Intelligence + Medicine (difficulty 7). While manifesting the ears, the character gains -3 difficulty on all hearing rolls and suffers a +1 difficulty to all Social rolls with mortals unless she takes steps to hide her ears.

This power costs 6 experience points to learn.

Flaying Touch (Potence ••, Vicissitude ••)

With this cruel power, a Tzimisce can tear away a victim's skin as easily as removing a robe, all without disturbing the muscles and other tissue beneath. The Fiend simply grabs a handful of skin and pulls it away or surgically slices it with the artful caress of a fingertip. Regardless of the method used, the target suffers excruciating pain and begins bleeding profusely from the exposed flesh. Even if a target somehow survives the blood loss, the area of skinless flesh soon becomes infected. Even Cainites suffer under this agony, though they do not have to fear blood loss.

System: This power requires the same roll as a conventional use of Fleshcraft, though the difficulty is always one higher than normal (maximum difficulty 9). The vampire need not restrain the victim as long as he strikes exposed skin (requiring a Dexterity + Brawl roll as usual), in which case the activation roll is reflexive. Each success inflicts one level of lethal damage, which may be soaked (if the victim can soak such damage) at difficulty 8. If the damage exceeds the victim's Stamina, she can only writhe and scream in pain for the rest of the turn.

Mortal victims continue bleeding profusely from their exposed skin, suffering a number of levels of bashing damage each minute equal to the initial damage. Once any of the original damage is healed or the wound is stanched (Dexterity + Medicine, difficulty 9), the bleeding slows to one level of damage per hour. Only when the original injury is completely healed does the bleeding stop.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Soul Decoration (Auspex ••, Obfuscate •••)

The body and soul are linked. Outer change brings inner change (and vice versa). The body's experiences can be summed up in the aura, but this phenomenon is the product of physical forces. By physically adjusting certain locations on the body — chakras, joints, erogenous zones, and the like — a Tzimisce with this power can "paint" whatever aura he chooses. The aura artist uses tools such as needles, clamps, and electric shock to work such change.

System: Aura crafting is a sensitive and precise art and requires at least ten minutes of uninterrupted work. After spending three Willpower points, the player makes a Perception + Empathy roll. The difficulty of this roll is equal to the subject's current Willpower — stronger personalities resist alteration. The number of successes indicates how completely the aura can be changed to the Tzimisce's specifications.

Successes	Result
1	Can alter primary color
2	Can alter secondary color
3	Can alter psychological state (frenzied, psychotic, etc.)
4	Can conceal or falsify diablerie and magic use
5	Can conceal or falsify natural condition (vampire, shapeshifter, ghost, etc.)

The deception lasts one night per success. During this time, the aura doesn't change to reflect new conditions in its owner. This power changes only the aura, not the subject herself. At the Storyteller's discretion, the subject may feel token emotions to match her new colors. She might feel somewhat distrustful if her aura was painted light green, for instance.

This power costs 21 experience points to learn.

The False Drink (Auspex •, Vicissitude •••••)

Some independent elder Fiends who pay lip service to the Sabbat developed this trick. Using a heightened self-awareness and vitae control, the Tzimisce is able to divert imbibed blood to a discrete cavity within her body. The compartmentalized blood is not absorbed into the vampire's system, and thus, the blood bond or Vinculum can be secretly avoided. The vampire can then vomit up the unwanted blood at her leisure.

System: Upon drinking the blood, the player must roll Intelligence + Medicine (difficulty 8). Failure means the vampire accidentally absorbs the imbibed blood as normal, affecting any blood bond or Vinculum as per normal. Botching the roll causes the vampire to vomit the imbibed blood, along with half of her own blood pool, in a messy spray.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Wound Sculpting (Fortitude •••, Vicissitude ••)

A vampire with this power may vastly accelerate her healing by concentrating and willing flesh to mold back to its original form.

System: The player spends one blood point and rolls Wits + Medicine (difficulty 8). Each success heals one level of lethal or bashing damage. Each wound level requires one minute of uninterrupted work.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.




Veritatem
Re In

Ventrue

"Power, like a desolating pestilence, pollutes whate'er it touches."

— Percy Bysshe Shelley, Queen Mab

An Evening at Boodle's

Officially, Boodle's did not admit women, and for living women, that was certainly true. Even among unliving women, Boodle's was discriminating, but the stature of the ladies of Clan Ventrue was such in London that not even policies that dated back to the Regency could bar them entrance. Therefore, it was that Euphemia Langton ("Fee" to her friends) — whose son had been the first Baron Darcy de Darcy before he got his head chopped off over some bit of religious nonsense — reclined on a fainting couch in one of Boodle's private meeting rooms. Few of the mortal club members knew it, but there were actually several private entrances and secret passages in the venerable gentleman's club, entrances installed just to facilitate the admittance of Ventrue ladies of good standing who needed discreet places to meet with their peers, their ghoul servants, or simply people of importance who needed "adjustment." The Baroness (for the Ventrue of London had granted her in death the peerage her son had squandered in life) knew all the secret ways in and out of Boodle's. She did own the place, after all.

Across from the Baroness sat the object of her current attentions: Colonel Arthur Basingstoke, a Ventrue of some importance who was 300 years and two Generations her junior. These deficiencies were outweighed by the ancilla's utility, for he was a student of history and politics and was generally someone who knew things. Information was his stock in trade, and it was so valuable to Clan Ventrue that they overlooked his more... unsavory associations. After all, someone had to work with Nosferatu on a regular basis, or who knew what mischief they'd get into.

To Fee's right was the young Lick she'd introduced to Arthur as Ethan Marshall, her youngest childe. He looked to be in his late-twenties, as he sat quietly trying not to show his insecurity. Basingstoke knew the fledgling had not been introduced to the court, and indeed, had not been introduced to any of the city's Ventrue. Accordingly, he assumed that Fee had picked him to test the whelp and see if he could sit in front of his peers without picking his nose or anything. It was daring if the boy had been anything less than a quarter-century dead, but he supposed that the Baroness wanted to accelerate her newest childe's training. Thus far, Ethan had been tolerable. He'd made small talk competently, and hadn't looked overtly bored at any point. He'd even made an insightful comment about Brujah involvement in several recent political protests.

"Arthur, darling," she said languidly. "I would love to continue our conversation shortly, but I have some minor business to address with one of the club members before it grows too late." She hesitated and then smiled in a reasonable simulation of warmth. "While I'm gone, might I impose upon you to share the benefits of your wisdom with young Ethan here? I have instructed him mainly on practical concerns, but I confess I have neglected his education on Clan history and politics. Perhaps you might fill in some of the gaps in his education."

Arthur favored her with Smile #17 ("Mildly Condescending Yet Still Chivalrous"). He was aware that most of Boodle's regulars were part of her herd. Her vitae of necessity could come from any peer of the realm, but she preferred men and women who'd actually done something to deserve the honor instead of the latest minor celebrity to receive an O.B.E.

"I would be delighted, dear lady. Shall I begin with the founding of Londinium?" His joviality masked his curiosity. He assumed she was laying a trap, though likely not a deadly one. But for him? Or for her childe, the naïf next to her who still hadn't figured out how to blink properly?

"Oh, no, Arthur," she exclaimed mischievously. "Much farther back than that! He wants to learn mythology!"

"Ah," Arthur replied. "The First City it is, then."

• • •

"Did it go well?" Fee asked, as she and her "childe" sped through the London night in the back of her limousine.

Ethan's face instantly settled into one of determination and intelligence, discarding his naïve persona. "A bit too well, I'm afraid. I pushed too hard towards the end, and he deduced that I wasn't really a neonate but an older Kindred pumping him for information. Then, he started ranting about the Secret Masters before storming out. It was my mistake, and does not reflect on the intelligence you provided about the good Colonel. If we decide to recruit him, I can hopefully repair the damage later. On behalf of the Justicar, I thank you once again for providing cover for my interview."

"Is he dangerous, Archon?" There was no fear in her voice, just curiosity.

"Only to himself, Strategos Langton. As you said, he collects secrets, apparently without regard to the risks they carry. He knows about the Baali. He knows about the Red Question. His theories about the origins of the Clans are insightful. I suspect he even knows the truth about Hardestadt, and he does believe in the Daeva."

She snorted. "Then he is a wise man. The kine have a saying, Archon. 'Just because you're paranoid, doesn't mean that no one is out to get you.'"

They said nothing on the rest of the ride. There was nothing else to say.

A Brief History of Kings

Let me begin by making it perfectly clear that the history I now relate is largely a load of rubbish — the short version of a history that is commonly accepted as true, by Kindred both in our Clan and outside it, but for which there is absolutely no evidence or veracity. There are no reliable records of the First or Second Cities, and damn little in the way of records of any kind pertaining to the Ventrue that date to before the Roman Empire. The *Book of Nod* and its companion works are most commonly encountered in the form of fourth century Latin texts, which were translations of Greek scrolls, which were translations of Egyptian hieroglyphics, etcetera, etcetera, until you get back to dead language translations of other dead languages.

With those caveats in mind, what is *accepted* about our origins is as follows. In the beginning, there was Caine, the chap from the Bible who killed his brother and was then "punished" by a capricious God with immortality, indestructibility, and an array of supernatural powers. Caine then traveled to the mythical land of Nod, eventually finding his way to an early human settlement that our histories call "Enoch." He seized control and expanded Enoch into the first settlement that could plausibly be called a city. Along the way, he Embraced the members of the Second Generation, who numbered three, five, or six, depending on who you ask.

Sic Transit Ventrue

That, according to the tale, is where we come in. Caine encountered a human of exceptional intellect, charisma, and competence — a man called Ventrue. So impressed was Caine by Ventrue's qualities that the First Vampire compelled one of his childer to Embrace Ventrue as the first member of the Third Generation, and then appointed the neonate to serve as his seneschal and to rule in his stead on those occasions when Caine left the First City for whatever reasons possessed him.

Since you are someone I selected for the Embrace and therefore are not stupid, I assume you see the gap in logic in the previous paragraph. If Caine had really been that impressed with Ventrue, he'd have Embraced the Founder himself rather than delegating the task to one of the Second Generation. After all, if Ventrue was truly the first Kindred of the Third Generation, then that means Caine couldn't have known for sure that his own childer would have the power to Embrace childer of their own. Ventrue might well have died from a failed Embrace.

The simple truth (to the extent that we Kindred traffic in truths) is that the commonly recited story is a fiction intended to artificially elevate the Founder and, by extension, our Clan to a position of authority over our rivals. There isn't even any reliable proof that Ventrue was the Founder's real name, let alone that he was favored above the rest of the Third Generation. There's a persistent urban legend among the Anarchs suggesting that "Ventrue" is actually Norman French for "fat pig." It's not, in either Norman French or any other known language. It *is* what we've called ourselves for 6,000 years or so. Writings left behind by Arak of Ur suggest that he and his peers self-identified as "Ventrue" as early as 3800 B.C.E.

I'm told the late Prince Mithras, who was supposedly of the Fourth Generation, named his sire as Veddhartha, but that is unconfirmed and, in any case, Mithras, his sire, or both may have committed diablerie to reduce their own Generations. It's not as if Mithras would have admitted it if he had. The origin story passed down from Ventrue elder to Ventrue childe over the last few millennia is a transparent fiction designed to afford our Clan a stature from which we may assert dominance over the others.

I'm sure I don't have to explain why that's not an opinion you should share too freely. The story is obviously untrue to sensible Kindred. *Less* sensible Kindred will accept all kinds of nonsense about Caine and the Antediluvians if their elders or superiors insist upon such belief, if such beliefs are important to their self-esteem, or if they're simply stupid. You may find the Founder's origin improbable. I certainly do. The fact remains that, except for the Tremere and the Giovanni, *every* Clan subscribes to a monomyth in which their founder was Caine's favorite, and it was all the other Clans that ruined everything. And as silly as it is to us here in the twenty-first century to contemplate such fantasies, never forget that there are Brujah, Assamites, Setites, Tzimisce and many, many others who will *kill* you for no other reason than institutional hatred of our Clan arising from imagined slights that took place 10,000 years ago in a likely fictitious city.

Fall, Rise, and Fall Again

However it happened, the First City fell and the Second City built its foundation on the First City's ashes. It was briefly a utopia — for some inscrutable definition of "utopia" — because Ventrue and his childer were in charge, which is exactly what most of the other Clans say about their own founders. Truth be told, do *you* think anyone other than a Ventrue could have run a city in which all 13 Clans were represented?

Anyway, there are scores of legends about who truly ruled the Second City and who betrayed it to its doom. The players swap roles depending on who the author is. I'd considered editing all the Noddist folk tales I've encountered into a book, but I suppose it's too much a threat to the Masquerade. Plus, who knows what deranged assassins such heresy would draw out of the woodwork? Leave that to hardy fools like that Gangrel Beckett to contemplate. Regardless, the only real point of similarity in all these stories was that the city fell and Caine supposedly came back just long enough to curse the Third Generation in a variety of arbitrary ways.

More nonsense, of course. What is a "curse," after all? We Ventrue become fixated on a particular strain of vitae. Pretty things easily distract the Toreador. How are those "curses" compared to the Nosferatu becoming so hideous that they can't be seen in public and the Malkavians all being as mad as hatters?

Personally, I think many of the so-called Clan curses were most likely imposed on the Clans later. There is a gap of between 4,000 and 7,000 years between the fall of the Second City and the accepted beginnings of human history. All sorts of things could have happened, leading the Antediluvians to impose conditions on their own offspring or those offspring cursing one another. For example, there's a rather novel theory that the Toreador founder can see through the eyes of all of her descendants and she compels them to stare vapidly at anything they found aesthetically pleasing so that she can while away eternity being entertained by the spectacle.

As for our own "curse," one fable suggests that Ventrue believed that his childer should not feed indiscriminately, but instead should exclusively feed from some class of mortals that speak to our individual characters. In that way, each Ventrue holds himself out as a connoisseur rather than a common predator. It's as plausible as any other explanation.



I suppose I should also note at this point that as Ventrue himself was leaving the city, the Brujah founder ambushed and committed diablerie on him. That, incidentally, would be the first of three pseudo-historical incidents in which the Ventrue founder was said to have been murdered and diablerized by someone. The most recent was supposed to have happened in the fifteenth century, though that is probably a garbled story about the attempted assassination of Hardestadt, who was so powerful and influential that some especially ignorant Brujah think he *was* Ventrue under a false identity. As for the Enochian tales, they're so vague that it's not even clear whether Ventrue's alleged killer was the original Brujah founder or Troile, Brujah's traitorous childe, who supposedly diablerized him. Or her. The Brujah are even less clear about their myths than we are.

But what is *truly* important about Enoch, the bit I think it's *vitally* important for you to remember, is this: whether he truly ruled Enoch or not, I believe that Ventrue was important to it. I believe that whatever else the Second City was, it was a place where Ventrue and his allies and childer tried to dig into the mud of a Bronze Age culture and *build* something enduring. And others came along and burned it down out of pure spite. Whatever other lessons you take from our storied history, young man, remember that whatever you try to build, you will encounter others who will try their damnedest to tear it down, just because they can.

Gloria Romani

Which takes us conveniently to Rome, which was also torn down by our enemies. Between the fall of the Second City and the rise of Rome, the ancients of our Clan experimented with different approaches to conquest, domination, and empire building. Arak-Ur, Mithras, Cret, Medon, Tanit, Artemis, and other members of the Fourth and Fifth Generations forged great city-states in Sumer, Phoenicia, Babylon, and Greece. Those worthies ruled their cities either from behind the scenes or as god-kings, particularly in Sparta, which Artemis shaped in the guise of the city's patron goddess. That approach violated the Masquerade, of course, but mortals were more credulous in those days, and the Masquerade was still embryonic. The god-king approach employed by Artemis and others were failed experiments, but noble ones. It would ironically take the excesses of the Carthaginian Brujah to fully teach us the dangers of ruling too openly.

The most important of those ancient builders, however, were Collat and his childe, Camilla. It was Collat who transfigured the Etruscan Kingdom into the Roman Republic, and it was Camilla who forged that republic into an empire. By all accounts, Collat met his end at the hands of the Order of Mercury, a cabal of priest-mages who were the duo's chief rivals in the governance of Rome. Naturally, there were the usual accusations of patricide and diablerie from Camilla's enemies. Honestly, it's yet another thing that *no one really knows*. It has been 2,500 years after all, and no one reliable took notes.

Anyway, Camilla became the Prince of Rome, and would remain so until he entered torpor sometime around the fifth century C.E. His innovation, pioneered by his sire, was to decline to seek direct power, whether through being worshiped as divine or through bullying mortals with supernatural powers. Instead, Camilla was *subtle*. He traded favors for favors, both with Kindred and with mortals who had no idea of his nature. He gave boons to those who aided him and spent *decades* plotting against those who had balked him and failed to make it up in some way. The rules of *dignitas* were still developing, but in a real sense, Camilla invented what we refer to tonight as prestation.

Through those subtle techniques, Camilla fashioned Rome into a sword and sharpened its blade to a razor's edge. Moreover, he used that fine weapon for the noblest of purposes — to utterly destroy the evil of his time: Carthage.

Delenda Est

Does that surprise you? That I should use a word as provocative as "evil" to describe an entire culture? Then you know nothing of the vampires of Carthage. Look up the city on the Internet. You *are* aware of the phenomenon called Wikipedia, aren't you? Research the history of Carthage, a city where mortals willingly threw their babes into furnaces to propitiate the pagan god Moloch. Now contemplate what must have *actually* been happening, given the existence of a Masquerade that has spent centuries whitewashing the truth. The Brujah fools of today claim that Carthage was a city where Kindred and kine lived in harmony. I suppose that's so, if you define "harmony" to mean that the mortals didn't even try to fight back when vampires snatched their loved ones up and drained them dry with nary a thought.

The "harmony" of Carthage was that of an obedient death cult. Carthage was an abattoir, made worse because it represented the last time that an Antediluvian openly walked the Earth. Brujah, or Troile, or whatever its name was... *That One* ruled Carthage and was the author of its horrors. And the forces brought to bear by Camilla and the Roman Ventrue *brought That One down*, buried that ancient horror beneath the sands of Tunisia, and salted the earth so that it would never rise again. Whatever sins you are ever accused of as a result of your Ventrue heritage, never forget that the blood of those who burned Carthage runs in your veins.

Needless to say, the Brujah of today cannot even understand why they should be ashamed of their history, let alone recognize what they owe us for not exterminating them to the last for their tainted heritage. And they *are* tainted. I said before that I thought the curses levied against the Clans came after the fall of the Second City. For the Brujah, I am certain that is true. The mindless rage the Brujah feel? We did that to them. It is the fury of their founder, the blood-god of Carthage who lies trapped forever beneath the sands, screaming through the blood of its offspring.

The Age of Princes

But enough about such lurid affairs. Rome fell, as all things must. Camilla fought torpor as long as he could, but after a millennium, sleep claimed him, and he had left no mechanisms to ensure continuity of control in his absence. His allies fell to infighting — understandably so, for he had been forced to allow Kindred of the other Clans into Rome in payment for their aid against Carthage. It was a testament of Camilla's genius that the city endured his passing as long as it did. Rome was a truly cosmopolitan city with representatives of nearly every Clan, all kept from running amok by the social customs and strictures laid down by Camilla. Caine may or may not have handed down the Traditions, but Camilla was the first to write them down and make other Kindred memorize them as a condition of admittance into a domain. Because of him that Latin and Greek words like agoge, lictor, tribune, and strategoi are liberally sprinkled through our vocabulary. Even those formerly associated with the Ventrue of Ancient Greece were only given Clan-specific meanings during the reign of Camilla.

Yes, Rome fell, but its ideals were carried forth by its Ventrue citizens, the eldest of whom went forth to forge new domains among the very barbarians who destroyed Rome. Even Ventrue Princes who predate Rome's fall soon adopted the socio-political structures of Camilla's era, while Princes of other Clans were slowly won over to at least some of our ideas. Mithras of London, Eric the

Ogre of Prussia, his duplicitous childe Elsa of Berlin, and the Iberian warrior-queen Ursula. All of these and more followed Camilla's basic approach. A Prince supported by a Seneschal and a Sheriff and backed by a Primogen from the other Clans, controlling a territory and ensuring that the Traditions are maintained within it. A platform that has been replicated a thousand times in a thousand cities ever since.

It was not until the Middle Ages that it occurred to anyone to extend the principles of Camilla beyond the level of a single domain, and that failure led to predictable results. Lone vampires in isolated regions acted foolishly. The Masquerade wasn't a word yet, but sensible Kindred understood the concept. Foolish or shortsighted Kindred did not, and when they ran amok in areas not policed by more sensible peers, the mortals became frightened, then angry, then belligerent. The intelligent belligerents figured out how to kill us. Hence, the Inquisition. Quod erat demonstrandum.

The bloodshed of the Inquisition started in France with some damned-fool Toreador who were connected to the Cathars — wretched frogs! — but soon spread to endanger every Kindred on the continent. Our British forebears were relatively safe, because Prince Mithras was strong enough and had enough influence over Edward II to keep the Inquisition out completely and to minimize the intrusion of French Templars. Thanks to his actions, not only were the British people spared the horrors of the Inquisition, so were the Kindred of the British Isles.

The Anarch Revolt and the Rise of the Sabbat

Unfortunately, his power did not extend to Europe, where elders, terrified by the flames of the inquisitors, recklessly sent their own childer into battle while they hid or fled. Some, in a precursor to the barbarous tactics of the Sabbat, Embraced childer for the express purpose of using them as distractions against the inquisitors. Eventually, inevitably, the rebellious abused childer of the other Clans turned on their sires and began the Anarch Revolt.

I will not insult your intelligence by suggesting that there were no Ventrue Anarchs. Of course there were. Some were improvidently Embraced childer incapable of living up to the Clan's high expectations. Others were capable Ventrue who had been cruelly misused by cowardly sires or who had been forced to fend for themselves after their sires had been exterminated. There is a reason, after all, why a Toreador rules Madrid, one of the great capitols of Europe, and barely 500 years dead. It's because the Methuselah Ursula, who had ruled the region since before the birth of Christ, was put to the torch, along with her childer and her childer's childer and their childer as well, until the last surviving Ventrue of her line joined the Anarchs just to survive.

For the most part, the Ventrue Anarchs did what they had to do, and once the hostilities ceased, most of them returned to the fold. Those who did not were the ones who had committed such crimes that they could not be forgiven, or who had been Embraced and raised so completely outside the Clan that they saw no value in our traditions. Their numbers were small then, and remain so today. If it were otherwise, Ventrue *antitribu* rather than Lasombra swine would rule the Sabbat. Instead, the relative handful of Ventrue that swear allegiance to that Sect content themselves with dreams of chivalry and paranoid delusions about the End of Days rather than playing any effective role in the organization.

For a time, the Inquisition and the Anarch Revolt represented a two-pronged attack on Clan Ventrue and on organized Kindred society. Something had to be done or our race would have met its end, whether from fire or fangs. Naturally, the Ventrue led the way. There had been previous efforts to coordinate the Clans into an organization for mutual protection and advancement. Lord Hardestadt, who ruled the Fiefs of the Iron Cross and who, at the time, was probably the most prominent Ventrue in the world, led the first major effort. Despite multiple assassination attempts by the Anarchs (accompanied by seditious propaganda suggesting that he had actually fallen to the fangs of some Brujah wench), he was ultimately successful in his efforts, and the Camarilla formally organized in 1435 C.E. He presided over the first Conclave in 1486, at which time his eldest childe was appointed as the first Ventrue Justicar. In 1493, he represented our Clan at the Treaty of Thorns, when the Anarchs and the Assamites were finally broken. I'm told he still sits among the Camarilla Inner Circle tonight.

The influence of Hardestadt cannot be overstated. After Camilla and the Founder himself, Hardestadt had the greatest impact upon us. The *dignitas* afforded by the founding of the Camarilla would be enough, but he did more. He ensured that the Camarilla's socio-political structure would mirror that of the typical Ventrue domain. Thanks to him, our system of control became the default approach for running a Camarilla city. And since we are

the ones most familiar with our own systems, Hardestadt's influence over the Camarilla has allowed us to become so dominant among the Camarilla that Ventrue Princes outnumber the Princes of all other Clans combined.

Having seized the reins of Kindred society, the following centuries have seen us hold on for dear unlife. The Enlightenment. Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Revolution. Colonialism. Queen Victoria. War, war, and more war. Despite our best efforts to stabilize mortal society and harness its potential for the benefit of the Kindred, we have often been our own worst enemies, as disagreements on how best to rule have led to intra-Clan conflicts. As much as we try to act as the puppet masters guiding and shaping the course of mortal history, I have to admit that we spend more time untangling the strings of our puppets than actually manipulating them. At our best during last six centuries, we have led the Camarilla and used it to preserve Kindred civilization against the forces of chaos and corruption. At our worst, we unwittingly *served* the forces of chaos and corruption.

It was the Ventrue who thought it wise to send our most dangerous enemies and our most truculent Clan members to America, which is why our hold over those lands is as porous as sand compared to Europe. It was the Ventrue of the northern American states who prosecuted the U.S. Civil War against the Confederacy and the blood-drenched abattoirs of the Southern plantations, abattoirs frequently ruled over by Confederate Ventrue as degenerate as the lords of Carthage. It was the Ventrue of Britain who stood firm against German expansionism and the horrors of Nazism, horrors unleashed by the mad Ventrue Gustav Breidenstein whose own lust for power caused him to disastrously underestimate the Third Reich's potential for monstrosity.

But that is the way of things for our Clan. There is always an evil lurking, waiting for the chance to destroy what we have built. For centuries, we have held the Camarilla together, but in doing so, we made ourselves targets for our true enemies. Enemies we cannot even name except through placeholders such as "the Daeva" or "the Secret Masters." That is the greatest secret of the Ventrue, the mystery that lies at the heart of our essential nature. We do not rule because we are proud. We do not rule because we are greedy. We rule because if we do not, then the true monsters, those who sit in shadow, will step into the vacuum of our withdrawal and rule in our stead. And their rule would doom us all. We claim the throne that is a cross because the only alternative to be a ruler is to be a slave.

Today's Ventrue

Hey, kids! Since the Ventrue run the Camarilla and are the dicks most likely to fuck with us Anarchs, some people on the Digital Draculas Forum asked us to put together a document explaining what they're all about. We actually know a cool Ventrue who was a Blue Blood in good standing before he got wise and joined the Movement, and he graciously volunteered to do an AMA. Although he ended up only answering a few of the most common questions — he was oddly silent when we asked him "at what point in the Ventrue Embrace do they insert the stick?"

1. What's with the feeding restriction thingy?

All Ventrue have a physical and psychological response that identifies a specific type of blood as "the right stuff." It's not immediate, and no Ventrue consciously chooses the blood type. Instead, sometime after the Embrace, while the fledgling is out hunting (supervised by her sire, of course), she will encounter a source of vitae that, well, is just awesome. It is the finest champagne when every liquid you've tasted before is Natty Light. Once the neonate has tasted the good stuff, it becomes impossible for her to willingly drink from any other vessel. She can feed from another vampire (if she doesn't mind getting blood bonded), but she will puke up vitae from any other source. She will also do so out of reflex if fed the wrong kind of blood while in torpor. She can even instinctively tell if blood from a blood bag will work or not, which is why it is possible for a Ventrue to intuitively identify characteristics such as "Italian woman" or "adulterous male" or "undercover cop." We just know.

A lot of Licks mock the Ventrue for this, and it is annoying at times, but personally, I think it's better than being hideously ugly or a barking loon or prone to berserker rages. YMMV. One of the more common digs is when a Ventrue gets a feeding restriction that is wildly impractical. For example, a WWI-era Blue Blood might only be able to feed on veterans of the Great War, which would suck because there aren't any left. That's not the end of the world for such a Ventrue, however. It is possible to change the feeding restriction or modify it, though doing so is damned

hard. Usually, such changes require an incredible act of will and can only be done after undergoing a hunger frenzy or torpor. However, a Ventrue can usually modify her feeding restriction after time spent in torpor due to lack of vitae.

2. Is it true that the Ventrue are a global conspiracy?

Dude, we're vampires. We're *all* part of a global conspiracy. If you mean do the Ventrue have a global *hierarchy*, though, then yes. At the top of the food chain is the Directorate (also known as the Ephorate among Ventrue so old they remember the original Greek nomenclature). It consists of somewhere between ten and fifteen self-selected Ventrue from around the world. I say self-selected because no one knows exactly who all of them are except each other, and you only become a Director (or Ephor) when the others agree to send you a bid for their Secret Fraternity of the Undead.

Whether you get that call depends on several factors: status, geography, and conflicts of interest. "Status" means "are you respected enough?" Just being a Prince does not carry enough status to interest the Directorate, unless it's a major metropolis. "Geography" refers to where you live and hold domain. The Directorate is a global conspiracy, and they need people who can provide valuable insights into trouble spots. That said, half the Directors are believed to be European Ventrue, and as of 1998, there wasn't a single member from Africa. "Conflicts of interest" means "any other responsibilities that might distract you from running a global conspiracy?" That's why Princes rarely get invited unless they abandon their domains. I'm told that Justicars and Archons don't sit on the Directorate either, though no one knows about the Ventrue Inner Circle rep.

The Directorate sets both the agenda and the tone for the Clan as a whole. Ever wondered why Ventrue (well, Camarilla Ventrue, anyway) act a certain way, why they're not just wealthy but *conspicuously* wealthy, why they're generally assholes to outsiders? It's because the ultimate questions within the Clan about what's an acceptable way to act, what's an acceptable way to acquire power, what's an acceptable way to *dress*, are all decided by a dozen or so reclusive elders who pass their views down to their subordinates. Then they disseminate them to every Ventrue Prince and Primogen in the Western World. It's like *Mean Girls* reimagined as a global occult conspiracy.

Beyond that, though, the Directorate plays an important role in maintaining the Clan's famous unity — occasionally by eliminating Clan members who threaten that unity. If there's a conflict between two powerful Ventrue that threatens Clan assets, the Directorate steps in to arbitrate the proceedings. But the most important role of the Directorate is "Clan Sugar Daddy." As a large coterie of ultra-wealthy Ventrue ostensibly dedicated to advancing the Clan as an institution, the Directorate often serves as "lender of last resort" to major projects. If you have a scheme that might benefit the Clan but it's beyond your financial or political means, you can theoretically submit a proposal to the Directorate. If it impresses enough Ephors, they might throw enough money your way to buy a country or two. Of course, I doubt any Anarch Ventrue would be willing to grovel before a bunch of stinky elders no matter how much money is on the plate, but I bet it would make the most awesome episode of *Dragon's Den* ever.

Below the Directors are the strategoi (singular: strategos), the hands of the Directorate, powerful Ventrue who are the conspiracy's eyes and ears on the ground. A good number of Ventrue Primogen around the world are also strategoi. Princes, not so much. As a matter of policy, the Directorate generally thinks a Prince needs to focus her attentions on her city rather than serving foreign elders. If the Directorate decides something should be done or not done, the strategoi spread the news among the Ventrue of the areas over which they've been given jurisdiction.

Below the strategoi are the lictors, the field agents and troubleshooters. Elders don't like to get their hands dirty. That's beneath them. But powerful people have always kept staff on retainer who have no such compunctions. And to be fair, it's a good stepping-stone to better things if the lictor plays it right. There have been many occasions where a strategos has sent a lictor into a city that's going to pot in order to whip the local Ventrue into shape, and once all the bodies have hit the floor, the lictor *somehow* ends up as the new Prince. In short, lictor is a dangerous but potentially profitable niche for ancillae Ventrue who want to increase their profiles and who don't mind courting death or dismemberment to do so.

Below *them* are the tribunes — the spies, errand boys, and toadies for the Directorate. In other words, every Ventrue who will reliably ask how high when told to jump by a lictor or a strategos. Only slightly below the tribunes are the peers (collectively the peerage), which is basically a list of every reasonably competent Ventrue who has any standing or influence of any kind. Curiously, being a part of the peerage doesn't really give you any benefits. Rather, it simply means you don't carry the stigma of *not* being a peer, which typically means that you've proven yourself to be a fuck-up and the other Ventrue won't let you join in any reindeer games.

Unsurprisingly, Free-State Anarchs are excluded from the peerage automatically. I suppose an Anarch within a Camarilla domain can become a peer if he sells out enough. Who wants to find out for us? Yeah, thought so.



3. What's it like for a Ventrue in a Camarilla city?

For the younger ones, it's like being a pledge in the "bad-guy frat" from *Animal House*. You're constantly bent over saying, "thank you, sir, may I have another" while presenting your backside to some snotty guy in a cravat. In any city with enough Ventrue to justify some level of Clan organization, the most powerful and influential Ventrue will form an intra-Clan governing body called the Board, or the Gerousia (Greek for "counsel of elders") in more traditional territories. The head of the Board is the called the praetor (or sometimes simply "manager," but praetor is much more common, I think because it sounds cool). The praetor is the highest-ranking Ventrue in the city, unless a Ventrue who is also the Prince or the Primogen plays that role and she delegates the praetor responsibility to a subordinate. The praetor chairs all Board meetings and is responsible for finding a place big enough and secure enough to host those meetings.

There are two kinds of Board meetings. The entire peerage usually meets on the first Tuesday of each month. I have no fucking idea what is so important about the first Tuesday of the month, but that seems to be the universal rule, even for Ventrue in Islamic countries that don't use our calendar. Whatever. The Board can also hold private informal leadership

meetings whenever it wants, meetings at which the "lesser" Ventrue aren't invited. Oh, and the monthly meetings are not as boring as you might think. First of all, it is a room full of vampires, and while Ventrue are notorious control freaks, you never know who might flip out and frenzy over some slight, so that's exciting.

As for the meetings themselves, some traditional Boards use strict *Roberts' Rules of Order* (and a few reactionary Boards use even more archaic and hidebound rules, because *Robert* was a mortal and no way are Ventrue elders using *mortal* parliamentary procedure). Most Boards are not quite so rigid. There's still an element of formality — encoded written agendas, reading the minutes from prior meetings, committee reports, and old and new business — but no more so than you might find in the board meeting of your local Rotary Club. If the Board members all get along reasonably well, sometimes one might even crack a joke every few years.

The praetor is assisted in her duties by Ventrue informally called "supervisors" and formally called aediles among pretentious old fuckers. Typically, aediles are competent and well-regarded ancillae who are happy to suck up, well, because they're Camarilla Ventrue ancillae and that's just how they are. All the ones with initiative have already joined us. In some domains, the praetor presides over Board meetings but an aedile actually runs things, usually because the praetor wants to nap through the meeting or otherwise can't be buggered to pay attention to what's going on.

The remaining Clan members fit into one of two groups. The questors or foremen are young Ventrue who have obtained some degree of status from the Board in exchange for loyalty and obedience. The eiren or associate members, sadly for them, are so young and inexperienced that they have no real status at all beyond that which all Ventrue accord to one another as peers. To compare it to the Mafia, think of questors as "made men" and eiren as rank-and-file gang members. Or, to compare it to a fraternity, the eiren are the freshman plebes and the questors are all arrogant sophomores who have been appointed to the membership committee and think that entitles them to haze the newbies.

Officially, the Board and the praetor don't have any power beyond what the Prince and Primogen allow. As a practical matter, if an associate steps out of line, the questors, the aediles, and the praetor can all take it upon themselves to engineer some kind of punishment. Depending on the nature of the fuck-up and how hard-core and/or crazy the Ventrue involved are, that can range from public humiliation to loss of status and interference with business activities to bloody, painful death.

4. I've heard that when you get Embraced as a Ventrue, they lock you in an attic for twenty years and make you read and take tests about being a Ventrue. Izzat true?

No. Well, not the attic part. Usually. Clan Ventrue *does* have a custom called the agoge. The name comes from the training period for Spartan children (again with the Spartan thing — I wonder what Ventrue elders think of the movie *300*). When applied to childer, it refers to the period of time in which the sire is so hyper-responsible for her childe that *any* misstep by the childe reflects poorly on the sire. Granted, the Fourth Tradition makes sires responsible for their childers' crimes, but this goes way beyond that. Nearly any public screw-up by a Ventrue childe results in social embarrassment to the sire. Hard-core Ventrue treat this rule so seriously that it is not uncommon for the sire to literally keep the childe sealed away from the rest of Kindred society for years or even decades until she's absolutely confident in the childe's ability to interact with other Ventrue. I'm pretty sure that most American Ventrue aren't that extreme, but I haven't looked in every Ventrue's attic to see how many childer they keep locked up.

The agoge begins with a crash-course in the basics of Kindred existence, followed by "the Choice." Yes, they do capitalize it when writing about it. Once the sire is confident the childe won't do anything crazy, he takes her out into the world and escorts her around to hunt. Eventually, she'll encounter her preferred feeding vessel, hopefully in a way that does not involve disposing of any bodies. Then, sire and childe return home where the sire spends the next week or so educating the childe more thoroughly in Kindred lore and customs, until the childe is competent enough to

appear in front of an entire crowd of Ventrue without embarrassing herself. Sometimes, some type of small party or a gift from sire to childe accompanies the Choice. You see, the act of identifying a feeding preference is the official marker that the childe is really a Ventrue and not a Caitiff. Accordingly, you can imagine how unpleasant things can get if the childe fails to identify her feeding preference quickly. Among some Ventrue, there's even a level of discontent if the childe picks a feeding preference that the sire considers unacceptably broad like "women only" or "no one under 10."

Anyway, after the Choice is made, the sire arranges for what is traditionally called "the Presentation" (again with the caps). Anarch Ventrue who've been through it call it "the meat market." The sire arranges for the childe's introduction to the Prince, with all of the city's Ventrue in attendance. If the Prince is not a Ventrue, then the sire may arrange a less formal introduction for the Prince, followed by a Presentation to the praetor and the peerage instead. After the introductions are made, the childe is sent home, while the sire remains behind to listen to all the other Ventrue tell him everything the childe did wrong. If the childe had any egregious screw-ups, she can expect a spankin' when Daddy gets home.

After the Presentation, training continues, usually for months or even years. During that time, the childe resides with the sire, who remains responsible for everything the childe does. The childe isn't released until "the Test," which involves the sire sending the childe out into the world with instructions to seize a domain of her own. This can mean almost anything to the childe and sire: start or seize control of a successful business; develop a power base without infringing on any existing Ventrue territories; acquire a boon from a powerful Kindred. Usually, it's a difficult but achievable challenge, and the sire will normally be careful to make sure the childe won't step on any important toes.

If the sire is satisfied with the results, he recommends her to the praetor and the Board. The childe tells the assembled Ventrue what she has done to be worthy of acceptance as a Ventrue, and the praetor asks her some questions about Ventrue history and culture. Although it is usually a done deal, occasionally a dumb sire will send in a childe before she's ready, or maybe the childe will just choke. I'm told that such events are considered comedy gold by Ventrue observers. Less so for the childe, who can expect at best severe punishment by her sire. At worst, in conservative Ventrue domains, the sire can reclaim the blood. That means killing the childe for any of you who haven't figured it out.

5. Is it true that the Ventrue antitribu have evolved into a separate bloodline?

How the hell do you expect me to know what's going on with the *antitribu*?!? I don't know, and I don't want to know. Some people have told me that the *antitribu* have developed a propensity for insight over emotional manipulation for some unfathomable reason. Of course, that was the same guy who told me that Ventrue *antitribu* like to pretend that they're more rebellious than the Brujah or they're like medieval knights that run around waving swords and swearing oaths at one another, both of which sound ridiculous. But I've also heard that there's no physical difference between Ventrue *antitribu* and regular Ventrue, but that some *antitribu* are just really good at Auspex for some reason.

I did come across the following bit of text supposedly stolen from the diary of an *antitribu* back in the 1960s. Draw your own conclusions, but I think it's creepy as fuck.

We enter the shrine in single file. Our chain mail rattles softly as we move, decorative armor only worn for special ritae. Our swords are not decorative, for True Ventrue, like the knights of old, are trained as masters of the blade as well as the gun, the garrote, and the grenade. There were many ways to kill, and we who swear the oath to St. Gustav, the patron saint of the Sabbat Inquisition, know them all.

One by one, knights first and then the squires, we kneel before our priest, unsheathe our swords, and then grasp the blade until the blood runs down into the sacred chalice. As each of us adds our blood to the Vaulderie, the priest chants in Latin, calling down the blessings of Caine and St. Gustav upon the True Ventrue. For we are not the fat pigs of the Camarilla who call themselves Ventrue, as if they know anything of honor. We permit our fellow Sabbat to call us Ventrue antitribu just as we tolerate their common brutality and vile inhumanity, but only until we purge this world of

our bloated Mammon-worshiping cousins. Then, we will simply be "Ventrue," the scions of a lineage of honor, of chivalry, of noblesse oblige, and we will take our rightful place as the rulers of the Sabbat and purify it of its deficiencies and its decadent and puerile leadership. The Brujah antitribu pretend at rebellion. They are children playing in a schoolyard. True rebellion means nothing less than to seek the annihilation of those who would claim to rule you.

When the Vaulderie is ready, we form a line and strike up a Latin hymn to show our solidarity and faith. One by one, in order of dignitas (and we know that word well, and more purely than the indolent rutting of the Ventrue pigs), we step forward to drink from the chalice as the priest concludes the ritus. United in blood and in song, we are strong in our faith. Perhaps tonight the Blessing of St. Gustav might even descend upon one us. The blessing of the gift of sight that penetrates all deception. The blessing of sight that shall pierce every darkness and lead the Crusaders into the holy light of vengeance, the flame of righteousness that the Ventrue antitribu shall use to scourge this whole world. That is our rebellion, a world burned clean of the Camarilla and the false Ventrue who rule it.

Like I said. *Creeeeepy.*

6. How do the Ventrue elders keep the younger ones in line without provoking them to revolt? If the Ventrue are as hidebound and repressive as you say, you'd think there would be more Ventrue Anarchs.

The short answer is Stockholm Syndrome. The longer answer involves a somewhat complicated social concept that the Ventrue refer to as dignitas. Yeah, I know, more Latin. If it helps, younger Ventrue (Embraced in the last century) often call it the Game — a term which elders *hate*, so don't use that around them.

The rules of The Game are difficult to explain to people who haven't been playing from the moment of the Embrace, if not earlier. To oversimplify it, dignitas is the intersection of a Ventrue's public reputation among his peers and his personal sense of identity, honor, and self-worth. The closest mortal parallels would probably be some combination of Romantic chivalry and the Sino-Japanese concept of "face." Young Ventrue are taught from the Embrace that it is vitally important to act in a way that other Ventrue would respect, and equally important to show respect to other Ventrue who act in the socially approved manner. "Socially approved manner," in this context, is represented by an impossibly long list of Do's and Don'ts that covers everything from how to properly address an elder to what's an acceptable business venture that will bring respectability as well as financial gain. Do something right and you get a point. Do something wrong and you lose a point. Fall too far into negative points, and you're a loser.

Not that there's a formal point system with a lifetime (deathtime?) score or anything. It's just that from the moment you meet a particular Ventrue, you should assume that she is keeping a running tab of how much respect you've earned and lost. Again oversimplifying things, you gain dignitas by working for the benefit of the Clan. By demonstrating competence in difficult circumstances, by always looking poised and in control (and to a degree, fashionable and stylish, though Toreador-levels of fashion consciousness can actually cost you dignitas), and by showing respect to your elders and superiors while avoiding the appearance of toadying before them. You lose dignitas by embarrassing yourself in public, by failing at something important in a conspicuous manner, by disrespecting those with higher levels of dignitas, and by failing to look the part of a Ventrue in good standing, which can literally mean something as petty as wearing white shoes after Labor Day. Or possibly ever.

Now, you may ask why any young Ventrue would put up with that. Simple. The Ventrue generally recruit people who naturally fit in with such a socially incestuous "high school forever" type of culture. Fraternal organizations. Authoritarian religious groups. Law enforcement agencies with a strong "Blue Wall" ethos. Organized crime. Elite military units. Academia. Hell, even hacker community websites. Basically, any social group where new members get hazed and/or mistreated until they prove themselves as loyal and valuable members of the group is a breeding ground for people who will fall into the

Game without ever questioning it. Not every Ventrue gets recruited out such environments, but then, not every Ventrue can play the Game.

7. Is it true that Ventrue are supernaturally compelled to help one another when asked?

No, they actually do that of their own free will. It's called the Ethic of Succor (sometimes grudgingly referred to as "the Ethic of Suckers" by Ventrue who have been burned by it), and it is the oldest Ventrue tradition. Basically, if you're a Ventrue in a Camarilla domain and another Ventrue comes for you and asks for help — asks rather than demands, mind you, with actual humility — you are obligated to help him in any way that does not directly risk Final Death. In fact, sometimes you *are* expected to risk Final Death when, for example, a fellow Ventrue bangs on your door claiming that a pack of Lupines is after him for some reason. The only limits on this are that you are not required to become an accessory after the fact if the supplicant has committed a crime, and especially not if he's under a Blood Hunt. But if it hasn't gotten that far, he can reasonably expect you to help him diffuse a situation that might lead to a Blood Hunt if it hasn't been called yet.

This includes rival and even *enemy* Ventrue, although most Ventrue are so proud that Final Death would be preferable to asking for Succor from an enemy. On the other hand, sometimes a Ventrue will ask for succor from her worst enemy within the Clan, a blue blood who might have actively tried to kill her in the past. And not only does he grant Succor, but the two resolve their differences in the process and become allies.

Every Camarilla Ventrue has the Ethic of Succor beaten into her brain before her Presentation. In fact, it's common for the Presentation to include hypothetical questions from the praetor about what the neonate should do if a fellow Ventrue asks for help under different scenarios. Turn down a reasonable (or even unreasonable) request for aid, and the Ventrue you burned can let the Board and the peers know, and if the general consensus is that you were wrong to have denied her your assistance, you can lose *a lot*



of dignitas. If you refuse to aid a sufficiently important Ventrue, the penalties can be higher. You're a complete moron if you refuse to help a Ventrue Prince who asks for your aid — blood hunts are not out of the question in such a case. On the other hand, if you ask for Succor from someone much older and more powerful than you, then you *owe* him or her. Most Ventrue forced to seek Succor try to do so from peers rather than indebt themselves to elders. Lord knows what kind of markers those guys will call in.

That said, you're not entitled to help from anyone or required to help anyone for frivolous reasons. The supplicant must make a formal request for aid (*very* formal when an elder is involved), and must explain why he has desperate need of assistance that only you can provide. If the Ventrue whose help is sought finds the need a frivolous one, she can deny it on that basis and let the Board and the peers know that somebody has been crying wolf.

8. What are the other major Ventrue traditions?

Almost as important as the Ethic of Succor is the Ethic of Politesse. Manners are more valuable than gold among Ventrue (especially Ventrue more than a hundred years dead). If you find yourself forced to deal with Camarilla Ventrue on their terms, I highly recommend you buy some books on etiquette and commit them to memory, preferably books on etiquette from the nineteenth century.

Refer to others by title if they have one, by "Mr.," "Miss," (or occasionally by "Madam") if they don't. Only use "Ms." if you *know* that she has modern feminist leanings. You risk embarrassing female Ventrue if you use "Ms." in front of the wrong elder.

Dress well but conservatively — Edith Head rather than Vivienne Westwood. Ask a Toreador if you don't know who those people are.

Do not interrupt older Ventrue when they are talking no matter how idiotic their words are. Likewise, do not take offense when an older Ventrue rudely interrupts you. In either case, your peers are perfectly capable of figuring out when someone is a jackass and remembering it for later.

Don't insult someone over a faux pas she made. Instead, say something genuinely polite that lets her know she screwed up and you know she screwed up and you're better than she is for not making a thing of it.

Meaningless small talk is more important than you think. Kindred are easily excitable, and small talk puts people at ease.

Always maintain eye contact with the people you're talking to — elders often take offense when you insinuate that they might Dominate you in a public gathering. Speaking of which, *never* use Dominate or Presence on another Ventrue is a social situation unless your unlife is in danger.

The Ethic of Control says that you should never display strong emotions in front of others if you can avoid it. Never raise your voice unless the building is actually on fire or under attack. Ironically, a frenzy is more easily forgiven than a normal loss of temper. Every Ventrue knows and understands what the Beast is, but flipping out on a waiter because he spilled wine on you is just gauche. In such situations, be magnanimous. You can always kill him later when no one's around. Wry chuckles are acceptable; belly laughs are not. And for God's sake, no matter how much the Toreador's mean comments hurt your feelings, there's no crying in front of other Ventrue, unless you're ready to hear about that moment over and over for *decades*.

9. Is it true that some elders are actually afraid of devils that run the world?

No, that would be the Malks, I think. Seriously, a small number of very old, very paranoid Ventrue believe in something called the Daevas (also referred to as the Secret Masters). It's all very sinister and conspiratorial, like if Dan Brown wrote *The Book of Nod*. The idea is that there is this secret cabal of supernatural beings that have hidden themselves away from the world and *everything that has gone wrong ever is their fault!* Presumably including fluoridation and the 1960 World Series. The Secret Masters include (depending on who you ask) Caine; Lilith; one, several, or all of the Antediluvians; various and sundry pre-Christian or even prehistoric Methuselahs; the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn; Opus Dei;

Lucifer and all his imps; renegade angels and their Grigori offspring; lizard aliens from Planet Nibiru. Anyway, the old fuckers who believe such idiocies are the least effective members of the Clan, because they're so afraid of manipulation by Secret Masters that they hide themselves away and never do anything.

And the funny thing is, there really *is* a secret global conspiracy that rules the entire world. It's called Clan Ventrue.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Blackmail Victim

You have always prided yourself on your rigid self-control and your impeccable sense of decorum. Your reputation for grace under pressure has made you respected among the peerage. Two months ago, you dropped by one of the newer grad students to join your herd for a quick bite. You had no idea that he'd taken a hit of LSD about twenty minutes before you arrived. You woke up the next evening with no memories of what had happened, some mysterious vandalism to your car, and minor injuries among members of your herd.

A week later, the first photo showed up. None of the Ventrue have hinted as to any knowledge of what happened, and the few Kindred you actually trust to ask about it don't know anything either. You're terrified at the thought of more pictures coming. You're even more terrified about what will happen when the pictures stop coming, and the demands start.

Coward

He came to you in the night, begging for help. A Sabbat pack was after him. He had no clue as to why, but he'd been attacked three times in a week and had barely gotten away. He said the right words to invoke the Ethic of Succor... and you slammed the door in his face and locked it. The thought that he might have actually led the Sabbat right to your door filed you with as much rage as it did terror.

He died two nights later, but not before telling others that you denied him. At the next Board meeting, you were the very first item on the agenda, and you weren't allowed to stay long enough to find out what was second. You were cast out. Your business ventures systematically ruined. Your haven condemned by the City. Your herd meets mysterious "accidents." As everything you've ever built gets stripped away, you regret not helping him. A quick death would be better than this.

Pledge Master

You were always a bit of a sadist. That's why your old frat put you in charge of coming up with some entertaining games for the pledges to play for the brothers' amusement. It was all in good fun. It certainly wasn't your fault that time one of the frosh choked to death on a live goldfish.

Luckily, your future sire fixed things for you. As it happened, she preferred to feed on members of Greek fraternities and needed someone to look after her herd. Eventually, your loyalty and efficiency earned the Embrace, and you were strangely delighted to learn that you could only feed on victims of hazing. Your sire insists (properly, you agree) that there should be no fatalities, no serious injuries, and no scandals with the administration. Beyond that, it's anything goes, and you're having so much damned fun. You don't even need to use Disciplines most of the time. It is astounding just how

Choosing a New Menu

A Ventrue who simply cannot find any blood that fits within her feeding restriction can attempt to "retrain" her restriction, but it is dangerous and difficult. The easiest way is to go into torpor after a hunger frenzy and lack of blood. Once the Ventrue is reawakened, her first hunt will determine her new feeding restriction.

Alternatively, the Ventrue can try to shortcut the process. First, she needs to have no blood in her body (zero blood points). The Ventrue must then go an *entire night* from waking until sleep without feeding, making Self-Control checks for hunger frenzy (**V20**, pp. 297-299) as necessary. If the Ventrue frenzies and attacks someone for blood, others can restrain her, but as soon as blood enters her mouth, the process has failed, even if the blood ingested gives her no sustenance. Once the Ventrue has gone an entire night without any blood whatsoever, she can spend a *permanent* Willpower dot. Her next hunt will then determine her new feeding restriction.

far insecure freshmen will go to utterly debase themselves just to get into the right frat.

Rapunzel

You have no idea why your sire picked you. You were a college student, not that good looking, not that smart, not that rich. But for some reason, he picked you and then stuck you in a room on the top floor of a skyscraper. And you don't get to leave until you get a perfect score on his weekly exams. After three years, your highest score is 65%. He doesn't get mad though. He just pats you on your head and reassures you. After all, he didn't get out of his room for almost twenty years before his sire was satisfied. He's sure you'll get out in half that time.

Re-Made Man

You spent years climbing the greased poll that was the Mafia. You worked for a local bookie at the age of 11. You started running drugs at 15. You whacked your first guy (a loser who wouldn't pay his debts) at 19. You were finally "made" at 23. Then, at 25, the Ventrue who really ran the syndicate decided that you had enough potential to join La Familia Morte and take over the operation of his criminal activities. It shouldn't take you more than twenty years to win your sire's acceptance and be freed to run the Family your way. Yeah, like you're seriously planning on waiting that long.

Rebellious Wannabe

You have spent your whole unlife as a Ventrue Anarch. You've picked up a few details about the main Clan—enough to make you want to heave. Arrogant, snotty rich frat boy douchebags. You regret the hell out of the fact that your sire picked you to join his Clan instead of introducing you to some Brujah. That's where it's at. The freedom to do what you want when you want. Not of that "dignitas" crap, whatever the hell that is. You may not be a real Brujah, but you'll win their respect somehow. Even if you have to kick all of their asses to do it.

Reluctant Daeva Theorist

You never believed that the Secret Masters were anything more mysterious and sinister than any other vampires. Then, a respected Ventrue peer showed up at your haven last week babbling like a maniac about the Daeva, and about the Black Shepherd who comes to cull the flock. Then he laughed and thrust a satchel full of papers into your hands before he... died. No, that's not quite right. He *melted*, right in front of you, into a puddle of goo that left a green stain in your carpet that you still can't get rid of.

The papers were nonsense scribblings in languages you don't read. But every night since your visitor turned into guacamole, you have been followed every time you leave your haven by mysterious figures who slip away in the shadows when you try to confront them. It's probably your imagination, but you could swear that they all have three eyes.

Sabbat Crusader

When you were a child, you read stories about the Knights of the Round Table, about honor and chivalry and sacrifice, about noble men and the courage they showed when fighting for what they believed in. When you became a childe, you were honored to have joined a band of modern-day knights who, like you, understand the majesty of an earlier, more dignified era. You are disgusted that the Ventrue once had such a pedigree and they threw it all away for stock options. You understand that your fellow Sabbat cannot truly trust you because of the taint of the Clan from which your line originated. That's okay. You'll earn their trust—one dead Camarilla Ventrue at a time.

Secret Tribune

You are an agent for the Ephorate, which would be impressive if you

weren't the only Ventrue in a smaller Midwestern city dominated by Brujah, Gangrel, and Malkavians. You don't get much in the way of respect — in fact, you're frequently the butt of jokes and pranks. If only they knew that you made nightly reports to a lictor in the next city over, the one who's making plans to fix what ails your hometown. After the hammer falls, you'll be poised to become a major player... provided the Anarch wannabes around here don't find out what you're planning and strike first.

Sommelier

Normally, Ventrue are reticent about revealing their feeding restrictions. With you, they make an exception. You are connected, resourceful, and for the right price, you can provide any type of vessel your clients need. You even offer special services — for a little bit extra, you can not only provide an important Ventrue with some "underage Latinas" to feed from, you can even ensure that they're pumped full of his drug or liquor of choice. Sometimes you feel kind of dirty that you've added "pusher" to "pimp" on your resume. When that happens, you console yourself by rolling around in a bed of cash provided by your clients.

Merits and Flaws

Connoisseur (2pt. Merit)

Your study of the Auspex Discipline, combined with your rarified tastes, allows you powerful insights into the character of any whose blood you taste.

System: The character tastes another's blood (potentially risking blood bond), and player rolls Perception + Empathy (difficulty 6 for mortals or 8 for Kindred). If the blood came from a mortal, each success allows him to learn one of the following: the mortal's Nature, her Demeanor, any Derangements she may possess, whether she is blood bonded, and whether she carries any blood-borne diseases. If the vitae came from a vampire, he can learn all of the previous information, plus anything discoverable with the first level of the Path of Blood (see **V20**, p. 213). The Ventrue may taste the blood of a mortal who does not fit within his feeding restriction long enough to use this ability, but he must immediately spit it out afterwards.

Vampires that do not have Auspex •• cannot take this Merit.

Blessed by St. Gustav (4pt. Merit)

Many Ventrue *antitribu* replace their traditional affinity for Presence with an aptitude for Auspex by means of the ignobilis ritus known as the Prayer to St. Gustav (see sidebar). For your piety and devotion to the Sabbat cause, you have been especially blessed and have an affinity for both Disciplines.

System: This Merit is identical to Additional Discipline Merit found on **V20**, p. 494, except that it can only be used to add Auspex as a fourth in-Clan discipline. Only Ventrue *antitribu* can take this Merit.

Uncommon Vitae Preference (2pt. Flaw)

Your preferred source for vitae is rarified even by the standards of your Clan, such as "only Korean War vets," "only Federal Court Judges," or "only virgins over the age of 40." The difficulty of all hunting rolls for your character is increased by +2, to a maximum of 9.

Prayer to St. Gustav

To the Ventrue *antitribu*, the Presence discipline (while useful) is often viewed as decadent and unworthy of the martial heritage they imagine for themselves. In contrast, the Auspex discipline is prized for its power to grant insights and to see through deceptions.

This ignobilis ritus allows a Ventrue antitribu to replace Presence with Auspex as a Clan Discipline. The ritus requires a group consisting solely of Ventrue *antitribu* to participate in a Vaulderie while wearing ceremonial armor and singing the praises of St. Gustav Mallenhaus, the founder of the Sabbat Inquisition. The player of any crusader present who has not yet acquired any dots in Presence may roll Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 7), and if the roll succeeds, she may replace Presence with Auspex as a Clan Discipline. With five or more successes, the Storyteller may decide to award the Blessed by St. Gustav Merit. A character who has already started learning Presence may attempt this ritus, but may not swap out his Presence for Auspex — instead his Presence immediately becomes out-of-Clan, and the player must pay the difference in experience points between what the Presence cost before and what it costs now.

Discipline Powers

Fealty (Dominate ••••• •)

This power allows the Ventrue to sanctify an oath or promise freely given (and even one falsely given) so that the oath-giver is incapable of going back on his word or refusing to fulfill his promise. This power will not function if the target was compelled to give the oath, but it will work if the oath-giver is tricked into making it.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Politics (difficulty is oath-giver's current Willpower). The number of successes determines the duration during which the oath-giver is bound. While the effect lasts, the oath-giver must spend a Willpower point prior to each action he attempts which violates his promise, and he suffers one level of bashing damage during each scene in which he is conscious and yet not actively doing something to fulfill the oath. If the oath was for a specific action, the duration ends once it is accomplished.

Successes	Duration
1	One day
2	One week
3	One month
4	One year
5	Ten years

Curse the Laurel (Fortitude ••••• •)

An unusual application of Fortitude, this power allows a Ventrue who has been successfully staked to slowly restructure her very heart around the offending stake so that it ceases to paralyze the Ventrue.

System: The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Stamina + Survival (difficulty 9). The number of successes determines how quickly the stake can be negated, according to the chart below. Each use of this power affects a single stake. On a failed roll, the player can spend another Willpower and roll again, but he cannot combine successes from multiple rolls. Only the roll with the most successes applies. On a botch, the vampire may not attempt to neutralize the stake again.

Successes	Time until the stake is neutralized
1	One month
2	One week
3	Immediate

The power only removes the stake from the heart, not from the body. It will remain trapped in the Ventrue's dead flesh until removed, a process that causes two health levels of aggravated damage.

Combination Disciplines

Command from Afar (Auspex ••••, Presence ••••)

This power has lost much of its former value since the advent of the cellphone, but many Ventrue (in both Sects) still swear by it for its impeccable security. By combining the long range effects of Summoning with the communicative benefits of Telepathy, the Ventrue can give complicated instructions over nearly any distance to any individual who is blood bonded to her or that she shares vinculum with.

System: The player must spend a Willpower point to activate this power, and then roll the character's Charisma + Expression. For each success, the Ventrue can communicate up to five words to a single ghoul, blood-bound vampire, or packmate with vinculum over any distance, so long as it is night where both of them are. The target will intuitively know whom the mental message comes from. The target is under no particular compulsion to obey, beyond any the compulsion normally attached to the bond or vinculum.

This power costs 24 experience points to learn.

Denial of Aphrodite's Kiss (Dominate •••, Presence •••)

It is an insult to the Ventrue's dignitas that he may be victimized by a lesser Kindred's use of one of the signature disciplines of his Clan. This power allows the Ventrue to apply the immunity to Dominate attempts by vampires of higher Generation to Presence attempts instead.

System: Once learned, this power is always active. Any use of Presence Levels One, Two, or Three against the Ventrue by another vampire will be ineffective if that vampire's Generation is higher than that of the Ventrue.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Divine Aura (Auspex ••, Presence •••)

This power is commonly used by those Ventrue *antitribu* who also study Auspex. It allows the *antitribu* to instill the power of her Entrancement into her own aura so that anyone who attempts to study that aura risks bowing before her.

System: The *antitribu* must spend one blood point to activate Divine Aura for the night. Until the sun rises, if any other Kindred attempt to inspect the *antitribu*'s aura, she may make a reflexive Entrancement attack against him. The player makes the roll for the *antitribu* as normal, but

the Cainite need not focus her attention on the target. Indeed, it is not even necessary for the *antitribu* to know that the aura reading attempt was made.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

Impeccable Manners (Auspex ••, Presence •)

The Ventrue intuitively senses the mood of another person through an unconscious awareness of her aura. Then, he instinctively modifies his actions so as to shy away from offensive conduct while effortlessly doing things that appeal to the subject.

System: While the Ventrue is interacting socially with another person, the player must roll Perception + Etiquette (difficulty 6 for mortals or 8 for supernatural beings). Each success on this roll reduces the difficulty of all mundane Etiquette or Persuasion rolls made against the same target by -1 for the rest of the scene. This benefit does not modify Discipline rolls.

This power costs 9 experience points to learn.

Rescue Beacon (Fortitude •, Presence ••••)

Fortitude will not defend against all attacks. The wise Ventrue is prepared for the day his luck runs out and his skill is insufficient. One always needs a backup plan. This power automatically activates a Summoning to the nearest individual who has tasted the Ventrue's blood in the event he is either forced into torpor or paralyzed via staking.

System: If the vampire either falls into torpor or is successfully staked, this power activates automatically. The player spends a blood point and rolls Charisma + Subterfuge (difficulty 4); this power is an explicit exception to the general rule that a vampire cannot spend blood while staked. The vampire can only use this power to Summon someone who has tasted the Ventrue's blood (ghouls, blood-bound vampires, packmates with vinculum, etc.). Otherwise, the power works as Summon (**V20**, pp. 195-196).

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

Retaliatory Terror (Fortitude •, Presence ••)

Those who dare to attack the Ventrue are soon taught the error of their ways. When an attacker successfully inflicts damage on the Ventrue, the terrifying power associated with her Dread Gaze strikes out at the offender, seemingly straight out of the wound.

System: Whenever the Ventrue takes damage from a Brawl or Melee attack, the player spends one blood point and makes a reflexive Charisma + Intimidation roll (difficulty equal to the victim's Wits + Courage). However, the difficulty is reduced by the number of health levels of damage the attacker inflicted on the Ventrue, to a minimum of 4. If successful, the effects are as per Dread Gaze (**V20**, pp. 194-195). The power cannot be used to retaliate to a successful attempt to stake the Ventrue, as he will be unable to spend blood to activate it.

This power costs 9 experience points to learn.

Telepathic Command (Auspex ••••, Dominate •)

Generally, the Auspex power of Telepathy cannot be used as a means to silently Dominate another, as both powers require concentration from the vampire. A Ventrue with this power overcomes that limitation.

System: The vampire must still make eye contact with the target (**V20**, p. 152). If he does so, he can use Command via telepathic means so that the order is not audible to others nearby. The power cannot affect vampires of lower Generation.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

Caitiff

"But for those like us, our fate is to face the world as orphans, chasing through long years the shadows of vanished parents."

— Kazuo Ishiguro, When We Were Orphans

Foundlings in the Woods

I didn't ask for this. Will that help my case in any way, Sheriff?

No. I didn't think so. It never does with my kind.

Would it make you feel better if I told you I understand? No, really, I do. I'm not easily categorized, so you don't know what to expect from me. I must look like a caged animal or a vagrant to you. The word Caitiff means "contemptible," did you know that? Put yourself in my shoes, if you can. The whole world is stacked against you. The last thing you need to do is pick a fight. You just want to get from night to night like anyone else. Just pull through and make something of this... strangeness.

I'm sorry. I ramble. I was a college professor before this happened. History and ethnocryptology. Puzzling things out was always my hobby. Filing in the blanks. That's probably why my sire chose me for the Embrace. She was Caitiff, too. Taught me a great deal about the Kindred. Quite a blessing for a Clanless. She's been dead for... sixty years next Tuesday. Slaughtered by the Sabbat, of all things. The ones who claim their Panders are equals. She was smarter than that, stood with the Camarilla to repel the siege. The Prince took pity on me for her sake and only exiled me. I suppose I'm lucky. I might believe it more if this kind of interview didn't keep happening, but you are listening, at least, and for that, I'm grateful.

This is strange for you, isn't it? To speak with a Caitiff who knows about his place, his station, who is well spoken and not another seemingly homeless foundling? There's quite a few of us, yet it seems the only ones who get noticed are those who stumble from place to place, standing at the edge of the Camarilla looking in. I once met a Caitiff fledgling who thought vitae was a brand of wine. Perhaps that's just because they are the outlier balance, the ones who know how to stay alive, but not how to blend in and thrive. What few those are.

As to what I'm doing here, I have made it my mission to better understand my Clan... well, my lack of Clan. The society of those outside society. It's one hell of a puzzle. Kind of a lost world. I like filling in those blanks. If you're curious, I'd be happy to share what little I've learned, or at least the bullet points. You're interested? Splendid.

The Uniformity of Individuals

It's a mistake to think we have a much of a shared history beyond shared troubles. To most Kindred, Caitiff aren't so much people as they are events, the way an accident doesn't have a name, just a solution. Caitiff becomes a verb. A hated, hated verb. The closest any of us come to



having an identity is when we make a real mess of things. Sort of like hurricanes, I suppose.

While Caitiff are uniform in their lack of Clan distinctions, they do fall into two basic categories: the Clanless, and those who failed to develop into their Clans. Clanless are often the result of impulse Embraces. A vampire feeds too deeply, falls in love, or frenzies, and has two realizations too late. The first is guilt, leading them to give some of their blood to the victim. The second comes a moment later, as they realize what they have done and all that comes with it. An unsanctioned Embrace is grounds for Final Death in many cities. Others are more scared of the responsibility they have taken upon themselves, unwilling or unable to support a thirsty young vampire.

Most of these Caitiff awaken with no sign of their sire, never to know who stole their life and gave them damnation. Some are lucky to have a sire remain just long enough to explain the barest basics of what they have become before warning them to run. These have the advantage of a little insight into their change, but pose a threat to their sire, whom they can identify; leaving them with a potential foe should the sire ever reconsider their earlier mercy. Perhaps more perilously, the sire's foes may try to use the Caitiff in their power games, making them the target of more Kindred power plays that they do not understand.

The other kind of Caitiff is one whose blood fails to develop the nature of their sire's Clan. For some Caitiff, this change can go unremarked, often for years, particularly if the Clan is one which has otherwise unremarkable qualities – a Toreador, Brujah, or Ventrue, for example. However, all Clans have ways of ferreting out the Clanless among them: a Toreador with potent supernatural insight, a Brujah who doesn't see passion in their erstwhile Clanmate, a supposed Ventrue who cannot trace their genealogy. Malkavians can sense the madness in others, while Nosferatu know their progeny by mere sight. I have heard Gangrel can smell the difference, while the Tremere probably have some mystical means of discovering the full nature of any vampire. The Sabbat and the independents no doubt have their own methods as well.

An Army of Nobodies

From what I can tell, there are no definitive records of notable Caitiff until the end of World War II, though there are some mentions of Clanless like the Stoneman here and there across the centuries. Only rumors, of course. By all accounts, the Stoneman was a Caitiff of great power,

possessing many forbidden — even novel — supernatural abilities. They say he, if it is a he, defends and educates Caitiff, but his goals are the stuff of pure conjecture. I've interviewed a few Caitiff who claim to have learned from him, or even that he sired them. It's difficult to know the truth of it. The legends about him are on par with urban myth, stories of unique abilities, a trail of bloodlines, the ability to take new forms on a whim. For all I know, he is simply part of a Malkavian prank, a Ravnos con, or even some Autarkis Tzimisce with a plan of its own. In the absence of history and culture, rumor and myth take on new significance. Any stone to cling to in a storm, yes?

I'm sorry, where was I? Ah, yes, the Second World War. Around that time there was a bit of a population boom for the Kindred, most notably among the Caitiff. Quite a few Clanless are victims of the war whose sires gave them a second chance, such as it is. Others, I suspect, were Embraced, but lost their sires in the violence before learning about their Clan and heritage. Some ascribe this sudden rise in number to vampires making use of the confusion or getting caught up in the celebration.

There are particular themes I see repeatedly during this period. Several Caitiff I have interviewed spoke of the same sire, an Italian, who took great pains to fortify her position against what she saw as a second coming of the Inquisition. Her fear inspired her to rapidly Embrace quite a few expendable conscripts. Some she sent away, telling them only enough to help them survive for a time, as they would drag would-be vampire hunters after them and away from her. Others she kept like hunting hounds, starved of blood but for the barest animal sustenance, or staked in a crypt, paralyzed until she might need to unleash them against her enemies in a frenzy of hunger and pain.

Ominous Whispers

Of greater concern, I've seen evidence of cults that take action to hasten Gehenna. None of the Caitiff involved learned any details sufficient to unmask them beyond the snatches of glyphs or phrases in passing. From their testimony, I can hypothesize a few things. They have a vested interest in awakening the eldest of our kind, which these deluded Caitiff hope will please them. In this way, they might serve them instead of becoming victims of their thirst. Worse, it seems there are multiple organizations pursing this end. I have found mention of an "Imperial Order," "Bahari," "Edenic Groundskeepers," and other such strangeness that fails to yield any tangible results, but I am hopeful.

Of all the aspects of prejudice I have seen towards the Clanless, this bears the most weight. None point to a single Clan as harbingers of Antediluvians and their apocalyptic hungers. Which is not a little ironic, considering the Camarilla's patent denial of the existence of Antediluvians. I have always hoped to study Noddist texts to gain a better understanding, but no one affords Caitiff such honors. I stand before you today because I asked a Malkavian scholar of this city for just such an opportunity, which she took quite... poorly.

May I see my journal? The one you confiscated along with my other things. I was writing down what she was ranting at me when you came to collect me. Thank you. My memory is not what it once was.

"Clanless, all, they will know secret ways! Clanless, all, they are Lilith's foul get. Clanless, all, they are newly awake. Clanless, all! No family, no sign, no loyalty, no elder!"

Is that from the *Book of Nod*? No? Ah, you are above such superstition. Yes, of course. Still, it does have that poetic rhythm of the theological and prophetic, doesn't it? Very much like an omen. I wonder what they mean by "secret ways?" This mention of Lilith is obviously in relation to Old Testament creation myths or even Mesopotamic lore. But then, who can tell with Malkavians? Honestly, I have no idea how they manage to gain more respect than we do. I'm sorry; I hope you are not Malkavian. I mean no offense.

The Rise of the Clanless

The next major event in recent Caitiff history is in the late '50s, when Joseph Pander managed to gain legitimacy for the Clanless in the Sabbat. Hmm? No, absolutely not. I loved my sire very much, and I have no sympathy whatsoever for those deluded fools. Pander is less a Clan and more of a rank: that of cannon fodder. Pure folly, but it proved that at least one political entity might be convinced to take us seriously. All the worse for all involved that it is the Sabbat and not the Camarilla.

There have been several attempts made in the Ivory Tower, of course, most notably the one led by Alexi Darba in 1973. Of course, you know how that ended, likely better than I do. I only know that no one ever heard from them again. Rumor says Justicars became involved, a rather telling response if the Clanless are so beneath notice. But then, rumor is only rumor, and it would not be the first time Caitiff claimed greater legitimacy by exaggerating. Legends are the lifeblood of hope for the hopeless, and there are few so bereft of hope as a Caitiff.

There are, of course, other legends. As I understand, the

supposed first vampire Caine sired at least the progenitors of the thirteen Clans, but there is some speculation as to whether there were others. Some Caitiff like to think they are the descendants of these "lost Clans," or even that they are closer to Caine than any vampire with a Clan is. After all, we seem to be equally inclined towards all the preternatural gifts Kindred exhibit, and display no trademark weaknesses that are the most telling marks of Clan lineage. Perhaps that is another reason to fear us.

Now here we are, present day, with the Clanless population on the rise and the Sheriffs and Scourges working overtime to control them. However, exile only works so many times, with so many knocking on the door. Must seem like more every time. A slowly growing legion of Masquerade violations waiting to happen, or fresh recruits for the Sabbat, since the Camarilla doesn't want us.

A Confederacy of Bastards

Organization? Surely you are joking. As I said, congregations of Caitiff tend to be dispersed, whether a coterie for protection or a political movement. We are alone in this world, removed even from the isolated society of Kindred. Unless, of course, we want to join the Sabbat, but I have explained my thoughts on this. So no, we aren't organized, but we can be categorized.

City Trash

Vampires are suited to the city. We are no exception. Plentiful prey, numerous havens, anonymity, and the company of others who share our nature, even if they reject us. If I may be so bold, my position as an outsider might give me some perspective you lack, and it tells me that after the grand aims of the Camarilla or the Sabbat have been achieved for the night, all their parties and politics are nothing more than hollow excuses to spend time with other people who might understand them. Kindred crave understanding, and mortals cannot, indeed must not, understand us.

So what happens to the outcasts from the outsiders? I've seen many a Sheriff who fills a quiet night by keeping tabs on Caitiff like me, or pushing them around. Indeed, we make for an excellent resource. I daresay we fulfill a critical niche in our social ecology. We serve as scapegoats for the machinations and mistakes of legitimate Kindred, or examples to prove the strength and dominance of more powerful vampires. A Caitiff is not the omega in the pecking order, but the varlet, the whipping boy in the social stratification of unspoken Kindred castes.

For those who just want to get along, banding together is a natural move. A coterie of Caitiff can keep watch for each other, stand up for one another, offer companionship and someone to care when every other shoulder turns cold. Some even manage to carve out a little piece of the city for themselves, usually the places no other Kindred would bother with. Places like the city barrens, the worst slums, the kind that have no profit and poor hunting. The Prince generally only allows this if she doesn't want to disperse the rabble, but still wants to keep them out of the way. Of course, when that little reservation of Caitiff domain comes to the interest of any legitimate Kindred with a Clan, they have to make way. Not that this is very a difficult task for any accomplished Caitiff; making the best of things is a way of unlife for the Clanless. Unfortunately for them, those bands who associate with each other are usually broken up before they can become a potential threat to the peace. A Sheriff can claim they are anything from diablerists to being Sabbat spies, and no one will speak for them.

Others opt to climb the totem pole the hard way. There is always use for a Kindred who is willing to do the dirty jobs no one else wants, and no one sees the need to recognize a Caitiff's deeds past throwing them negligible scraps of power, scant instruction, meager resources, or fulfilling some minor boon any other vampire would laugh at. A canny Prince can make use of these desperate Caitiff, and as years pass, those who manage to succeed time and again may gain some modicum of reputation, if not respect, for getting the job done. I recall a Sheriff who kept the city's Caitiff as Hounds. She collected the credit for all their work, but she took good care of them with hunting rights and havens. A short leash in a gilded cage. Their lot is never equal to that of so-called *real* Kindred, but constant striving builds skill and will, and these Caitiff can prove canny agents and opponents. They'll fight for what little they have with all they've got.

The alternative is the Anarchs, who still may look down on Caitiff, but it's less of a handicap. As self-declared outcasts, Anarchs sometimes appreciate the inherent freedom of a Caitiff's nature. They're still a step down until they prove what they are capable of, but I've always found the Anarch States far more hospitable than the Camarilla, and infinitely more so than the Sabbat. Why don't I stay there? Frankly, the Anarchs tend to make poor historians. There's less of the culture I prize. In addition, if I were offered the opportunity to enjoy equal rights under the Camarilla, I would enjoy its citizenship. For now, the best I can do is to make a good impression.

What legitimate Kindred least expect is the power in perceived weakness. A Caitiff can use the underestimation of others to take them by surprise. Our ability to learn a variety of abilities without the limits of a Clan can make us versatile, particularly in combat. Similarly, no one expects us to be clever, and those who play the games of power well enough can reap unexpectedly rich rewards with no one the wiser. Of course, this is a rarity, and against the Machiavellian acumen of elders, most Caitiff who play this most dangerous game are punished for their audacity, or co-opted into becoming effective pawns.

Small Town Prince

Some Caitiff opt out of the city scene. It's no small wonder. Others hunt us just for existing, and without claim to domain and no Clan to back us up, there are slim pickings for feeding, havens, and opportunity. But the wilderness is werewolf country, and a vampire is going to need humans. So, they pull up stakes and make for the suburbs or small towns, places outside the domain of a Prince or Bishop and, being the only vampire around, declare themselves Prince of whatever backwater they choose.

It doesn't sound very glamorous, does it? Perhaps not, compared to the ritzy parties and late-night thrills of the metropolis, but for the Caitiff who is tired of others pushing him around, tired of being left out and spit upon, it can be a real relief to be the one calling the shots. It doesn't take too long to get the feel of a small burg, and blood bonds can quickly take over the key members of society, ensuring control over the police, politics, businesses, doctors, and even local gossips. The Caitiff Prince gets first pick of the feeding with no competition. They can build a nice little unlife of comfort and ease if they play their cards right, living better than they ever have before.

So why aren't more Caitiff doing this? Because there is a reason vampires stick to cities. Little towns rest in the midst of werewolf wilderness, and the wolves will happily hunt down a lone undead with no protection. Sabbat nomad packs on their way to cities may stop for rest and recruitment, and decide the Caitiff would make a good conscript, sport, or food. Perhaps least expected, though, are the mortal hunters. Small towns have very close-knit communities, and the wandering watcher from the church or even a paranoid mortal can spot the signs of vampiric manipulation and predation.

The most common, and indeed predictable, end of a Caitiff's reign is their own carelessness. Most Caitiff are not given proper instruction in the use of their powers, restraint of the Beast, or the practice of the Masquerade, to say nothing of managing ghouls or mortal politics. Some grow drunk on their power, while others let hunger take hold. Some Caitiff develop strange habits and needs, and in a small town, it's easy for word to get around fast. There are no shadows to hide in, no crowds to vanish into, and no Camarilla to clean up the mess. The human mass is not isolated in herds as it is in the city. It is a living community, and the vampire is a parasite. Once they reveal their nature, simple human action can be the end of the lone Kindred.

However, for some few who manage to learn the ropes and keep their heads down, rulership of a little fief is a peaceful existence. With time, they can build resources, educate themselves in the use of their abilities, and gain an understanding of how to manipulate mortals for their own security and comfort. These ones can pose a threat to an itinerant coterie or pack that strays into their territory, or may prove to be an ally who can offer shelter far from the intrigues of the city.

Exile

Back in the larger cities, not every Prince is so accommodating as to allow Caitiff in their city. While some might execute the Kindred outright, most will simply tell the misbegotten undead that their kind are not welcome, and tell them to leave immediately. City after city, these Caitiff meet closed doors guarded by Sheriffs more than willing to pound the message into them. The path of exile is as good as a death sentence. Most meet their ends at the claws and teeth of werewolves, while others starve, frenzy, or get absorbed into the Sabbat.

Those who do manage to survive usually go about it in one of two ways. The first is to become a nomad. While vampires are generally creatures of territory and security, a nomad takes their life in their hands wherever they go. Some ride the rails, while others hitchhike, gaining transport and a meal for their troubles. Others opt for a secure means of travel, like a camper or a car with a generous trunk. These Caitiff often recruit a ghoul to drive them by day. Some adopt a shipping route, making a little money as they journey in the cab of a freight truck. Strangely enough, these are the ones a Prince is most likely to accept for a brief time, as they do not ask for residency and can offer their services as messengers, couriers, or *agents provocateur*. A vampire on the go is harder to track, and can get up to all kinds of mischief before authorities, human or Kindred, can catch up to them. This is, of course, dependent on the Caitiff proving they are not a Sabbat agent. Not an easy task, but one some Clanless

consider worthwhile for the chance to earn feeding rights and training in their abilities.

The other option is solitude in the wilds. These vampires rarely survive in any sense of the word. With little in the way of shelter, a diet primarily consisting of animal blood, and no company, their already tenuous grip on their morality wavers and decays. Instinct and the Beast claim more of the conscious mind in the Caitiff's struggle just to survive. What seems to come naturally to the Gangrel is a hard-won skill for us. Only the most exceptional of Clanless adapt to this existence. For the rest, there is only the descent into madness and feral hunger until death from a mistake or a foe beyond their power to defeat and consume. Imagine that. The only place you can be safe is near those who despise you.

That's why I'm not afraid of you, Sheriff. Maybe it would have been better if my sire had just killed me that night, because I have stared death and rejection in the eye more times than you will ever have to imagine. I know I'm dead. Maybe it'll be you that kills me, or maybe another Sheriff, another Prince, another city. All I can do is promise my loyalty to the Camarilla, try to make it through another night, and find some kind of answers until then, so this will all have meant something.

That is what it is to be Caitiff.

So, what will it be, Sheriff? The stake and the sun, or exile?

Character and Traits

Concepts

The Disappointment

The process of choosing a potential neonate is not undertaken lightly, as the right to sire progeny is a great boon. Vampires who wish to sire progeny watch and even groom prospective childer for the Embrace. When such an exceptional specimen fails to mature into their Clan, it reflects poorly on both the Caitiff and the sire. So your creator has forsaken you, but you have some insight into Kindred politics and your own exceptional skills to call upon. Will you try to regain their love and trust, strike out on your own, or take vengeance on them for abandoning you?

Small Town Punk

You didn't plan on becoming some kind of freaky goth in the middle of Bumblefuck, Nowhere, but the vampire who decided you'd make a nice midnight snack while passing through didn't leave you much choice. It was sheer luck you bit into him as he drained you. That taste of blood carried you back to life when he exsanguinated you, and your hunger frenzy stole back every drop and more. You've got an idea of what you are, based on Netflix and young adult novels, so now you're wondering if his friends are going to come looking for him. Maybe it's time to run. Or maybe you should take over the town and set a trap...

Mongrel Hound

Sometimes you get dealt a shit hand in life, and the only thing to do is see it through. No job without experience, no experience without a job. Why should it be different for vampires? Well, you've got all the time in the world, now, so you look at this as an internship. Do a good job under the Sheriff maintaining the Masquerade and being her brute squad, and maybe you'll get to move up in the world.

Merits and Flaws

Personal Masquerade (3pt. Merit)

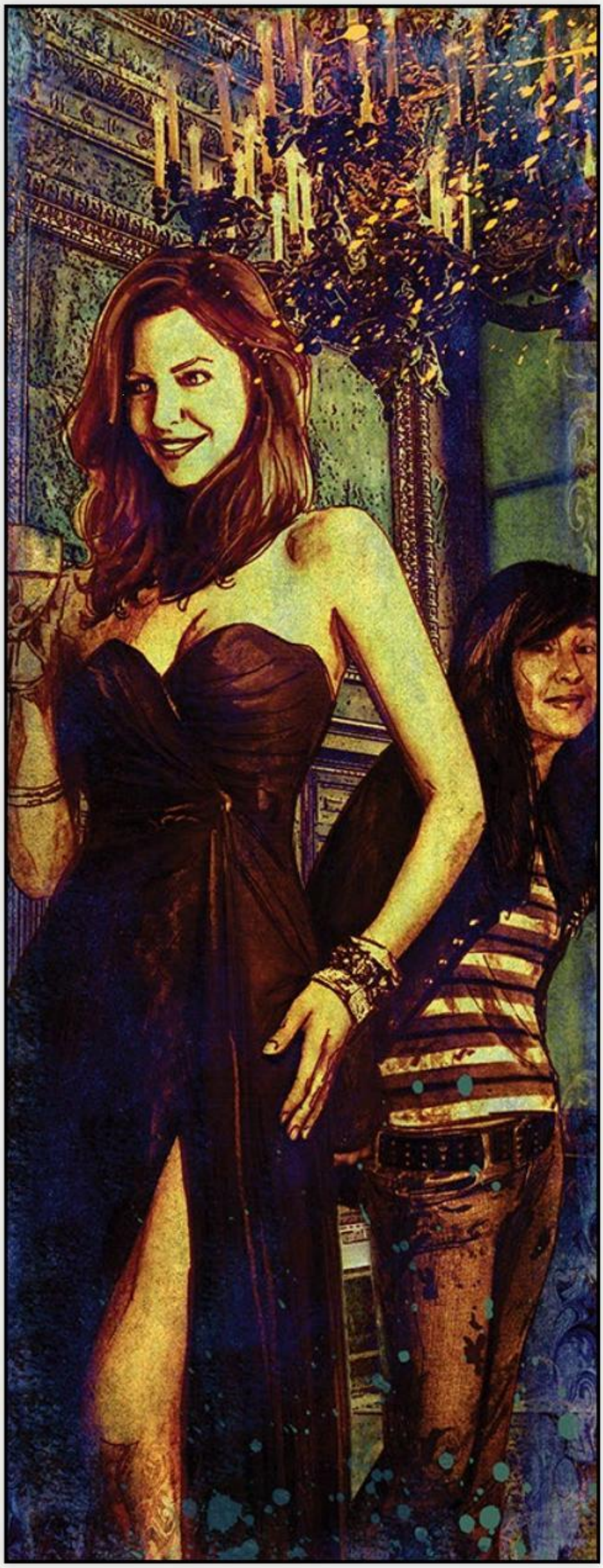
Thorough charm, manipulation, or just plain luck, you have managed to convince other vampires that you are a member of one of the Clans. Any social interactions with vampires ignorant of your true nature ignore your usual penalty for being Caitiff. However, you must constantly be vigilant of your ruse. Should anyone come to realize you have been playing them for fools, their vengeance will be swift. The higher you climb in Kindred politics, the more likely this becomes. The Clan Weakness Flaw can actually prove to be a boon in supporting your Masquerade. Others, however, must be that much more careful.

Clan Weakness (2pt. Flaw)

Despite your failure to adopt your original Clan's other abilities, you did inherit their weakness. While this can be deadly to the unprepared vampire, a canny Caitiff might turn this to their advantage to better blend among the parent Clan. Some Nosferatu, for example, would likely never notice, and might even stand up for the Caitiff even amidst accusations from outsiders.

Fangless (2pt. Flaw)

Considered the mark of a true mongrel, you never developed your fangs, or you lacked teeth before the Embrace. Either way, you have to use a knife or otherwise drink from bleeding wounds. You have no natural way beyond Disciplines to inflict aggravated damage.



Ignorance (2pt. Flaw)

Many sires abandon their Caitiff progeny without a word of instruction or warning about their new nature. For most Princes, ignorance is no excuse for a breach of the Masquerade, and Sabbat packs are quick to notice weakness. The character starts with no knowledge of the abilities, customs, or politics of the undead, and must learn from their mistakes or find a mentor. Of course, any vampire willing to take on a Caitiff will most likely blood bond the poor wretch, leading to a completely new set of problems. Ignorance is deadly for a vampire, and doubly so for the Clanless.

Bulimia (4pt. Flaw)

You hunger for blood, and like all vampires, you will eventually feed, but the thought of it still makes you sick. Maybe you're just not cut out for an eternity of bloodsucking, or you had an eating disorder in life that has followed you to the other side of mortality. Whatever the reason, you can't hold your blood. Whenever you feed, make a Stamina roll with a difficulty 8. If you fail, you vomit out the fresh blood before it can be absorbed into your body, spraying it everywhere (embarrassing at best, a breach of the Masquerade at worst). Note that blood taken in frenzy is absorbed normally, though this carries its own risks.

Combination Disciplines

Bagman's Shelter (Obtenebration ••, Fortitude •••)

Vampires can't stand sunlight, but not every vampire has the luxury of a haven or the ability to merge into the earth. What they do have is access to some exotic Disciplines, and some of those who have to last the day in unsecured shelter have survived by this little beggar's trick.

System: The Caitiff spends a blood and a Willpower point before resting for the day. All around them, the shadows darken and reinforce cover in such a fashion that improves an otherwise flimsy shelter for the purpose of blocking sunlight. What light does penetrate the space seems not to reflect from whatever surface it hits. As long as none of the exposure is direct, the vampire can sleep safely in a small space, such as the back of a truck cab under a heavy blanket or a basement stairway in the alley covered in trash. For some reason, this ability doesn't work if the Caitiff is awake.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

Beneath Contempt (Obfuscate ••, Presence •••)

Sometimes the only way to stay alive is to bow your head and grovel. While that is not a necessary element of this power, many Caitiff remain alive only because someone more powerful didn't think they were worth the effort to kill. By focusing an aura of the pitiable while masking any real strength they have, the Caitiff can find grudging mercy in disgust.

System: The character spends a Willpower point to activate this power. For the remainder of the scene, anyone who looks at the Caitiff as a potential threat must make a Willpower roll against a difficulty equal to the Caitiff's Humanity score, or 4 if the Caitiff is on a Path of Enlightenment. If they fail the roll, they dismiss the Caitiff as being unworthy of hostility. The Caitiff is not invisible or forgotten, and they might still take them prisoner if they have been defeated and are begging for mercy.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

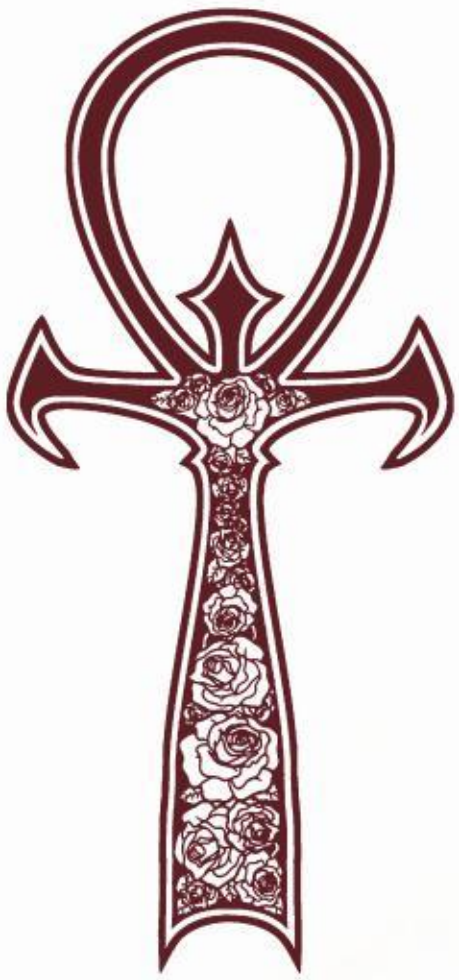
Mover and Shaker (Auspex ••, Presence •••)

Playing the grand city game is beyond most Caitiff, but those who choose to take over a suburban town can learn to create a modest but effective hold over their minor territory. The Caitiff who becomes well acquainted with the people of their town can weave a subtle web of approval among them, harnessing not only their goodwill, but also their shelter from accusers.

System: The Caitiff must spend time meeting and getting to know all of the people of the town they want included in this effect. By spending a Willpower point for each night they spend mingling, they can gain the lasting trust of the citizens in a passive, undetectable fashion.

This does not have as obvious an effect as Presence, nor does it give you control over them. What it does do is create a sense of basic goodwill and a positive impression. They trust the Caitiff, and anyone who starts asking suspicious questions or making accusations will find doors closing to them – all Social rolls regarding the Caitiff are at +2 difficulty for a number of weeks equal to the number of Willpower points spent. This can help shake off would-be hunters and even some Kindred. Werewolves and other supernaturals will have their own ways to find the Clanless.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.



Appendix II: The Antitribu

"We are told to remember the idea, not the man, because a man can fail.
He can be caught, he can be killed and forgotten, but 400 years later, an idea can still change the world."

— Evey Hammond, *V for Vendetta*

The Assamites

I smile when I hear the word *antitribu*. It unsettles others when they see it. They expect me to be a grim-faced assassin who only opens his mouth to fill it with the hard won blood of his targets. In a way, the idea is comforting. An unthinking beast is easier to manage than a thinking adversary is. That we are the *antitribu* because we do what we've done since our Embrace is a paradox I meditate upon often. We are dead but we live. We are men but we are beasts. We are unbound yet we are the ones called exile.

We spilled the blood that let the rest of the Sabbat slip the chains of the Antediluvians. Whether it was because of ideology, mercenary blood contracts, or revenge for the bloodshed of the Crusades, it matters not. Our hands held the knives that slit throats across the world. The founders of the Camarilla knew we were the true threat. Why were we the only ones cursed by the blood witches? Why not those who slew their founders? Alamut was discovered but never truly in danger. It was a moment of weakness that put our brothers in chains that still bind them to this very night.

How we escaped the curse depends on where you hear the story. The sorcerers say they sacrificed themselves in great number to ensure that a few would have unchained blood. The viziers say that Haqim spoke to the worthy in their dreams of day, speaking powerful words of protection that the blood curse could not break. The warriors claim they took a place of power from the witches and forced them to free their small band from the curse in exchange for killing them quickly. The common thread amongst these stories is there were those who would not submit, who would not bend their knee, and they now stand with the Sabbat.

Those outside of our blood see little difference. Our loyalty is to the Sabbat, not to the sleeping thing that gave us our blood. We are proud of our heritage and the gifts Haqim gave us, but we fear that he now sides with his tainted brothers and sisters over his sons and daughters. On some black day in the future, he will rise like the rest, with a terrible, unknowable hunger. We will stand against all of them with sharp blades and bared fangs ready to drink their sweet, sweet souls when they show their unworthiness to us all. I only wish I were there on the nights when the others fell to their childer.

Many of us shifted our worship from the fallen idol of Haqim to the one who gave him his blood. Caine is the true master of the blood. He has faced gods, angels, and monsters, and defied them all. Haqim saw the path and lead us much of the way, but his sleep is muddled

with confusing dreams and the manipulations of the Antediluvians. We are the Angels of Caine, showing those with his blood how he used it to rule, to survive, and to master its wrath. We are beautiful, we are terrible, and we serve only he who is worthy to command our power.

Our focus in these matters gives us a right to positions that require faith. We are the paladins of the Sabbat. Our packs are feared for their bloodshed, with each member pushing the next to kill more enemies and soak the streets in undeserving blood. The Black Hand may offer membership to those who survive, taking their place as our blood did in the early nights by guiding the Sabbat's purpose. I hope to one day be recognized as *Hulul*, the eldest member of the blood within our ranks. I know whom I would choose as my *Shakari* to advise me, and I even know where I wish the ritual of my destruction to take place.

Despite our reputations for fanaticism, those under the curse are still our blood. We do not war with one another. We know they strain under an unjust yoke. They may serve Haqim, but they serve Caine by doing so. We would not stoop to kick a muzzled dog. We would not disown a family member because they are in prison. We know that if the opportunity arises to throw off their shackles, they would take it. We rejoice when those small numbers do, and wait patiently for all of our brothers and sisters to one day be free again, just as we were in those beautiful nights of agony.

The Brujah

Don't think vampires are immortal. There are still plenty of things out there every night that will kill you. That's why they play all these political games. Deep down, those bastards in power know that one day, they'll be gone, so they need to soak up as much power and pull as they can while they can still use it. They see the fires and the sunrise and use whatever they can to protect their petty little kingdoms. We're the ones smashing the barricades to let in as much light as possible. The only way they can ever feel how much we burn on the inside every night is by burning them on the outside for a few minutes until they are ash. We live every night like an eternity.

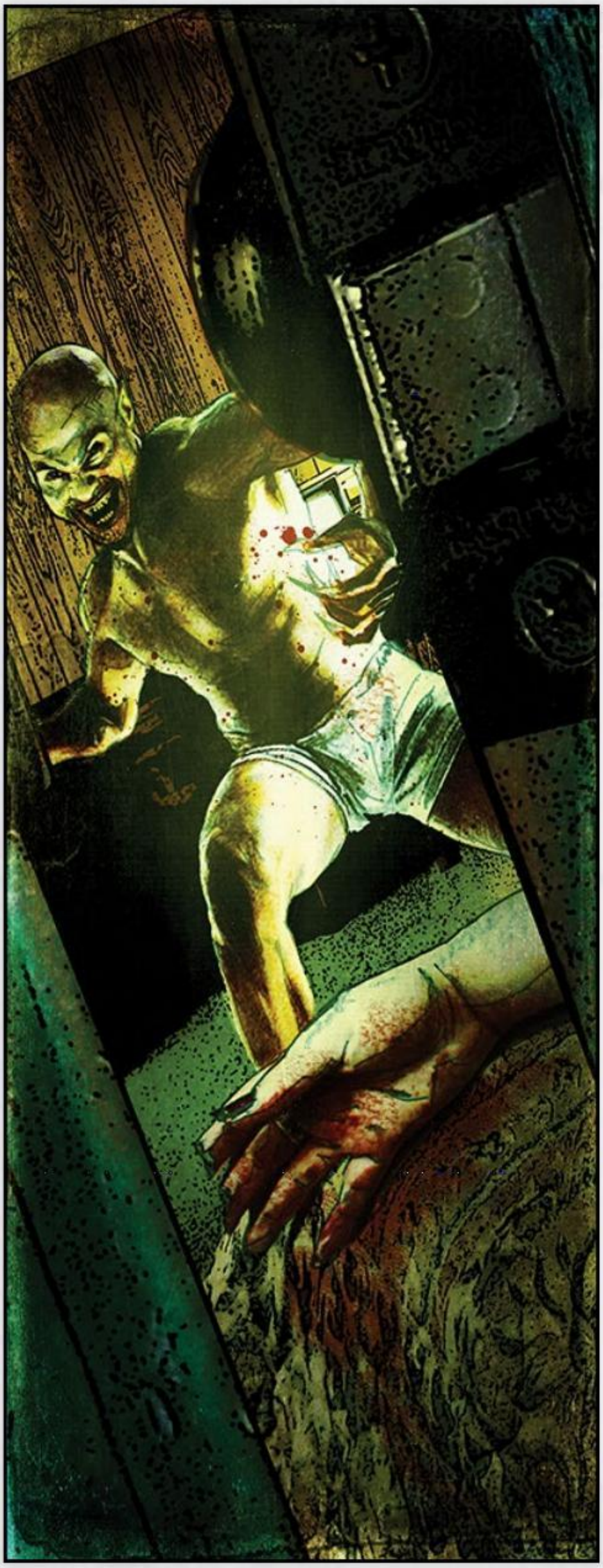
We've been on the frontlines since the beginning. We're the burning heart of the true Anarch movement, not the pale reflection that stole the name. We're the fury that drove Troile to slay his or her sire. We showed the world it could be done. We held the old bones of Lasombra and Tzimisce while their childer tore out bloody chunks and squeezed them dry. We feel the burn of frenzy and don't hold back. When the Camarilla scares its sad little members with horror stories about the atrocities of the Sabbat, we're the ones they talk about.

Far too many Kindred scurry in the shadows or cast furtive glances from their towers. We are the glorious monsters in the streets. Why resist when the blood calls out? We ride that wave out to the bitter end, covered in our blood or the blood of anybody in our way. We are freedom from human morality, freedom from the tyranny of thought, freedom from the fear of dying without making a mark on the world. We burn bright so that the Sabbat may tread in our wake and ensure those freedoms are passed along to the next generations.

The blood that we spill in the name of the Sabbat often belongs to those who share our name in the Camarilla. Those poor, deluded fools. They suddenly saw their existence threatened and fell in line with the rest of the Kindred. They still feel the passion that burns brightly, but they are so easily pointed at each other to squabble in parking lots, instead of tearing down the power structures they pay such lip service to lament. They bark viciously at the end of their leash, but even when they slip it, they rarely know what to do with all that pent-up aggression. They are the dogs who caught the car they chased.

You've heard the tales about how we invented the "shovelheads." Bury a bunch of neonates in the ground, see which ones climb out, and see how long they survive. As if the Embrace is some sacred, holy thing. It's just another one of the traditions to be burned and broken, another rule put in place because older vampires are afraid of being eclipsed and eaten. We are predators who need our young to be meaner predators than we are. There's no time to protect childer and wait for them to decide if they really want to be a vampire. The fire inside never burns as brightly as it does in that first night, and we need to see who will hold onto that feeling. The ones who can't claw themselves out just in time for the sun to melt them away.

Those who claim they are the "true" members of our Clan are even more deluded. They are the sad pawns of the elders who we seek to destroy. Their claims exist only to give themselves a sense of purpose. The lies they've built let them lurk in the halls of power of the Sabbat. They can have their word games and their secret clubhouses. Our lives are too short and too full of purpose to worry about naming rights. We spend our nights on the streets of living cities tasting the real blood of our enemies. Until they show this true power that they claim to possess, we have better things to do.



What about the Anarchs? These pretenders know where the real struggle lies, at least. They are a fertile ground of finding brothers and sisters to the cause, even if their blood snakes away to different founders. We can speak the most freely here, away from the oppression of the Camarilla and the power games of the Sabbat. They are our half-brothers, not quite ready to let themselves go, but certainly willing to lend an ear (and a hand) when we need to look outside the pack for support.

But in the end, it's all bullshit. None of it matters until we can burn it all down.

The Gangrel

Why don't you tell me the difference? Most Kindred don't see it. They think we're all buddies with the Lupines and live in junkyards on the edge of town. They only call us when something needs to be torn apart as a message or because they need to be sure it's dead. The hypocrites treat us like dogs when everyone else is just as much of an animal as we are. The Embrace is a wake-up call, reminding us of our animal nature by giving it teeth. Most Kindred try to push it down or away. We hold onto it like a long-lost relative. It's not this other thing that we blame for misfortunes. It's what we've always been. It's what we always become.

The ones who write the histories love to claim they were the ones who lead from the front. We tell the stories of their fearful probes into our territories sending their hapless children in the night for us to stalk and slaughter. The choice between Clan and *antitribu* was false for us. We didn't care either way. It came down to a choice between making peace with neighbors and building fortifications between your territories. The Gangrel in the Sabbat incite fear, while those in the Camarilla are treated like now-broken animals who were once mighty.

The difference lies in our viciousness. We protect our territories tooth and nail. If that means killing a family to make a point, our hands get dirty. The Beast will not be ignored. It shows us the truth of our surroundings. Nature is full of savage reality, and the night is no different. The Camarilla fears the response of humanity, but they've proved not to be worthy vampires already. If we can't come out on top through viciousness and exacting a price in blood for hunting us, we've failed The Beast. We are unworthy of it.

An Outside Perspective: The Giovanni

First off, there ain't no such thing as a Giovanni *antitribu*. Hurts my ears just to say it. There are always going to be them who ain't happy with their cut and cry about it. They'll complain to whoever listens, make big claims about quitting the family and throw a tantrum or two to prove how serious they are. Either one of two things happens: they get a few years to calm down and make their apologies, or they get invited to a meeting to clear the air and they don't make no more trouble for anybody ever again. It's hard to fight the blood. Going against the Clan means going against the family, and there ain't too many people who can do that. Even less who can make it stick.

Of course, just because we don't sign up for the Sabbat don't mean we can't do business. They know we do business with the Camarilla, and the Camarilla knows the same. There ain't no vampire yet that doesn't have to do bad things to stay upright from night to night. Even the ones who try to be picky on how they feed still gotta take blood from somebody. The Sabbat, at least, leave their monstrous nature out there on the table, which makes it easier to act like we respect them. Too many Kindred in the Camarilla call us necromancers and give us that *look*, even though they're the ones who made the Promise of 1528.

Sure, there are plenty of our people who claim they don't want to deal with the Sabbat. Good for them. They're the ones that we can hold up to the Camarilla whenever they get upset about uncovering one of our arrangements. Between you and me, those Giovanni who stomp around about not getting into bed with the Sabbat are the same ones who do plenty of business with them anyway, thanks to proxies in the family who have no problem talking to the local pack leaders. Plenty of earners built their careers on selling guns to Sabbat packs looking to tear up somebody's Elysium or slipping the location of the Prince's new haven under the right door.

There's a reason we don't mind being seen talking to the Sabbat. They make great patsies. Deals go south, operations go bad, and sometimes someone's gotta take the fall. Anyone in the blood knows they might have to serve their time or eat a rooftop breakfast in the name of protecting our interests. But a lot of times, we just point our fingers at the Sabbat and get everybody looking the other way. The Sabbat expect it too. They probably did the same thing somewhere else and figure that if anyone wants a fight, they got plenty of them to hand out.

There's one big, fat, juicy reason to get into bed with the Sabbat: they bring the body count. The cities they fight for rack up plenty of casualties, and the cities where they are in control aren't far behind. Dead bodies mean ghosts, and ghosts mean plenty of fresh souls for our family interests. Whether that means ones the Clan can use for practical purposes or ones they just squirrel away for the Endless Night, nobody else is going to be using them anytime soon.

All Gangrel do the same thing; we hunt. For the Sabbat, we hunt enemies, pursue traitors, and chase victims in the dark spaces between the cities. The Sabbat lets us do so to the full extent of our abilities. We don't have to wear a human smile or dress up for tea parties. Our strange features make it difficult for them to politely drink blood. We leave that to the Clans that enjoy that sort of thing. If something threatens us, we kill it. It may be a slow, quiet death or a messy death full of more blood on the walls than in our mouths, but it inevitably ends with one of us not returning the next night.

In the darkness of a lonely highway, the difference between Gangrel and *antitribu* is hard to tell. The Country Gangrel love to set up traps to lure their prey. A single motel miles away from town. A side of the road diner where nobody is eating. Humanity has suppressed its base instincts for so long that it's just so easy to get them into your parlor before you shut the door. They think they can protect themselves with smartphones, GPS, and Yelp ratings. They don't realize how hard it is to dial 911 when a Gangrel has already chewed off a few of their fingers.

Cities are not without their dark places; look for old factories, abandoned strip malls, and defunded city buildings, and you'll see the gleaming eyes of our packs. We've known just how small the light cast by the fires of civilization is since the first cities, when we came to Greece. We adapt our look to match our environment like any wary predator. While the Gangrel who wander the wastes start to look like wolves and eagles every time they give themselves over to the Beast, the ones in urban nests look more like rats and spiders. Our monstrous appearance is just one more tool of evolution. The seconds prey spend wondering what the hell is that thing are seconds we use to close in for the kill.

Make no mistake; if you've angered a Gangrel, your days are numbered. Our Camarilla cousins may be on a leash, but if they slip it, they can be just as ferocious. They are the only other Kindred we can respect as predators. Every other vampire is predator or prey. Predators must be avoided when they are aware of you and eliminated if you can get the drop on them. Prey is to be consumed. You may toy with it if you like, but always be decisive when the time comes to end things. The other Gangrel still understand this, even if they've chosen to stand with those who wish to deny them their love of The Beast.

The Lasombra

Okay, I'll tell you what you want to know. I mean, you already know what I am. You've done all this work to pick apart my claims of a Ventrue lineage. You must want to know why I did it. Why any of us do it. I'll tell you before you kill me, because if you tell anybody, I'll be dead anyway. The Sabbat will come for me or your Prince will find an excuse to blame one of his failures on me and drive me out of the city. If I tell you why, at least I'll know somebody understands why I stood against my Clan.

We don't like to use the term *antitribu*. Most of us want to draw as little attention to ourselves as possible. Calling out our status just encourages trouble. Despite what the Clan would have you believe, not everyone was on board with Gratiano's plan to strike down our founder. Some even consider Montano, Lasombra's childe who fought against the founders of the Sabbat, the leader of our faction. There's nothing of the sort. We just want to be left alone without the weight of leadership or the feeling we need to be constantly looking over our shoulder.

During one of her all-night lectures of Kindred history, my sire told me that our Clan invented the term *antitribu*. I don't know how true that is; she said the Lasombra were responsible for many things, and it got to the point where she claimed we invented television and Embraced Albert Einstein. But she had a way about her that... I couldn't understand why you would look at your sire and think they were the enemy. None of what she said to me made sense. Maybe it did centuries ago when the Sabbat was newly born, but they've been around just as long as the Camarilla. How could they not see they were just as bad, if not worse? My sire and I had... a disagreement. I hoped that the Archbishop would believe the fire claimed both of us.

Many of the Lasombra who leave do so as a reaction to finding out about their Clan's history. There are still a few holdouts who sided with Montano from the old days, but they are decidedly well hidden. Most Lasombra can't reconcile what the Sabbat says with what the Sabbat does. Despite fighting against the Jyhad for five centuries, they haven't found any more founders to pull into the light. A few of the Lasombra on this side of the wall even wonder if the vampire Gratiano destroyed was, in fact, our founder.

Even rarer and more deadly are the Lasombra who think the Sabbat has lost their way. These radicals think Gratiano is due for a coup much like our founder experienced. They play a dangerous game by trying to reclaim the Clan from Lasombra in the Sabbat. Hiding in the shadows from masters of the dark is difficult enough. These Kindred strike back at not just their Clan, but also the entire Sect they control. If they don't do it carefully, hopefully they take out as many as they can when they are loudly destroyed as an example to anyone who would stand against the Lasombra.

There are more of us in the Camarilla than you would think, but not enough to rally around. Many of us pretend to be members of other Clans. Others don't bother to mention what bloodline their hail from, but do their best to avoid rooms with big mirrors. Those Lasombra who try to exist outside of either large Sect usually have contacts in both they can use to obscure their lineage. Having a Tremere willing to lie about lineage tests is the gift every one of us wants.

The Sabbat Lasombra are relentless in their pursuit of us. You could probably deliver me to one of their leaders and wrap up a nice little position for yourself. I've seen all sorts of traps laid out for Lasombra not part of the Sabbat. I've seen amnesty offered and bloody murder delivered. I've seen Camarilla Princes claim false lineage to justify Blood Hunts. I've seen meetings supposedly arranged by Montano himself end in fiery explosions. I want you to think about that once you've left here. The Lasombra in the Sabbat like to claim that we don't exist. If you claim to have met one, how long will it be before they come looking for you?



The Malkavians

What's in a name? We are the same as the ones who stand across the political divide. We're both made of iron bone, barbed wire muscle, and unnatural meat. If we stand against everything they believe, does that not make us irredeemably sane? We are paragons of cold, rational thought known for our tempered experiences in this undead life. Yet mention your Clan to another member of the Sabbat and they stare curiously, expecting you to try to bite your own fingers off. Which is ridiculous. Other people's fingers are readily available.

When Mommy and Daddy split up, there was a lot of talk about who we would end up living with. The Camarilla was full of Kindred who needed our help. So many denying the truth by walking through the night with their eyes already closed. The Sabbat are blind in their own way, but their thrashing about is immensely entertaining. The whole split was because of a disagreement over the crazy stories Kindred believed about the Clan founders. Some of us didn't care. Some of us wanted to make them crazier. The stories, I mean, though making the stories crazier drove the Sabbat to do more extreme things, which made us make the stories even crazier still, which turned the whole thing into this great apocalyptic hamster wheel. We keep the pedal to the metal as we rocket toward Gehenna. Maybe as a gift Malkav will make the wilder stories come true.

It was all thanks to dearest Vasantasena. Not only did she see the truth of the strings, but also she made sure that no matter who won, there would still be children on the winning side. She stood with the Sabbat and drew the most broken with her. We would have never survived in the Camarilla's society of tortured politeness. Here, we flourish like weeds. Every delicate flower crushed in our hands, using the innards to smear the truth in ragged letters. We may shout, but watch when we quietly walk into a gathering of packs. Everyone pays attention to us.

Her greatest gift was keeping Malkav's blessing alive in each of us. The rest of the Sabbat call it a "discipline," but it is the direct line to Malkav's ear. Here, as part of this organization dedicated to burning the founders, lies the most direct connection to their terrible dreams and nauseating revelations. A connection that will continue to exist even if Malkav and all of his brothers and sisters are pulled from the ground like weeds. We hold the proof

of their existence in our very blood, passing it on to the others not so long ago.

Are we the rabid dogs that the Sabbat keeps around to set loose on enemies? If we're so dangerous that we need to be kept in cages, hung upside down by chains, why do they keep us around? We've shielded ourselves from the whispers of the old ones by tearing out the offending matter with bloody fingers. We are running as hard and as fast as we can toward the Sabbat's original goal. If we are truly leashed, we pull the whole revolution along by our teeth. By our example, we show the others just how beautiful freedom is. Freedom from sanity. Freedom from morality. Freedom from humanity.

To those who don't understand the subtle nuances of things, they often single us out as the more extreme cases featuring the weakness of our blood. Malkavians can occasionally be presentable, but the *antitribu* will bite off your face if you're in the same room. However, we both want you to see the world for what it truly is. The tame ones like to play games and design extraordinary machines that clockwork to the point of revelation. We prefer to throw you through the mirrored glass and hope you survive the fall.

So if we're the ones continuing on from the original bloodline, have an ancient Elder watching out for us, and protect a unique power that we graciously passed on to our inferiors, how is it that we are called *antitribu* and they get to wrap themselves in the loving arms of our father Malkav? Anyone who thinks we don't have a sense of humor should see how we react to that question in person.

The Nosferatu

My favorite part of the night is *that* look. You know, that *look* when the twisted wreck of flesh and bone starts to speak. People jump. Even the leanest, meanest pack leaders fresh off an attack run pull back from my face. Elders who have been dead centuries widen their eyes when they see the color of my tongues. The gag reflex, long buried by years of undeath, triggering when I groom myself. Maybe I should have been a Toreador, because I like to put on a show. Course, when I say that to the Toreadors who hire me, their reaction is the best of all.

Every Nosferatu's heard a different version of the story. Our founder did something bad. He killed Caine. He was the first diablerist. He was The Beast That Ate Carthage. Some of these I've heard, some of them I made up. Sometimes, when I host work parties, I give out a prize for the best one and then sell it as gospel truth to someone who didn't attend a few weeks later. When you hear a big story like that, you have to ask yourself; do I believe it? The ones who didn't joined the Camarilla. The ones who did joined the Sabbat. It's not as clear today as it was back then, but then, what ever really is?

That's the big difference between us and the other Nosferatu. We're out to get him before whatever it was he did comes back to get us. We know he's been covering his warty ass for thousands of years by hiding out in some deep tunnel somewhere. Some of us dig too deep into the earth and rarely come back. Maybe they see him and figure out the truth. Maybe he eats them like bugs. The point is we know the Antediluvians are real. Ours has been screwing us over since he gave us our name and took everything else.

In the meantime, what we do for the Sabbat is not that much different from what we do for the Camarilla. We listen. Then we pass on that information to the people who need it. War packs need to know where to go. Bishops need to know when cities are primed for the taking. We set the fuse for all the big boom excitement that is the Sabbat's calling card. We also make sure that everyone's on the same page when factions within the Sabbat all want the glory of dying for Caine. We just make sure they pay us up front.

We might have one of the most cordial relationships with our other halves. We work the same job, have the same outlook, and the family resemblance is obvious. The only thing that really gets annoying is how they like to wrap themselves up like mummies and corpses. The lights come on and they scuttle like roaches or rats. We like to stand our ground. The Sabbat is about not hiding what Caine gave us. We like the way we look. We can walk the shadows with the best of them. But when it's time to talk face to face, might as well have some fun with it.

Our mutual respect also means we cut down on the bullshit with each other. I think I can safely say that not everyone who hires me works for the same organization. It's the nature of the business. Sometimes people pay you to tell them what they want to hear. I do my best to be accurate, but you can't ever really be 100%. However, if it's someone from the Clan that comes and talks to me, I'm going to make damn well sure that what I give up is true. I expect the same in return.

One word will perk up the ear of any Nosferatu within range. And usually get them to scurry away as fast as they can. Nictuku. Whenever one of us starts talking about it... them... him...? Anyway, that's a clear sign to wrap up the

conversation. Because whenever one of those things turns up, our warrens clear out. Nobody really knows if it's because everyone goes to ground or everyone gets put in the ground. But, if they are real, and we believe they are, they hate us something fierce.

The Pander

It's not much, but it's a name. We're one of the few groups in the Sabbat that doesn't define itself as "not the other guys." It's mostly the two founding Clans and us, which says a lot. Not everyone remembers that and thinks we're just some lousy Caitiff. We have to show them why that's a terrible mistake to make. We are the Panders, and we fought for that name. We might not have the bloodline or mythology that the Clans do, but we showed the Sabbat there are still people willing to fight and die for what they believe.

A lot of folks fought for their rights in the 1950s. Our namesake Joseph Pander led our fight. He got tired of the other *antitribu* pushing us around and organized us against the factions within the Sabbat that were making things rough for us. Were we pawns in a bigger struggle? Maybe. But we made this name by cutting down those who stood opposed to our goal of improving our station in unlife. The Tzimisce and Lasombra backed us in the end, and here we are today as full members of the Sabbat.

Unfortunately, we get the grunt work in Sabbat cities. If a pack leader can't get their newbie to do it, they call us. We get to haul bodies, trail spies, and make sure that Cainites are going where they are supposed to be going. We usually don't get called in for front line fighting, but we aren't soft. When they push us too far, we got no problems picking up right where Joseph Pander left off when we got our name. The Sabbat forgets that from time to time, so we remind them with a few busted noses and broken windows.

One point that makes things difficult is how we define ourselves. We're not a Clan because our blood hasn't been around long enough to take on specific powers and weaknesses. We're not a bloodline because we're still open to anyone who feels left out, was cast out, or believes in the ideas of the Sabbat without knowing where their blood leads. And we're not a Sect because we don't have a political agenda. I mean, yeah, Joseph has a knack for politics, since without him we wouldn't be what we are, but we only have decades of scheming instead of centuries.



We're something different from all of them. Some nights, I like to think we're something better. We get cast-offs from both within and without the Sabbat. The Caitiff have it rough. They don't hear about us unless we get the message out to them, but when they do, they get that look in their eyes. They rarely do unless we get the message out to them. The Camarilla doesn't tell them much about their structure. They certainly aren't going to talk about how the Panders stood up within the Sabbat and took a little something on their own. The trick is knowing which Caitiff will listen and which will sell you out to suck up and try to make their existence in a Camarilla city a little easier.

Every Pander says they've met Papa Joe once. I know I did. I thought he'd be taller. He sat hunched over at a bar in town. He was checking in with the local Ducti to make sure they weren't giving us too much trouble. He even gave me some good advice. He told me to learn as many Disciplines as I could. He shook my hand and it felt... warm. I don't know how he did it or if he knew he was doing it, but it made me feel good. It was a solid, firm grip by someone who knew just exactly what he was in this world. Even if that's someone who spends their nights getting their nose broken because they're sick of putting up with a vampire's shit.

The Ravnos

So many of our kind cling to the cities like a child wailing in fear. They expect a werewolf to maul them the moment they step out of the city limits. They worry their car will break down and they'll have to spend the night in the trunk. Both of these things have happened to me, and I've lived to tell the tale. I change the telling depending on who is listening. I am reborn in every town. Here I am a contractor driving a truck full of tools. In the last town, I was a young tech maverick looking for investors. The Ravnos die every night and every night we are reborn as something new. The *antitribu* discard these identities like dead flowers as it suits our whims.

We joined the Sabbat because they offered that which the Camarilla did not: freedom. Our blood seeks the truth behind the illusions, but the other Ravnos too often wrap themselves up in the philosophy. They stayed out of the conflict because they were busy contemplating their navels and their paradox. The Sabbat offered a chance to walk the world, seeing lies of all different sizes and shapes. It was a tempting offer from the start. We stand apart from the firebrands and the revolutionaries calling for the heads of their elders. It's far too amusing to see young Cainites turn into that which they despise.

Our wanderlust serves us well as messengers in-between cities. Vampires adapt to modern technologies slowly. There are those who still communicate by sealed letter and ancient cipher. Mystic artifacts aren't the type of things one trusts to the post office. We're also often asked to explore areas unknown to the Sabbat. We find out what cities can be expanded into and what Camarilla holdings make good targets for quick strikes. This makes us valuable to the Sect and lets us stay on the road as much as possible.

Exploration is second nature to us because of our blood. We don't stride into a city with our *antitribu* status puffed out on our chests. We know that to the outsider, all the Ravnos look alike. We're vagabonds and wanderers who merit little attention. We're not interested in grandstanding in the name of the Sabbat. Plenty of the other Cainites do that and do it well. We love new experiences, especially the odd ones the Sabbat provides, but we aren't usually the ones digging graves or setting an Elysium on fire.

This freedom to explore extends inside ourselves as well. Many of the Ravnos walk one of the Paths of Paradox to keep the Beast at bay. Such a dogmatic solution to a central question of our existence! If we are to seek out the illusions of the world, shouldn't belief systems be part of that exploration? At the very least, it's a test of the faith we should have. And for those of my brothers and sisters who now walk the paths of the Sabbat, perhaps they've discovered something we have yet to uncover.

Anyhow, we often use people's confusion to our advantage. If a city is hostile to the Ravnos, we play up the differences between us. They are the troublemakers, not us. We don't play all those silly little games. But in a city that loves the Ravnos, we quietly drop the *antitribu* and make a big show of putting our arms around our long-lost Clanmates. Here's a little secret: the Ravnos do the same exact thing to us. I've seen a Ravnos convince a Primogen that her evil twin Ravnos *antitribu* sister was to blame for the things she did. She even got the old fool to apologize to her.

When we do encounter one of our brothers in blood, we'll wave as we walk past. Sometimes we'll spend a few hours catching up on family, friends, and enemies. There is a polite distance between us, but violence rarely erupts. They think they might give us what they consider redemption, while we can speak plainly to those on the edges doubting their place in the Clan. Telling them about the things we've seen is the best way to pull other

Ravnos into our freedom. They could be having so much fun if they would just let themselves do it. They could experience things they can't do anywhere else. The biggest illusion of them all is the one fooling them into thinking they can be so much more.

The Serpents of the Light

Whenever an animal wishes to cause fear in another animal, it makes a hissing noise. Nothing cuts to that primal fear like the sound a snake makes before it strikes. The Followers of Set have worshipped the personification of the snake for thousands of years. They claim their master is the first among equals, greater than Caine, greater than all the vampires who gave their blood and their names to the Clans. We take our name from what they fear, the simple thing that harms them the most. Every time they say it, they are reminded of all the lies they surrounded themselves with.

While we are thankful for the gifts of our founder, we need not cloak our respect in any more elements of mythology that they already are. We are the childer of a powerful elder, thousands of years old. We do not need to exaggerate him to be the root of all darkness, the true creator of vampires, or build underground temples to illustrate his power. The Setites make bold claims to chase away the Sabbat, trying to convince us that they will be crushed so easily should they seek him out. We know the truth. He will have his day in the light at our hands.

We are united not just in blood with the Setites, but also by our serpent's tongues. They tell lies about the influence of their whole Clan. They say Set was as a god and claimed a place beside Ra, Isis, and the others of Egyptian myth. We tell lies about our lineage and claim to be descended from whatever vampires, *loa*, and other beings will give us the most power at the time. The Setites seduce, tempt, and betray to offer those prizes to their dark god Set. We seduce, tempt, and betray to get weaker vampires out of the way. Our means are similar, but our ends could not be farther apart.

Our time in the Sabbat, compared to most of the other Clans, is a single twitch of the clock. We began in what was called the West Indies and thrived by ourselves for hundreds of years. Outside scholars claim our elders came across on ships full of African slaves. It was only when Sabbat expansion into the area brought us into the larger world of Cainites did we begin to flourish as members of the Sabbat. The Setites attempted to lay claim to us and forbade us to speak with Sabbat emissaries. We laughed and sent them back to their gardens in Africa.

Haiti remains our garden today. Though we spread across the world to fight as part of the Sword of Caine, we are part of the island. Our founder lies there somewhere, buried and ready to return someday when it is time to destroy the lies of the Setites once and for all. We will take their temples, we will take their cartels, and we will feast upon Set at a banquet never seen before or since. We claim our own name because we will one day be the only members of our bloodline standing.

We are not the only children of Set who find a strong connection to a founder farther down the bloodline. Those who claim Damballah as their maker are much closer to us than the Setites that say the entire Clan is their own. Anyone digging into our past finds strong connections between Damballah and the Cainite that first set foot on Haiti. Serpents of the Light who manifest their need to speak with the spirits every night instead of our affinity for darkness are viewed as blessed by the *loa*. They are even more prized than a Kindred Embraced into our ranks with bold red hair.

Because of our connection to the *loa*, the Sabbat holds us close for our mystic abilities. The other Clans that claim such abilities as strengths send their cast-offs and heretics to the Sabbat. We speak to the spirits in the world to provide council and perspectives that our Sect often finds lacking. There is wisdom in that which lives in the dark, wisdom that we can retrieve.

The Toreador

As an artist, I can tell you that my purpose is to extract an emotional response through my work. When most people hear that term, they think of positive emotions, like joy or happiness. Things they can get by ordering a painting at two in the morning. Real emotion, real passion, doesn't flow in such easily designed patterns. We are artists unbound by such definitions. The Camarilla suppresses the truth and censors my art. I paint terror. I sculpt agony. The others here understand what I'm trying to say whether it's with a brush, a razor, or a little bit of both.

The Lasombra and the Tzimisce were the sound and the fury that birthed the Sabbat, but it was our attention to detail that made it an ongoing concern. Revolutionaries have a base magnetism, but we were the ones who structured the core beliefs, figured out what to call

everybody in power, and gave a bit of taboo flair to the rituals that have become legendary. Everyone had their own ideas on what to do, and we brought them together to make the meetings memorable.

In the modern nights, we often end up as the face the Sabbat presents to mortals. We placate them with honeyed words, but leave just enough unspoken to keep them intrigued. We also identify the important people in a city that need to be under our control. If the Brujah are the brutal sledgehammer, we are the Ripper's scalpel. We are the proof that dying doesn't mean you stop living. For most of us, it's really a chance to embrace who we really are. A pun? Don't be gauche. Puns are for lazy Malkavians and Toreador from the '50s.

The mainstream Toreador spend far too much time trying to get an emotional reaction out of themselves. Their art is for their own benefit, and their blindness to it is their weakness. There's a big, black world out there ready to terrify and inspire, and all they can do is look in the mirror or photographs of the sun and paint while they ugly cry. Who wants to stare at a brick wall until sunrise when the real beauty is in the glint of an electric light in spilled blood? Our condition gives us such interesting media to work in. The Tzimisce might have an advantage in sculpting, but have you see Dario's *Generation Sect*? He used bodily fluids on canvas like few I've ever seen.

That's the big difference between our parents and us. The Toreador look backward and try to hold on to everything in their past. It's a little sad. True artists need to grow and do new things. Nobody wants to see a band release the same album over and over. We don't really hate all of them. Most of them can be fun to invite to some of our less radical events. Every now and again, one of them even has an epiphany of decadence and looks forward into the darkness instead of squinting into the light.

We've applied our artistic knowhow to a few modern ideas too. It's no coincidence that many of the Sabbat have tattoos, piercings, and other body modifications. It takes time, effort, and blood to maintain these things after the Embrace. We worked with our brothers and sisters in the Tzimisce to work out a code; certain body modifications in certain areas mean certain things to the trained eye. Switching the location of a piercing can tip a pack to a new meeting place, while new ink might mean something painful is heading into town.

Right now, rabbit holes are popular with the trend-maker *antitribu*. It's that thing where you host an underground party and you leave clues across the city to get there. Except you leave two sets of clues; one for the Cainites you want to attend as guests, and one for the kine you want to attend as meals. Or sometimes it's a set of one directions to the party and the other set is to a hungry war pack looking for an ambush, which is just a different kind of party.

The Tremere

What's it like to be the worst thing in the world? Depending on who you ask, we are traitors, infernalists, double agents, triple agents, or monsters politely calling ourselves vampires. We are bastards covered in extra bastard sauce who don't deserve to spend one more second in the prickly embrace of the Sabbat. We are mere seconds away from dropping a dime to the Camarilla, using our secret blood wizard powers to lay out a big whammy, or bringing in our good buddies, the lords of Hell, to rain on everybody's parade with piss that smells of sulphur.

To understand why we joined the Sabbat, you have to understand that we got a bit of a late start. The Tremere have been around for less than a millennium. They don't have the mystery of timeless existence and the direct blood ties to Caine that some of the other Clans do. They had to make up a lot of lost ground quickly, so it took a few hundred years for some of us to get fed up with their rules and regulations. We may also have been inspired by the times. In the 18th century C.E., a lot of people were leaving the Old World for the New because they were sick of the people in power. So we packed up as many Tremere secrets as we could and got the hell out of Vienna.

Despite what the Tremere want everyone to believe, they were not the first to come up with the bright idea of mixing magic and vampire blood. We take what we can from all those other traditions and synthesize them into Thaumaturgy everybody can use. Some of those Clans get very upset when you start moving in on that territory. That thirst for knowledge gives us our awful reputation. We profane thousands of years of secret blood magic for our own purposes, which for some reason are more evil than the purposes of the original group.

The Tremere have the advantage of locking Thaumaturgy in their chantries and not let anyone else play with their toys. This is where we differ from Vienna. We only exist because we can produce. There are large parts of the Sabbat who are openly hostile to our very existence. We can only stay in the club if we convince the rest of the members we are worth it. That means giving up the tricks we learned in our chantries, but not just handing out an inventory. There are still things we took that we haven't shared yet.

Once the bag of tricks is empty, the Tzimisce get a huge piece of leverage to push us out into the lonely cold night. That's why discovering new paths of Thaumaturgy means so much to us. New discoveries let us save the old stuff for some seriously rainy days.

Most of the other Clans simply don't get along with their *antitribu*. We're the only ones who upset our Clan so much that they hit us with an indelible mark. They can definitely see it, but other Cainites with sorcery in the blood can also see it sometimes. The Tremere love to drop blood curses on Clans they hate, and we are number one on that list, right above the Assamites. If there's one thing an organization hates, it's one of their employees quitting and setting up a rival shop across the street. They have a particular hate for the Telyavic Tremere who escaped the big curse and went unmarked. Sometimes, when I'm bored, I like to send an anonymous tip to a chantry that a Telyav infiltrated their inner circle, just to watch all the scores get settled.

If nobody likes us, everybody hates us; I guess we should eat worms? Our ace in the hole is Dark Thaumaturgy, which are the rumors of secret paths we learned in exchange for the souls of our victims. Let me tell you something; if such a thing as Dark Thaumaturgy really existed, it would have a much better name. It also implies that we need help gaining power and can't do it on our own. The Tremere can't believe that we've lasted this long without their help. I would hope that any *antitribu* looking to sell their soul would get something much more valuable that a few lousy rituals.

The Tzimisce

Antitribu. A term filled with such vanity. It is the child casting down the gifts of the father to provoke a reaction. It is such a human thing to do for Kindred who have a monstrous reputation. Our Clan name is irrevocably linked to the founders of the Sabbat. The flesh-sculpted monstrosities haunt the Princes of the Camarilla and scare the Anarchs in the night. Our family name is famous, but expecting everyone to be a part of the fame is small minded. Knowing someone with the last name of Washington does not mean they will be able to sleep in the White House, just as being a Gates does not entitle most to a free computer.

Despite what the Sabbat would wish all Kindred to believe, there are those of us who have lived outside the Sabbat for a very long time. The idea that there are none of us outside the Sect is a miscommunication that turned into misinformation, which became propaganda over hundreds of years. Saying that all Tzimisce are Sabbat played up the fanatic loyalty to the cause. Those who would show evidence to the claim were too busy in their domains to spend the time and effort to clear the air. They let the children have their fun; anyone seeking out the Tzimisce uninvolved with the Sabbat could still find them, but the solitude it afforded was an unexpected gift.

The Tzimisce and the Lasombra came together to form the Sabbat because they were sick of dying. The elders sent so many of us to our deaths. They used the tactic because it often worked. Kupala Night broke many blood bonds, but not every bond was broken by a dramatic uprising and a castle in flames. There were those who refused to attend the evening out of loyalty to their masters. They fought just as hard to protect *tirsa* as the ones who joined the Sabbat. Failing to wipe us out, the Tzimisce resorted to the tactics of the Lasombra: lies and whispers.

Names like "Old Clan" came from outsiders needing a clearer definition to understand for themselves. The gift of Vicissitude is a great step beyond the monstrous condition of the vampire. Our Clan seeks to define our condition in more exact ways than the others do. These Tzimisce felt they did not wish to begin a new project before completing the old. We respect such conservative thinking, even if we don't all agree. They are refusing to explore with all the tools available. They wish to wander the woods alone, even though there are maps and trails they can use.

Yet this Old Clan showed us the way to our freedom. Because they showed us that we don't all march in lockstep despite our common heritage. Isn't that the message the Sabbat desperately wants everyone to believe it champions? Instead, it became "us versus them," without checking to make sure that all of "us" were on board with the idea. We are small enough in number to be left alone while the Sabbat takes up most of their time. They don't like to admit some of us slipped through their fingers and just want them to leave us to our own devices.

Without the Sabbat, what is it that we do? Very few of us ally with the Camarilla directly. Those who do often do it for very specific personal reasons and sever those ties once they reach their goal. The oldest align themselves with the smaller Sects. Some of us try to preserve the traditions of sorcerous blood. Many of us explore the gift of the Eldest in more subtle ways than the fleshcrafters of the Sabbat. They make *zulo* like the kine make movies these days. We strive to show that we can be more effective through small, subtle changes to the human form. Fingers of all the same

length. Eyes that blink horizontally instead of vertically.

Some of us strive to protect the old ways. The Oradea League does much to preserve how we were before being drawn into the political arena so many centuries ago. Some consider it a quaint picture of how life was long ago, much like the colonial villages tourists visit today. Others think it's a grim reminder that the Sabbat still has work to do in overthrowing the puppets of the Antediluvian. I see a mixture of the monstrosity of the Sabbat and the deliberateness of the Camarilla. Perhaps there is something new on the horizon from our laboratories?

The Ventrue

We are the truest embodiment of the *antitribu*. The Ventrue say everything they do is for the good of the Clan, but whoever believes that lie? They tell this story for hundreds of years, erasing lineages and changing history to suit their whims; painting themselves as the inevitable winners of history. They want you to believe it was all part of their plan. We are the surest evidence that they had no such grand plan. They exist only by convincing pawns to send themselves to die in their place and feed on the glory of sacrifice.

Before they were executives, we were kings. Before they were office drones, we were knights. The Ventrue that formed the Camarilla, knelt before the other Clans, and dug the first hole to hide in. We were Princes of the Long Night, back when the title was a source of pride and not an administrative position. The Ventrue claim the weak and the sniveling founded our bloodline. I will note that this is only said when they are in the comfort of a well-defended Camarilla city; the only Ventrue I've ever met were weeping or headless upon my arrival.

They insist we are beyond their notice. We hold true to the elements of the blood, elements that they abandoned to become merchant princes when their need for gold overtook their need to lead. When the time came to take a bold stand against the Antediluvians, they huddled with the other Clans of the Camarilla and decided it would be easier to convince us all that there was no problem that we needed to fix. They'd be happy to assume a leadership role in the new organization, of course, but they decided focusing on petty princedoms was the answer to a question they didn't want to admit existed. They sit on their thrones. We stand on their bones.

The Ventrue believe all glory goes to the Clan from its members. We believe the other way around. We believe in personal glory and our reputations raising up the name of our blood. We fight for ourselves, not for some vague concept of glory sold to us in the hopes that we die well. Each *antitribu* begins as a knight, chosen for their virtues and for their achievements. Some even learn classic techniques of fighting in armor to make the symbol clearer to those who don't quite understand. We protect the most important members of the Sabbat, even if we are unable to take those positions of power ourselves. We lead by example here.

We've taken many names in the course of our duties. The difference between a paladin and a templar doesn't seem that large outside of our Clan, but the names mean something to us. Templars serve high-ranking members of the Sect as bodyguards, knights, majordomos, and other valuable assistants. Becoming a templar is a high honor for many Sabbat, but it also means never being able to accept membership in the Black Hand. Paladins are those whose devotion to their charges is so great that, when given the choice of becoming a Black Hand and becoming a templar, they choose to serve a Sect leader instead. All paladins are templars but not all templars are paladins.

Both templar and paladin serve the greater good when asked to join the Sabbat Inquisition. Being an inquisitor is the ultimate proof of loyalty for knights like us. The Inquisition seeks out heretics involved with infernal powers. Many of our swords pledge themselves to keeping our ideology pure. Sometimes this leads to conflict with other supernatural creatures. Often it leads to Sabbat who have been taken in the machinations of the Jyhad. When the Sabbat Inquisition fails, these are the stories told around the world as examples of great members of the Sect who fell to outside manipulation. When the Inquisition succeeds, only the knight knows the truth, because the target is dead.

Appendix III: Kindred of Note

Badr al-Budur, Princess of Death

Clan: Assamite

Generation: Ninth

Sire: Ma'aruf

Embraced: 1867

Badr shares lineage with the infamous Fatima al-Faqadi, and strives to prove her worth to certain elders in her clan. She subconsciously compares her own deeds to the legends about Fatima, which can occasionally drive Badr to take on risky, dangerous assignments. As she travels throughout the United States, she frequently targets Camarilla cities with Anarch uprisings or regular Sabbat incursions. This offers the enterprising assassin plenty of potential work. However, she has to be careful when selling services to both sides of a conflict, lest they turn their attentions on her.

Prior to her Embrace, Badr spent a long time as a ghoul, serving Khalil and other warriors as a daytime scout. At night, when a target had been acquired, she often took on support positions, including eliminating the target's guards or ensuring escape routes remained uncompromised. As a woman, she was often overlooked when infiltrating servants quarters or otherwise blending in with the mortals within the domains of her master's Ventrue and Toreador targets. She used her extended time as a ghoul to study and practice her combat skills.



After a failed strike at a Tremere chantry, both Badr and Khalil spent time recovering at an estate managed by members of the sorcerer caste and their strange servants, the Kairouan Brotherhood. When they said she would not ever fully heal from her wounds, she was given the choice of death or revenge. To this night she holds a special hatred for the Tremere, and gladly takes on contracts to end them for bargain prices.

As a member of the warrior caste who is not part of the Web of Knives nor an adherent to Path of Blood, she was recently approached by members of the Preservationist

Conspiracy and quickly agreed to their cause. She has extensive experience operating within Camarilla cities and has begun setting up a series of safe-houses should open conflict within the Clan start in earnest. She has also collected numerous boons from Kindred throughout the United States that will be called in for safe conduct should fellow members of the Conspiracy need to go underground. She loathes the idea of allying herself with the Tremere, but Al-Ashrad has contacted her personally to stress the threat the Clan may be facing.

With that dire message echoing in her mind, she has moved on from the Midwest, seeking more Camarilla cities to sell her formidable services. She is actively seeking allies among other Clans who could be useful for the cause.

Lula Birch, the Wild Child

Clan: Gangrel antitribu

Generation: Twelfth

Sire: Pedro Diaz

Embraced: 1991

Born and raised in the farm country of Arkansas, Lula was a bit of a tomboy. She spent most of her free time hunting and camping. One night, Lula awoke to find a strange man crouched just on the edge of the campfire's light. He sat eerily still, watching her. She wondered if he needed help and asked him to come into the light. He didn't move. When she shined her flashlight on him she swore he had red eyes. She heard laughter coming from the darkness just outside the crackling light. Before she could scream, she was whisked away to the same cemetery where her grandparents and generations of her ancestors were buried. The Sabbat pack gave her the Creation Rites, and she soon proved herself in battle against a number of enemies, even a fierce midnight fight against a pair of Lupines that tore through much of the antitribu, including her sire.

She wandered away from her pack shortly after that, feeling the need to explore. Having only been a vampire for a few years at that point and realizing that her sire had not taught her much in the way of the Sabbat nor the Gangrel, she felt the need to discover. She hitched a ride with another pack that was heading south and paid her way with entertaining campfire tales. The other vampires, mostly Brujah antitribu and Panders, were enraptured with her colorful style as she recounted the deeds of her original pack.

They ended up as guests of Tzimisce and his Bratovich servants for almost a year. There she learned much about



the history of the Sabbat and even participated in another Lupine hunt. She reveled in the brutal savagery of the Bratovich, finding them much more to her liking than their strange "lord," though his tales of the Sect's early nights only fueled her desire to learn more. When she hit the road again, she did so on her own. She figured she would eventually end up in Mexico City, but along the way she hoped to meet up with other Sabbat, hopefully some other Gangrel, and share some stories.

Critias, Primogen of Chicago

Clan: Brujah

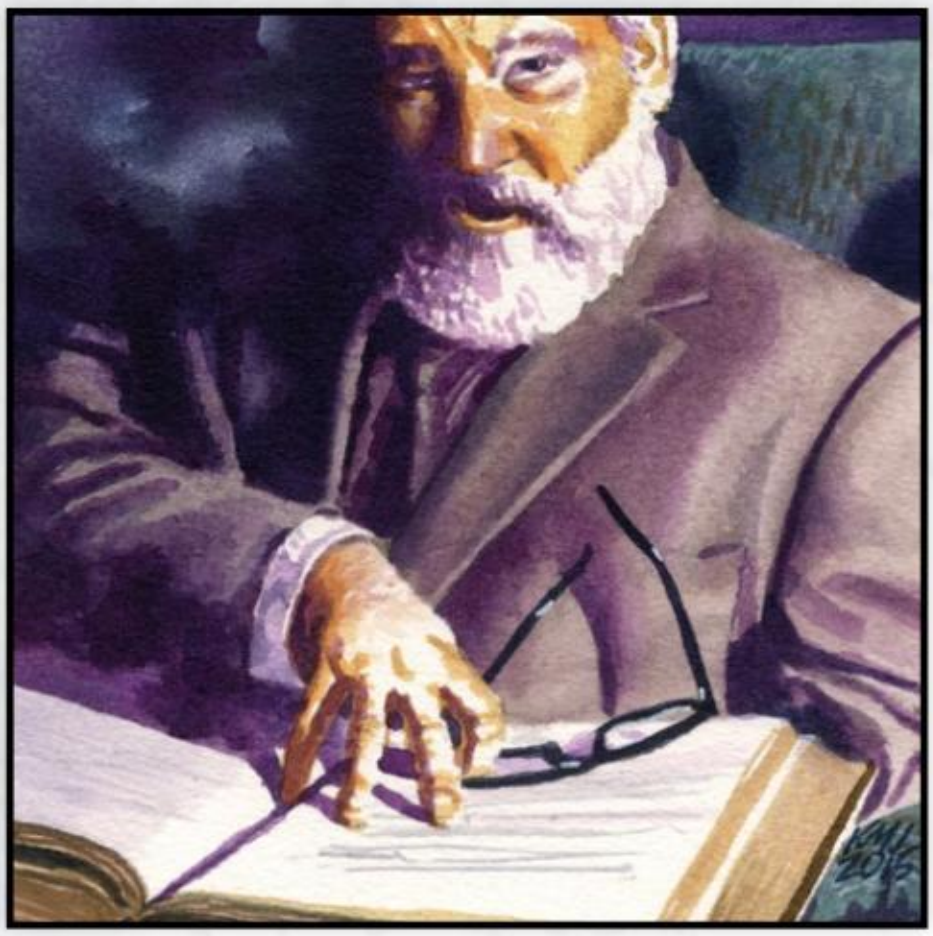
Generation: Fifth

Sire: Menele

Embraced: 423 BCE

One of the oldest elders in the Camarilla has recently begun an effort to drive the Sect into a more assertive stance against all enemies, not just the Sabbat. What has shaken the aged Brujah scholar out of his formerly quiet influence among the Chicago Primogen is anyone's guess.

An Athenian philosopher in life, Critias was not one to mince words, and his teachings made more than a few enemies. This did not concern him, however, as he was still well connected to the halls of power, and what was a few ruffled feathers among scholars and politicians? This small miscalculation almost earned him a poisoned dagger in the back when one particularly insightful quip about the corruption of a local favored son went a little too far.



His allies abandoned him, and he feared exile and death. It was another, however, that ended his life. The Brujah Methuselah Menele was interested in preserving Critias' sharp mind and challenged him to a debate. The two discussed many esoteric topics throughout the night, and just before dawn the Methuselah Embraced the philosopher.

After a few years of travel, Menele and Critias moved to Carthage to experience for themselves the city their Clanmates had built. Critias had many long debates with the Assamite vizier Mathos, which provided much entertainment and enlightenment to their contemporaries. Eventually Critias traveled to other domains, acting as both an envoy and a recruiter to the Carthaginian cause. He was far from the city when the Roman legions sacked it, and his fury at the Ventrue became legendary. He traveled far, joining in any crusade or effort to damage Ventrue interests. It was from the Malkavian scholar Avitus that he eventually learned that both his sire and Mathos had escaped the destruction of the city. Avitus had been one of the Roman undead who advised against the war between Clans, and this act spared him from Critias' wrath. The two kept in contact for many years until the Malkavian's death during the Anarch Revolt.

Eventually, Critias sailed to the New World and traveled throughout Camarilla territory. He brutally put down a Sabbat invasion in Boston before moving on to Chicago. He assumed a position among the Primogen of that city.

He has recently revitalized the secret Council of Scales, a scholarly and legal philosophy club of elders in the Camarilla. Together they examine the Traditions, advise Princes on blood hunts, and aid the Inner Circle with the selection of Justicars and other Sect positions. Some say this recent project is the only thing keeping the elder from the clutches of torpor as he approaches 2500 years undead.

Salvatore Giovanni, the Man in Charge

Clan: Giovanni

Generation: Tenth

Sire: Rosario Giovanni

Embraced: 1887

In life, Salvatore seemed destined for an early grave. He was bold and fearless, jumping into a fight or driving recklessly without any care of what lay ahead. He received the Proxy Kiss because his great aunt Gisella needed some extra muscle defending her holdings in a contested city. She was surprised at how effective he turned out to be. His eidetic memory and eye for detail saved her from an ambush by a Sabbat pack. He also negotiated a deal for weapons with a mortal who usually sold to local street gangs. This allowed the Giovanni access to connections with a portion of the city's criminal elements that they had previously been cut off from. Salvatore continued to use equal parts



strategy and impulse to keep everyone guessing at his next move.

Years later, the *anziani* wanted someone who could build connections to different drug cartels. They commanded Gisella's rival, Rosario, to Embrace Salvatore, and they felt Carlita Giovanni could use the help. She had married into the Family, and her legendary temper caused more than a little tension whenever the Clan tried to push further into the business. Salvatore and Carlita came to blows fairly quickly, but an outside threat (again from the Sabbat) forced them to put aside their differences. As they drove the Sabbat out, they realized they could be quite a team. Carlita's connections to Cuba and Salvatore's head for numbers made for an effective operation.

Salvatore is ambitious and open minded. Unlike many Giovanni ancilla in the Southern United States, he diversifies his organization and makes extensive use of the minor families. He has Milliners laundering the money and a team of Puttanesca enforcers working with Giovanni transporters bringing in shipments of product. He even has two Rossellini revenants as his daytime guardians. He feels that this diversification strengthens his operation, and that more of the Clan should be open to the idea. Why put in the effort to acquire these other families if not to make the entire Clan more efficient?

This attitude has not gone unnoticed by his sire, and Rosario has begun to cause trouble for his wayward childe. However, Rosario's efforts to recruit Carlita to his side have failed. As she was married into the Giovanni family and not born, she does not share the same Giovanni "family first" mentality. Salvatore was able to use his sire's attempt at manipulation to fully solidify his relationship with Carlita, and now the two of them are more effective than ever.



Catherine Maidstone, Prince of Maidstone

Clan: Toreador

Generation: Ninth

Sire: Maiselle of Rochester

Embraced: 1229

Born and raised in the village of Strood, Catherine expected to be married off to one of the locals and maybe raise a family. Her sire and the Ventrue Jean-Marc d'Martinique came to town and cut short this simple life. Catherine had been working at her family's inn when she was discovered by the pair of vampires. Maiselle knew that in order to build her influence in the area she would need to ingratiate herself among the locals, who often mistrusted outsiders, especially in a small English town in the 1200s.

Maiselle ghouled Catherine's father and Embraced the young woman. The coterie grew yet again when the Brujah Manfred Bauer, a fallen soldier looking for revenge on the vampires of Rochester who had humiliated him, joined them. Together the foursome continued to build the domain of Strood into a viable market town. They managed to break free of the dominion of Harold the Bearded, the Prince of Rochester, and declare Jean-Marc Prince of Strood. Catherine learned early on the value of allies and how manipulation could win as many battles as brutality. As her sire taught her how to use her gifts on both mortal and vampiric targets, she became more of an integral member of the coterie.

Manfred eventually showed Catherine just how much her sire had manipulated her. It took several years for the blood bond that Maiselle had over her childe to shatter, and then Catherine plotted a long plan for revenge. She used Maiselle's own tricks and lessons against her. She seduced the Malkavian poet, Eva, and had her poison one of Jean-Marc's favored mortals. This drove the new Prince into torpor and dropped the domain of Strood into chaos just as the Anarch Revolt arrived in England.

Catherine fled the city after driving a stake into her sire's chest and roamed the country with some of the other Anarchs, even if she wasn't particularly dedicated to the cause. She had her freedom, but the need to fight against all elders was not a driving force for her. When the Anarchs were brought to heel by Karsh and the Founders, she attended the Convention of Thorns willingly. She quickly jumped at the chance to have her sins forgiven and join the recently formed Camarilla. She drifted into torpor not long after visiting her sire, who had recovered from her injuries. Some found it curious that both sire and childe vanished within a few weeks of each other.

A hundred years later, Catherine emerged from torpor more powerful than when she was previously active, although somewhat lost at how advanced the world had become. After taking some time to familiarize herself with the world, she declared herself Prince of the English town of Maidstone. She laughs when anyone asks which had the name first, the town or the Prince. Now Catherine is a loyal ally to the Queen of London, Lady Anne, and the two often share strategies on dealing with external threats, such as the Sabbat or mortal hunters.

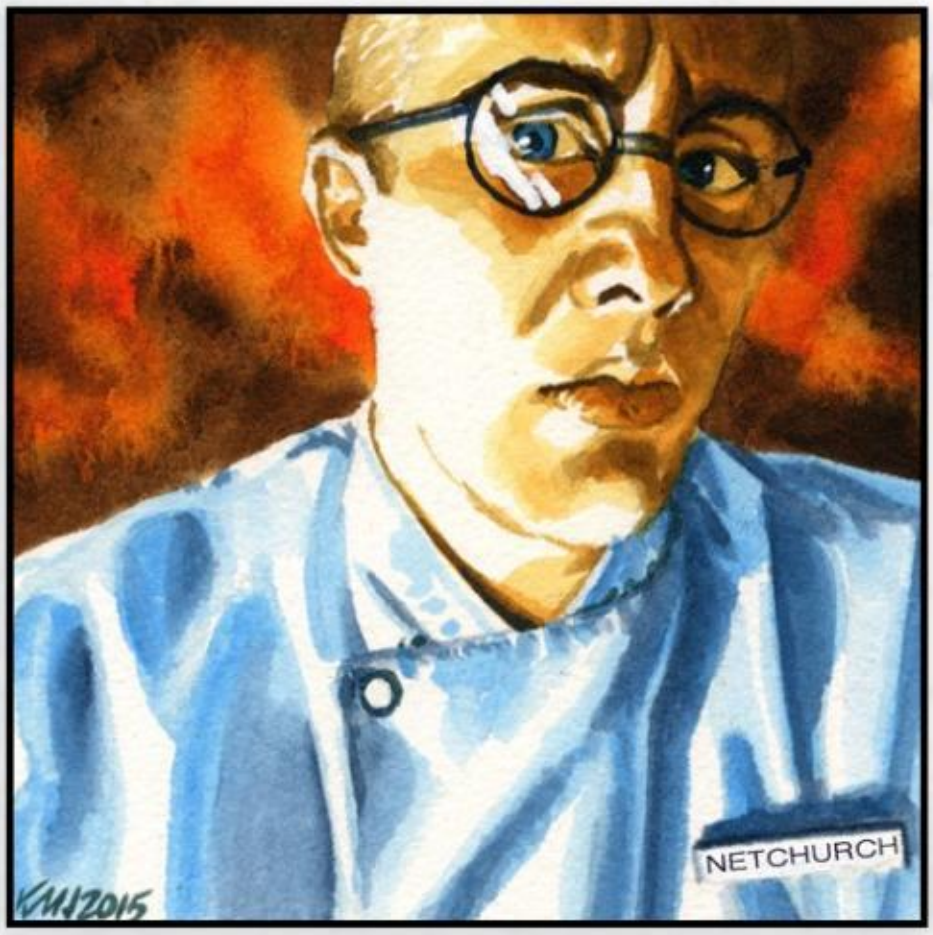
Dr. Douglas Netchurch, Expert on Ghouls

Clan: Malkavian

Generation: Seventh

Sire: Trimeggian

Embraced: 1915



Born into wealth, Douglas Netchurch seemed destined to follow his father's footsteps into a well-respected practice in the Boston area. He went to several universities to further his studies, enjoying London the most out of all his travels. He left school due to the eruption of World War I, volunteering to assist his fellow physicians treating wounded soldiers. There he learned the horrors of war and what kinds of damage man could inflict on each other.

The Malkavian elder Trimeggian, who had studied developments in medicine for several hundred years, was fascinated with the young doctor. No matter the horrors of chemical weapons and rampant diseases from the trenches, Netchurch never lost his resolve and seemed tireless in his efforts to assist the wounded. Trimeggian realized that he was having trouble adapting to modern technological advancements, and that the young doctor may be able to offer him a new perspective on several of his current experiments.

Although the Embrace was traumatic, and at times, the elder wondered if Netchurch would survive the process, eventually he released the fledgling Malkavian from the cell he had locked him up in. Together the vampires collected a number of test subjects, both human and Kindred, and snuck away to Trimeggian's laboratory. For several years the two worked together to understand the Embrace, experimenting on a number of different methods on how to create new vampires. Trimeggian's obsession with creating new bloodlines was not shared by his childe, although the work was certainly interesting. Eventually, Netchurch left his sire and returned to the United States.

He has created a number of covert research facilities, including labs in Boston and Piedmont, and at least a few more even his most trusted ghouls and childer do not know about.

A respected member of the Camarilla, he continues to study the effects of ghouling, blood bonding, Discipline use, and other aspects of vampirism. He and some like-minded scholars of the Sect, mostly Tremere and Nosferatu with medical or scientific backgrounds, attempt to unravel the secrets of the undead. He has a bit of a rivalry with Dr. Louisa Sedillo Mateo, a former hematologist Embraced as a Lasombra antitribu a scant decade ago. The two of them often attempt to outdo each other in related areas of research, usually relying on the opinions of other respected Kindred to choose a "winner" in their debates.

Parovich, Primogen of Milwaukee

Clan: Nosferatu (antitribu)

Generation: Seventh

Sire: Boronisk

Embraced: 1467

A military officer in Ivan the Great's army, Parovich avoided the more brutal aspects of battle when he could be making himself invaluable in other areas. He had an uncanny ability to spot spies among the civilian population. He managed to avoid drawing too much attention, not wanting to make himself a target for assassins nor get responsibility dropped onto his shoulders. He wanted nothing more than a comfortable life of obscurity. It was his ability to not stand out during tumultuous times that drew the attention of his sire.

Boronisk had recently committed diablerie upon his sire and was on the run from his former broodmates. He wanted a skilled childe who would be loyal to him and help him escape the region. Together they fled into Europe amid the chaos of the Anarch Revolt. They joined up with roving packs of Tzimisce and other Anarchs. They participated in several raids against elder strongholds, reveling in the carnage and bloodshed.

Boronisk fell in a battle with Josef von Bauren. Those who witnessed the battle between the two Nosferatu have said it was one of the most brutal duels of the entirety of the Anarch Revolt. As von Bauren went on to become one of the Founders of the Camarilla, this may have been what drove Parovich to join the nascent Sabbat at the end of the Revolt. After the Convention of Thorns, Parovich convinced a small brood of Nosferatu to become antitribu.

As the years wore on, Parovich turned once again to stealth and blending in, favoring those tactics over direct conflict. He has since moved to Milwaukee, posing as a reserved Camarilla elder and assuming the role of Primogen for his Clan. There he attempts to favor the Anarchs and weaken the Camarilla's hold on the city. He secretly delivers messages to the Black Hand, preparing them for an invasion of the city when he gives the word.

His position is extremely fragile however, as one of his childer, Kristian, has not only discovered Parovich's ties to the Sabbat, but has also fled into the tunnels beneath the city. Should Kristian reveal this information to the Prince or the Sheriff, Parovich may not escape in time. Parovich does not want to leave the city, and has summoned other



Nosferatu antitribu to hunt down his wayward childe. If they are unable to locate Kristian, he will signal the Sabbat to invade Milwaukee and attempt to drive out the Camarilla completely.

Dr. Vermundo de Sancha, Doctor of Pain

Clan: Tzimisce

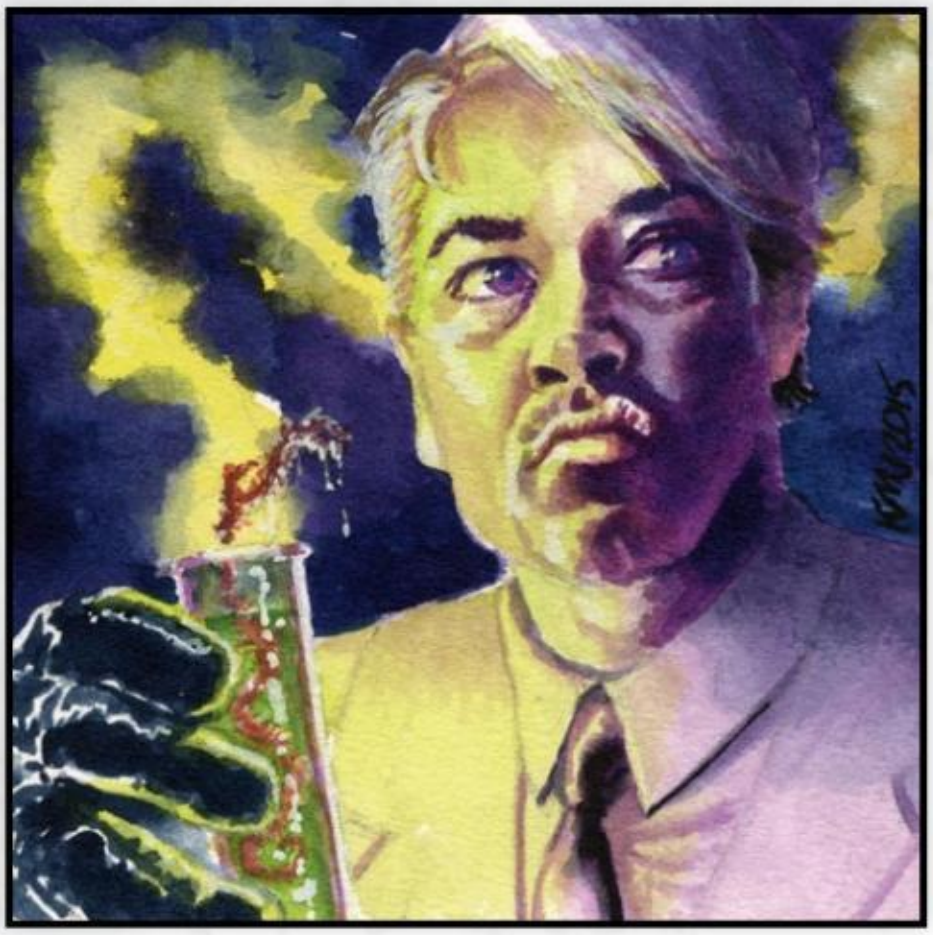
Generation: Tenth

Sire: Efrain Sortano

Embraced: 1943

Vermundo de Sancha was a professor of a medical university in Mexico, unaware that his lectures on vivisection and anatomy were being heard by more than just his students. The Metamorphosist elder Sortano, called the Zookeeper by younger Sabbat in Mexico City, was fascinated with the Doctor's work. The Zookeeper eventually made Dr. de Sancha his ghoul in order to preserve the brilliant mind of the professor and to learn aspects of modern medicine. Unfortunately, the stress of serving the Tzimisce elder broke parts of the doctor's mind, and his colleagues discovered him performing unnecessary procedures and giving lectures to animals.

Sortano had hoped that the doctor would explore the Path of Metamorphosis and expand his research, but after his induction into the Sabbat and a time of reflection, that was not the enlightenment de Sancha felt was his calling.



He found the Path of Death and the Soul aligned with his work. He spends his nights in a quest to understand how pain affects the minds of his mortal and vampiric subjects. He offers great rewards for those who bring him new subjects to study; currently he is most interested in comparing how different supernatural creatures react to his methodology.

He has attained great renown as an interrogator among the Sabbat. The Black Hand has attempted to recruit the doctor more than once, yet he always politely refuses. His work is his passion, though he is loyal enough to the Sabbat to assist when his services are needed. His closest ally in the city is Bishop Isidro de Saldanha, a Lasombra tasked with the never-ending job of keeping the Sabbat's nightly activities from drawing too much attention from the mortal authorities. While the doctor no longer practices medicine, he has enough knowledge of, and connections to the medical community to assist the Bishop in forging medical examiner reports and disposing of bodies when needed. This has earned the doctor more than a little status among the Sabbat leadership, the better to continue his research.

Sarrasine, Prince of Sydney

Clan: Follower of Set

Generation: Sixth

Sire: Khay'tall

Embraced: 532

The Prince of Sydney, Australia is something of a conundrum to the elders of both the Camarilla and the Sabbat. Embraced by the leader of a Setite cult infiltrating the vampire intrigues in Byzantium, Sarrasine was already a master at seducing and corrupting those in power. His sire, Khay'tall, had formed the Children of Judas, a cult with followers throughout the region. Sarrasine became one of the cult's most influential members, concentrating his efforts on ensuring the loyalty of vampires from other Clans. The Ventrue and Assamites were among his favorites, as both claimed to be beyond corruption.

By the time the Fourth Crusade hit the city of Constantinople, Sarrasine had grown weary of his sire's erratic behavior and stagnation. As the city was sacked and the violence bled into the havens of the dead, he struck down Khay'tall and consumed his soul. He traveled to a number of different Setite temples, including Uganda and later England. In England, he briefly fell under the sway of the Toreador Primogen, Lady Meritt, and did not realize until years later that she was actually Kementiri.

It isn't known exactly when Sarrasine traveled to Australia, but it did not take him long to assimilate to the chaotic court of this strange new land. He became a trusted advisor to Prince Abram, who left him in charge of Sydney as the Ventrue's regent when he moved to Melbourne. Due to Sarrasine's flatteries, Abram had come to see all of Australia as his domain; for such hubris the Ventrue was overthrown, and Sarrasine became the new Prince of Sydney.



Sarrasine's advisors, including his newest childe Ella Littleton, are beginning to wonder if his lax rule of the city is a problem. For years he took no side in the conflict between the Camarilla and the Sabbat, declaring Sydney a free city where any vampire was allowed to live. His enforcers kept the Masquerade under control, but the court has become decadent and degenerate. While he has not reformed the Children of Judas, he uses many of the same tactics to entice and ensnare followers, still enjoying the thrill of corrupting those who claim they are too strong-willed to be enchanted.

Tatiana Stepanova, Undercover Alastor

Clan: Ravnos

Generation: Eighth

Sire: Vasily Vasilevich

Embraced: 1764

Tatiana grew up an angry child of a noble family in Russia. She resented her father for being a weak and cowardly man, and her mother for being a gossip and an adulteress. She rebelled against them both in a number of ways, going out of her way to thwart every effort on their part to control her. When she learned they planned to marry her off to a rival family, she fled out of blind fury.

She turned to burglary and other crimes to stay fed. She used her knowledge of the nobility to pose as any number of heiresses to gain access to stately homes and a few social functions, where she was able to steal some valuables. She was taken one night by the cold and deadly Ravnos elder Vasily, who himself had been posing as a member of the nobility and was impressed with the mortal's ability to blend into the social circles of the wealthy. He wanted to use her to gain further access to the halls and parties of the nobility. He Embraced her without ever considering her wishes, and forced her to steal more valuable jewels and items of worth from ever more dangerous marks.



Tatiana once again resented the control someone was trying to wield over her, and eventually fled her sire. She had only a basic understanding of her Clan and her place in the society of the dead. The Ravnos were not welcome in many cities, regardless of whether they were held by the Camarilla or the Sabbat. She would often pose either as a Russian Brujah, or occasionally as a Malkavian antitribu, in order to make her way through a city.

Her wanderlust kept her from settling too long in any one area, but this helped her keep her disguises from too close inspection from local vampires. She did encounter other Ravnos from time to time, and learned as much as she could about her Clan's history and traditions from them. She often hoped she might further fit into the Clan, but has always had a little trouble convincing herself that Vasily is long gone. She fears he may have allies or other childer who may attempt to drag her back to him.

While posing as a Brujah in Paris during the 1950s, the Alastor Lucinde discovered her ruse. The Ventrue did not turn her over to Prince Villion, instead offering Tatiana an opportunity to use her skills at deception to help in her hunting of the vampires that make up the Red List. She served as Lucinde's Auditor for several years. Lucinde was named the Ventrue Justicar in 1998, and has since promoted Tatiana to full Alastor status, though she made Tatiana fully declare her allegiance to the Camarilla before bestowing the rank and title to the Ravnos. Tatiana now goes undercover in Sabbat and Anarch cities, searching for signs of the Anathema.

Carolina Valez, Archbishop of Montreal

Clan: Lasombra

Generation: Eighth

Sire: Tobias Smith

Embraced: 1957

Embraced as part of the Sabbat's effort to battle Anarchs in the California Free State, Carolina seemed



an odd choice to Embrace for the usually reserved Tobias Smith. He had noticed Carolina among the gangs, though she was not a member of any particular group. That she played different gangs against each other in order to keep the violence away from the few blocks her family called home impressed him. He hoped she would be able to use those skills to bring some of the gangs under the Sabbat's influence. Just as she had begun her efforts, the entire Sabbat offensive fell apart. Archbishop Fuller, the Brujah antitribu who had been leading the effort, had given too many foolish orders, and the Anarchs wiped out several of the heavy hitters on Fuller's detail.

Cardinal Strathcona was called in to clean up Fuller's mess, and he decided to reward those who had not failed the Sabbat cause – Carolina Valez among them. Those who were not rewarded, such as Archbishop Fuller, were never heard from again. While the Cardinal was pleased with Carolina's efforts, he was not one to let a skilled young Cainite rest on her laurels. Montreal, one of the oldest Sabbat strongholds, was a chaotic mess after the Sabbat Inquisition had sentenced the city's Archbishop to death for infernalism. Without leadership in the city, the packs were running wild. The Cardinal installed Carolina as the new Archbishop, with instructions to bring some order to the chaos and ensure the Sabbat's hold on the region.

Carolina, with a handful of Grimaldi revenants to assist in her management of the city, quickly enforced a strict protocol of silence, as the more wild packs had drawn the attention of several hunters to the city. Naturally, she was accused of being too soft and too much like the Camarilla with their Masquerade. She quickly dealt with the more annoying critics; some in Monomacy duels, while others she let the hunters take care of.

Now she struggles with the ever-changing mortal world. The Sabbat is in an active war with the Camarilla and other enemies. Her city is one of the oldest Sabbat strongholds, and yet it has committed very little to the overall war effort. She knows that the Camarilla has targeted Montreal for takeover, but the Cardinal has not offered any new support. Carolina, however, is certain she is being tested in the matter. She has no plans to fail.

Victor the Assassin

Clan: Tremere

Generation: Ninth

Sire: Duke Traska

Embraced: 1950

Victor was a decorated soldier during WWII. After the war, he went to work for an unnamed intelligence agency, carrying out assassinations and other classified missions during the Cold War. It didn't take him long to stumble into the world of the supernatural.

To this night he wonders who was pulling the strings behind his last mission and why he was sent to kill the Tremere manipulator, Traska. He suspects that whoever set him up knew that he wouldn't be able to destroy the undead Duke. Once Embraced, his training in blood magic



was rudimentary at best. However, unlike other apprentices, no one seemed to mind. This added to Victor's suspicion that they had chosen him for a different task.

He realized his military background was an asset when a local Regent asked him to lead a squad of ghouls and Ducheski revenants against a Sabbat pack that had taken over a biker bar outside of town. After the successful mission, the Regent explained to him that the Tremere had lost some of the warrior spirit that had forged the Clan in their earliest nights. With the rebellion of the Gargoyles, the defection of the antitribu, and the death or torpor of several Clan elders who were involved in the early battles against the Tzimisce, the Tremere had faltered. Traska (and a few other loyal Tremere) had been tasked with seeking out experienced fighters for the modern age, and Victor was one of several ex-military candidates selected to shore up the Tremere's combat capabilities.

Victor travels around the world visiting different Tremere chantries, advising the local Regent on how to shore up defenses and counseling against relying solely on mystical rituals to protect the sanctum. He is an advocate of high-tech security systems and well-trained ghouls, and often requests custom built traps from the engineers of the Ducheski to fortify locations important to the Clan. His goal is to eventually become Tremere Justicar, though he knows that may take years.

Vincent Day, the Paragon

Clan: Ventrue antitribu

Generation: Ninth

Sire: Leander Phipps

Embraced: 1327

As a Templar who fought in the Crusades, Vincent was no stranger to conflict. He fought long, drawn-out battles in the name of the Church and his order, only to be crushed at the loss of so many good men. Somehow, he survived battle after battle, and yet those in power seemed more interested in politics than in victory. He retreated with others to regroup, and went on a pilgrimage to Rome. While resting and studying there, he learned that King Philip IV of France had tried the Templars for heresy. Vincent left the order and hoped to retire to a quiet life away from the bloodshed.

Instead, he was chosen by Leander Phipps to serve for eternity. Vincent's early years as a vampire were cruel, and he saw little hope for escape. While he was a Ventrue of a distinguished lineage, descended from Mithras himself, Vincent seemed to gain nothing from that reputation. His sire taught Vincent enough to act as both a guardian and a messenger. Vincent was often sent on long, dangerous journeys to deliver important missives to other Ventrue throughout Europe.

The explosion of the Anarch Revolt gave Vincent the freedom he craved at long last. He quickly joined the Sabbat when the sect was just beginning, and has been a loyal member ever since. He left England and traveled to the New World. His experience as a Templar helped form the basis for the Path of the Honorable Accord. He is often sought out as a mentor to those young vampires seeking to adopt that Path as their moral compass in keeping the Beast at bay. As he rose in the ranks of the Sabbat, he staunchly refused to join any one particular faction, even though the Inquisition and the Ultra-Conservatives both offered him positions of honor.

Ironically, he often finds himself in the role of messenger once again, delivering secret letters to Sabbat Cardinals and Prisci in various Sabbat cities. Cardinal Strathcona of Canada, a fellow Ventrue antitribu, often calls on Vincent to be his envoy when the Regent calls for a council. Vincent's other patron is the elusive seer, Vasantasena, who sends him on unfathomable missions from time to time, but Vincent admires her longtime dedication to the Sect.

Younger Sabbat often wonder why a Cainite as old as Vincent would choose to serve others. And yet, one look into the cold eyes of Vincent Day, and they see someone who has honed himself into a weapon, determined to one day bring the battle to all who would oppose the Sect.





KICKSTARTER BACKERS

ARMY OF THE NIGHT

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Damien "Haligaunt" Edwards
Dheyrdre Machado
Jens Moseholm
Johan Eklund
Josh
Konstantin "Kostya" Donnikov
Matt M McElroy
Rally for Rowan
Tamsyn 'Destroyer of Worlds' Kennedy
Thomas Tobias Conrad

CLAN INITIATE

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Cristian Rogelio Velasco Gutiérrez
FST

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Ole Andreas Gresholt

John Lambert

Angel Collins
Christopher Duesler
M. Ullstat
Mathieu Dugas
Mike Spector
Nuno Vargas

Rage Seth
Sekdar Hackholm
William Greystone

Dane "Noctis" Madsen
Donnie McNeely
Mitchell Diamond
Phil Kilcrease

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Alexander Lucard
Alexandra Körner
Alice Lanteigne
Almarion Saintclair
Amber Vietzke
Anderson Hughes
Andreas G Schramm of the Gangrel
Andrew Wilson
Ash & Theo
atamajakki
Bernie
Bitter Old Joe O'Toole
Bjørn Jagnow
Bob Ooton
Bobby Chow
Braden Kanipes
Brian Gates, generally-in-motion
Bronx "NWO" Coyle
Bruno Dallacort Zilli
Burak Türköz of House and Clan Tremere (On behalf of Anadolu Hikaye Anlatıcıları)
Calder Rooney

Carl Dane
Cesar Cesarotti
Chandra Tolmie
Chase Schillner
Chris Allen
Chris Michael Jahn
Christofer Sandell
Clarence Washington III
Claus
Colin Urbina
coraxbio
Corey Hansen
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Dan Hgy
Dan Keller
Daniel "Arista"
Daniel "Dukal" Bell
Danni Feveile Börm
Darkshifter
David A. Cuneo
Deja Mort
Derek Grimm
Diego "Louis Shand
AKA The Flying Ventrue" Ubago
Doongar
Enrico Rebufello
Eric "Lameth" Folco
Eric C. Magnuson
Fam. Schienhammer
faux
Felipe Nascimento
Ferdinand von Schenk
Froth
gabriel heraldstorm
Gilles111
Gregory Lopez
Hieu 'Tony' Nguyen aka Xyrus Oblisk
Ho Dracon
Ian Magee
Indraneel Dutt
Isis
Jackson Brantley
James Bombok
James Fitzjames
Jamster
Jason Brennan
Jens Müller
Jeremy Seeley
Jim Burdo
Jim Ryan
Jim Schofield
Joe Rixman
Johannes Lisser
John "FearMeForIAmPink" Franglen
John D. Kennedy
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John 'KoopaCloud' Allen
Jonathan D. Harter
Jordan Springer
Joseph Osborn
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Karoly Kopataki
Karsten Zoeller
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Kevin Nissen Wortmann
Kincaid
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Liyana Casimira VonZuiden
Lothar Consfalk
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Lunus Flambeau (Sophia H.)
M McClelland
Malcolm Jackson
Marcus Tanith
Martin Terrier
Matt and Miranda Gnepper
Matthew Earlywine
Matthew House
Maxime Berar
Megan "M5" Matta
Megan Greathouse
Michael Black
Michael G.
Michael Kelly
Michael Lucas
Mike Kiesling
Monsieur Claude
Nathan Henderson
Nathania Wong
Nicholas Peterson
Nicola Went
Ninjar
No One Important
Owen Thompson
Papa Richard Aquitaine
Patrick Chandler
Patrick Sandoval
Peelgood the Leperous
Perverseness
Peter Gates
Peter Klevvall
Peter Kuhnert
Peter Patrnllliak
Peter Rolf
Phil Hattie
Phil Stafford
Phillip Bailey
Quasi Mortuus
Rhodes Py Klem Bauer
Richard Alan Lawson
Richard 'Finn McKenzie' Ross
Richard Libera
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Rob Carroll
Roxane Tourigny
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Ryan Tsandilis
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Scott Rick
Sebastian Menke
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Sheela
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Steve
Sune Sejberg Nielsen
Ted Ludemann
Terence Co
The Amaranthine
Thiago Gueiros
Tim Bogosh
Tommie Boatwright

Vincent Darnay
Vincent Pasko
Vladislav Lazarov
Walter Mecham
Weltwandler
Willy Kaceres
Wynand CJ Hart
Zach Greggs
Zeke Hubris
Ziggy Ramone

CLAN LOYALIST

0
17-Mar
"Irrefutably Thor" Thorson
~KT4313~
A. Leslie
Aaron Reimer
Aaron Woodside
Abner Rodrigues
Ackamandar Darkchylde
Adam Doochin
Adam Lee
Adam Phillip Smith
Adam Van
Adam Zielinski
Adolf Steinhaus
Al Kafir (Mitta)
Alain Geroux
Alan Douglas
Alan Thagard
Alaric Kheyne
Alby M.
Alden J. Blethen
Aldous Derleth
Alec "Michel" Wills
Alexander Morozov
Alexander Strong
Alexandre Coscia
Alexis Hodieux
Almoni
Alone Dillon
Aly C
Alyssa Lange
Amadeus
Amanda Costigan
Amelia J Crowley
Amelia Rose Oswald
Ammariel Melwasul
Anders Carlson
Anders Holmström
André Roy
Andreas "Zanity" Bengtsson
Andrew Augustine DiNovo
Andrew Gedrich
Andrew J. Trujillo
Andrew Tavish
Andrew 'Whitenoise' Rogers
Andy Grimm
Andy Martin
Anna-Marie van der Wal
Annida Christofi-Clark
Anthony Howell
Ariel Kaiser
Arthur Tudor
Ashur Parker
Aura Stephenson
Aurelia Pettigrew,
Childe of Carolina Valez
Aurély Sabourin Messina
Austin Haught
B. Hill
Balda
Bartole Family
Beachfox
Benegot Kirberg
Benn Mer
Benoit Devost
Bing Tabernilla
Bishop of Tucson Hop
BJ McManus
Bo Engwall
Bob Bonsall
Bob the Tzimisce
Boris "Borinel" Ulyanskiy
Brandon Graff
Brendan Martin
Brendan McCann
Brennen "The Crazy One
To The Left" Willer
Bret Stelmar
Brett Easterbrook
Brian C. Clark
Brian Dixon
Brian Lawrence
Brian Reck
Bruce "Darth Dabz" Gregory
Bruce Gray
Bruno Pereira
Bryan C. Smith
Butch2k
C. Ryan Smith
C.James Blukacz
C.W.Richeson
Caitlin Eckert
Calvin Kok
Cameron Manski
Cameron Murtagh
Camilla Chalcraft
Captain Chokefuck
Captain Estavan Marcalino Navarro
Nautica
Carlos Vergara
Casey Corbin (Greyson)
Cassidy Lambert
Catherine Stanford
Cédryck Mimault
Chad & Christine Geraghty
Chad Hazel-Kepler
Chad Valdes
Charles A. Wright
Charles and Ashley Oliver
Charles Crowe
Charlie "PookaKnight" Cantrell
Chasym
Chevreaud Olivier
Chris and Kat Wilde
Chris Brinkley
Chris Eggers

Chris Greene
Chris Mawford
Chris Reay, High Regent of the Durham Chantry
Chris Snyder
Christian Ojeda
Christian Topp
Christoph Schulz
Christophe The Diablerist
Christopher Gunning
Christopher Hale
Christopher Hauschild
Christopher W Mercer
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Clara Morin
Clayton York
Clytememnestra
Cody Killebrew
Cody L. Dobbs
Conor S.
Craig Bishell
Craig Gaddis
Craig Oxbrow
Crüjen A. Geist
Crutch Abram
Crystal A. Chappelle
CtrlAltFaceroll
Cynesra James
D. Scott Stewart
Dacar Arunsone
Damien Starlurker
Dan Frazier
Dan L. Nielsen
Dan M.
Dana Myers
Dana Tenneson
Daniel C. Barton
Daniel Cohen
Daniel Corn
Daniel Fruchterman
Daniel H. Spain
Daniel Lewis
Daniel Niekerk
Daniel Richardson
Daniel Sampaio Brito
Daniel Sellers
Daniel Wright
Danny Belden
Danny Montgomery
Dante Giovanni di Negro
Daphny Telles de Oliveira
Dariusz Holda
Darren MacNeil
Dave 'Moridin' Bruno
David & Jennifer DeNova
David Baity
David Clark
David 'dj' Coleman
David Doucey
David Huston
David M. Hubbard
David Rickman
David Wild
David XLII van Nederveen Meerkerk
Dawid "Dievas" Wojcieszynski
Deinqaal the Guy with Obsidian Teeth
Demitrius DeAvonte
Dennis D. Harry
Denny "the_eldar" Buhle
Detective Mark Quinzel
Devilskebab
Dirk Reinelt
Dixie Cochran
Dmitrios Kyriakis
Dominic Parent
Dominil Fairbairn
Don Iacobo Giovanni
Doom Cookie
Douglas Bramlett
Dr. Evil
Dr. Reinhardt
Drazx
Durante Giovanni
Dustin D. Dalton
Dustin Earl
Ed Fuqua
Ed Moretti
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Elias Riker
Elmo Valkeinen
EmanantVolition
Emily Brumfield & Susann Hessen
Emperor Manuel Commenus I
Enedino Fernandez
Enzo Christiano
Eric Miles
Erik Bergesen
Erik Thurman
Erin Ruston
Erin Sullivan
Esben Andersen
Esben Mølgaard
Evan Odensky
Evander Killian
Evangelos Salvatore Giovanni
Fabio Vitanza
Faith Eryan Taylor
Father Emmanuel
Faye LaRoux
Flavius, Lasombra's Archivist
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Forrest Spilker
François Labelle
Frank McCormick
Frank Reynold
Fraser Imrie
Freaklegion
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Fredrik Forssen
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Geoffrey Ward
George H. Trace Webster III
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Graeme 'Thee Forsaken One' Foote
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Gregory Bullard
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Grégory Gevaert
Gretle St. James
Grolorm
Guillaume 'Lenny' Asset
Gustavo E. Astudillo Romero
Guy-Samuel F.Dussault

Hadwyn of Shaw
Haint Blue
Hansbeck Balshiv
Haroon Alsaif
Hauke Wedekind
Heath Horne
Heimi
Helder Lavigne
Henrik
Henry "Ion" Jones
Henry Lopez
Holger Schrenk
Ian Nusskern
Iarlais
Ibon Presno
Ignacio de Bormás
In Memory of Olwen Ferrie
Iñaki Iglesias "Lenguadeplata"
Ingo Beyer
Insigrad Sparda
Isadora Fagotini
Ivan Cavestro
Ivan Malak
Ivo Goudzwaard
J Quincy Sperber
J. H. Frank
J. Mance Haines
Jack A. Kaplon
Jacob Juenger
Jacob Santos
Jacques DuRand
Jairain
Jake "the Blade" and Maureen
Jakob Maretti Bengtsen Kiilerich
James Rollins
James Yarton
Jami and Drake
Jan Gatz
Jana and Odessa Volkemyre
Jan-Hendrik Fuchs
Jared Koon
Jared Tinker
Jaron Kaplan-Parr
Jason "Panda" Hayes
Jason C Marshall
Jason Carter
Jason Freston
Jason Italiano
Jason Kenney
Jason Nell
Jason Wilcox
Javier "Critical Hit" Palenzuela
Javier "He-who-walks-between-worlds" Montegris
Jean deTenebreux
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Jeffrey Palmer
Jeffrey 'Taihunsu' Pritchett
Jeffrey Uyanik
Jennifer Jenkins
Jennine C.
Jenny Langley
Jenny Rain
Jeremey David Walker
Jeremy "Ravyn" Thomas, Clan Ravnos
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Jessa "Demon Cat" Denmark
Jessica Gains
Jina Ellias
Joachim M'Baka
Joan Anonical Sartori
Joe Dunham
Joe Huntzinger
Joe McNamara
Joe Parrino
Johan Staaf
John Carnathan
John Doyle
Johnathan "Johnny" Buccharatti
jon hicks
Jon 'Rossini' Brotherhood
Jonathan Perry
Jonny Murray
Joonas Teurokoski
Jordan Schmerer
Joseph M. Jankowski
Joseph Vieni
Julian Gray
Junas
Justin Van Fleet
K.L. Stevens
Karl Hagen Mann
Karrie "Bernadette" White
Kate Gryn
Kelley Barnes
Ken Carlson
Kermit James
Kevin "Menagerie for Nostradamus" Warmerdam
Kevin Behan
Kevin Diesel Roxxor 007
Kjell Kenneth Moens
Klaus von Klempt
Kleverson Carvalho
Knights of the Red Star
Korusef
Kraig Blackwelder
Kris Vanhoyland
Kristine Hertel
Kristoff Miyazivka
Krzysztof Zajkowski
Kurtis Hruska
Kylan Day
Kyle Graydon
Kyle Henderson
Kyle McCarty
Kyle Niedzwiecki
Lacey James
Lachlan Smith
Lady Seya Miyu, Pontifex
Laertes Dorset
Lambert Behnke
Larel Anorien
Larissa Bussell
Lark Cunningham
Larry Determan
Lars Brorholt Sørensen
Lars Haymaker
Laura Bennett
Laurent Desaulniers
Leonard Helding
Leslie Weatherstone
Lester Ward
Lewis Davies
Liam Allman
Liam Eyers
Liam Murray

Lindsey Morsé
lobachevsky
Logan and Tessa Bryce
Lokie
Lord Vox Anteron
Luca Guerra
Lucas Morgan
Lucas 'Voudun' Jungblut
Luciana Falbo
Luciano Pontes
Luis de Montano
Luis E. Gomez
Luke K Johnson
Luther Rommell
Lyttleton L. Callender
M Newton Moore
Mads Madsen
Magus
Máire Bourke and Kurt Hanna
Malcolm Fields
Malcolm McBride
Malena Catani (MEDW)
Malte Schultz
Manuel F Jacobo
Manuel van Maldeghem
Marc-André Laurence
Marcello Larcher
Maria Cambone
Mark Horne
Mark Huba
Mark Lewis
Mark MacKinna
Mark S
Martin Michaud
Martin Warwick
Masl
Mason Jones
Mateho Christoforo de Therak
Mathias Bøgehøj
Matt Asbell
Matt Carman
Matt Roberts
Matthew Dawkins
Matthew Junge
Matthew York
Matthias R.
Max Wojciechowski
Maxime Haineault
Maximillian Stone
Mel Addams
Melissa Dainu
Menno Rieff
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Mia Ruben
Michael and Brian Goubeaux
Michael Bergh Hansen
Michael Homola Jr.
Michael Knightmagicks
Michael M.
Michael Murr
Michael Solomon
Michael Starhawk
Michael T.J. Pippin
Michael Tully
Michele Ranaldi
Mike "Wolf Papa" Holland
Mike Goble
Mike Nudd
Mila Dalili, Chosen of Ravana
Miss Horrorbelle
Missy & Randy Smith
Mitchell Roggeveen
Moretti Michele
Mortain
Mr Thomas Vye
N. Ohnesorge
Nathanielstarr
Neil Lavery
Nejlah al-Rahab, Country Gangrel Antitribu
Nemere 'Cappadocian' Domonkus
Nic Matuzic
Nicholas Cler
Nicholas 'Lord Mechanar' Belanger
NIck Davis
Nick Esposito
Nick Radcliffe
Nick Rotheroe
Nicole Porter
Nikolas Keating Brand
Nistine
Octavio Arango
Ole Kadasch
Oliver Barker
Oliver Hambsch
Ollie Drake
Omer Ahmed
Orin Spiess
Oubliette
Oumaru
Oz "Ephorate" Sozen
Ozz "Moses Trueblood" Atik
palmi8
Panu Laukkanen bani Tremere
Patrick "PJ" Alderson
Patrick "Scarabus" Hanna
Patrick Fagan
Patrick Walters
Paul Davis
Paul Durfee
Paul 'Five Eyes' Harries
Paul Leone
Peiblit
Peter Brichs
Peter De Kinder
Petri Wessman
Phaolan Fluke, Clan Adasha
Phil Welch
Philippe Fenot
Pierre Coppet
Pip Padden
Preston L Bobo
Prince Brandon Princess Sandy
Professor Eleanor Jones
Professor Richard Kently bani Tremere
Qlippoth
R. Sean Callahan
Rachael Thomas
Rafi al-Walid
Randolph Scott
Randy Todd
Raphael Bourdot
Rebecca Malsin
Regent Steven Ian Staker
Renard
René Berthold
Reno Marino

Reuben Israel Beattie
Ricardo "Lucard" Fraga
Ricardo Foureaux
Riccardo Zampieri
Richard Alford
Richard Neary
Richard Popham
River Valley Rage
Riyad Zersha
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Rob M. Sutton
Robert "Jefepato" Dall
Robert "Rev. Bob" Hood
Robert Beckett
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Robert.W.Holmes
Roberto Hoyle
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Rodrigo Moreira Fagundes
rogue7sg
Rohel Terrazas
Romain PESSIOT
Roman Adamaszek
Ron "Khaalis" Owen
Rosening
Ross Pollock
Ross Thomas
Roy Berman
Rune Printzlau
Ryan "Honorary Malkavian" Creedon
Ryan and Echo Full
Ryan Elliott
Ryann Rambo
Ryan-O, Lord of the Thunderbats
Saleem Halabi
Salvatore Giovanni
Sam Hing
Sam Myatt
Samuel Gordon Mitson
Samuel J McCoucha
Sargin
SaxMan
Scott Kendrick
Scott Milner
Scott Mullock
Scraps
Sean Ashcraft
Sean Goode
Seana McGuinness
Seastnan Dolton
Serena bani Tremere
Sethreich Ardestahdt
Seven
Severin Rytz
Shaun D. Burton
Shawn Polka
Shawn Riley-Rau
Shelby Mehl
Sir Durande
Sir Geoffrey Scott
Skafte
Slaz
Stalks-the-Reef
Stephen Joseph Ellis
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Steve Burnett
Steve Darnell
Steven Fader
Steven Sauer
Stevie Coelho
Stoneking
Stuart "Spider" Adam
Stuart Armstrong
Sverre Midthjell
Sylvain "OgGy" Tanguy
Sylvanwulf
T. Nielson
Tácito "Tremere" Reis
Talita "Setheus" Amaral
Talon Godchild
Tami - Bibliophile extrodinaire
Tammy "Jinx" Nolan
TCRoleplayer
TechnocratJT
Tehnazzy
The AIY
The Bean
The Lady Arachne
Thomas Stewart
Tiffany Korta
Tim & Mitzi Gousie
Tim Boser
Tim Croker
Tim Flannigan
Timothy Jay
Timothy Layton, Abbot of the Toy Soldiers Pack
Timothy Vollmer
Tjidde Mayer
Tobias Schulte-Krumpen
Toby Stanford
Todd Branch
Todd Grotenhuis
Tom Landry
Tony Adkins
Tony Contento
Travis Carpenter
Travis N. Thomsen
Trenton Christensen
Trevenen Harry
Trevor Stamper
Tristan Beck
Tronoth
True Human
Ty Bailey
Tyemmerz
Tyler Hall-Burch
Tyler Lassinger
Ulrich "Syrill" Mackert
Vegard "Baal" Kivle
Victor Leandros, Country Gangrel, Loyalist
Voivode Nem'Seth Cszar'Descu
Wade Jones
Wade Overly
waelcyrge
Wayne Welgush
Weston Harper
Will Inskip
Willard Nations
William Deseron
William Dovan
William LeRoux
Xarknor
Xxero
Yan Beauchamp
Yang Yi & Xue Ping (Young One & Snow Apple)

Yann Arseneau
Yes
Yuichi Takahashi
Z Spellstorm
Zach Knox
ZanicNight

Aaron Buttery
Abraham, Tzimisce Ouroboros Priest
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Adrian Carlyon
Adrien "Tydesson" Lochon
Alain M.
Alan McNevin
Alec McClain
Alessa Abruzzo
Alessandro Rossi
Alex Myers
Alexander Weins
Alexandre "Magnamagister" Joly
Amel Beddek
Andrea Migone
Andrei Antonio Gonzalez Reyes
Andrew D. Kempf
Andrew Jay Cardinal
Andrew Laliberte
Andrew Waterfall
Ángel "Angelus" Martínez Murillo
Angelborn
Anneliese Arany
Anonymous
Anonymous
Anthony "Selketh" Dennetiere
Anthony Jennings
Apprentice of the Fourth Circle, Lily Germaine
Arcade Lancelot de Isengard
Archidamus
Arianhro
Aris "dreamer" Lambrianidis
Ash Hubbard
Ashley W.
Ashra Black
Bael the Cruel
Basilic
Ben Fitzhardinge
Ben Kesner
Ben Treeby
Bentley W. Chism
Bernardino Casas
Bertil Lindy Jensen
Bill Dittmar
Bill James
Bill Shaffer
Bjørn Kobæk Søndergaard
Black lion
Brendan Carrion
Brian Crank
C.J. "Lordzum" Misner
cantrip
Carlos "ChecaWolf" Checa Barambio
Charles Hsu
Chaz Lebel
Chris "Tar Ecthelion" Monroe
Chris Cowger
Chris Dyer
Chris Foster
Chris Wong
Christian "SaintxJoker" Beltran
Christian A. Nord
Christophe des Brumes
Christopher A. Bell
Christopher H. Lee
Christopher R. Wain
Clément Leval
Conan Brasher
Cowain the Mad -Greg D-
Coyotekin
Cristian Trincone
D Sonderling
DaemonChrno
Dale 'Clayton' Millward
Daniel "Deaddy" Bogdanoski
Daniel "DM" Martins
Daniel Chase
Daniel H
Daniel Ley
Darin Kerr
darksfallen
David "JustDave" Talboy
David and Samantha Mcknight
David Bjorne
David Bresson
David Ghosh
David Rose Fraser
David Weidendorf
Denis E. Savine
Derek "Pineapple Steak" Swoyer
Devilbear
Devin & Linny
Dirk Vanleeuw
Donte
Doug Atkinson
Doug Caillard
Dr Gertrude Kaspary
dr. Eperjesi Andras
Dr. Henry Smith
Dr.Bang
Dragosmire Akoimetai
Duane Kessler
Duke Lucius Fox
Durgen McChuckles
Ed Shannon
Edouard Contesse
Eduardo Vega Toledo, Loremaster
Eliza Wells
Eric "Garfink" Lai
Eric Aldiss
Eric Crabtree, Gangrel Primogen of Minnesota
Eric Pensman
Eric Sikora
Erik "I'm starting to regret that I summoned this demon" Gärtner
Etain de Bleueflamme
Evan "JabberWokky" and Sarah Edwards
Evelyne Schreiner
F.A. Nosic
Fabian Marche
Fabio P F Carvalho
Fenris Omen
fmadmonk
Francis Renault
François Labaye
Frank Wieden
Frankie Mundens
Fred Pilarczyk

Fred the Setite
Fredrik "Frippe" Nilsson
Friktion
Gabriel Sorrel
Gabriele "Sogno Mistico" Mammi
Gareth Marc 'Volesus' Bell
Gavriel Phothis
George Taher
Gianpaolo Messina (gianpox)
Gijs Blaauw
Gordon Gordon Gordon
Greg "Street Rat" Meyer
Greg Phillips
Gretchen - 8yr old Sabbat Gangrel
Gugli
Guillaume Leclef
Habeeb
Hakim Masaamba
Harry J J Gardner
Henry F. Bruckman Vargas
Iain MacPhee
Ian "Squee" Sargeant
Ian Asha
Ian Hamilton
Ian Smith
Isaac Carr
Isael Barroso
Ivan Ferrari
Ivan Vandalsvik
J. Noah Wiley
J.C. Carvalho
jacob "Jack" Guldbrandsen
James and Ashley Simons
James Monty-Carbonari
Jan-Willem Kaagman
Jason Dickerson
Jason Geis
Jason J. Chapa
Jason T. DeForge
Jay Page
Jayna Pavlin
JAYSON "the14thguest" TURNER
Jeff Zitomer
Jennifer Fuss
Jeremy Brown
Jim Flood
Jim Morrissey
Jitse Paping
Jody Bowman
John "Wolfe" Kelley
John Doe
John Sturkie
Jonas Hansson
Jonas nyrén
Jonathan A. Cohen
Jonci Aguillard
Joseph
Joshua "Akasen" Faria
Joshua "Maverick" Manor
jozef boddaert
Julián Navarro
Juliana Lamy
Jussi Myllyluoma
Justin Howard
Justin 'Romero' Castro
Kai Schiefer
Kamilla Dias
Karl Fiebiger
Katja Van Cauwenberge
Kenzi Solo
Kevin C. Wong
Kevin R. Dombrowski
Kieran Carder
Kirk Foote
Klink von Zarovitch
Knuchi
Kody W. Stinson
Konstantinos Rosmpoglou
Kragen LerDrahk
Lance Hosaka
Laurence de Oliveira Arruda
Laurent Sinitambirivoutin
Lazaro and Damiana Giovanni
LeAnn 'Ellyham' LaFollette
Leslie Clements
Lifestealer
Lin Liren "Pride of The Sword"
Livia von Sucro
Lord Adarvark Loric III
Lori Krell
Lt. Robert Sparkle
Luca Sacchini
Lucas Bonsignore-Boisset
Lucas van toren
LVB
Madeleine Astor
Majdi Badri
Malabron de Malafas
Malevolence- Sanguinus.org
Marc BLINN
Marc Collins
Marc Kuczborski
Marcos Almeida Leite Bomfim
Marcus Maniakes
Marcus Wallbreaker
Margarete Strawn
Mark Garbrick
Mark Moore
Markus Wagner
Martin Gattis
Mathieu Guittard
Matt Ross
Matthew & Nicole Powers
Matthew Sanderson
Matthias Pettersson
MaTThias Svensson o Sara Törnström
Max Nevill
Mehmet Ortaç - Smyh Aben Kabali of House and Clan Tremere
Mentat
Methandrela
Michael "Legion" Page
Michael "Moradion" Dunsch
Michael "Nicolai & Portia 4ever!" Brosens
Michael Lenzo
Michael Patrick Foight
Milosz Nawrat
Miranda
Mizuki Yamada
Mr. Black
MSG Timothy Smith
Myke Diemart
Nadim, Seraph of the Black Hand
Nathan Favorit
Nelson Candanedo
Nicholas A. Tan

Nicholas D. Kisiel
Nicolas Villatte
Nikika Giovanni
Noble Thayer Graves, Clan Tremere, Follower of the Path of Blood
Noskavian
Nym Moondown Francesco Bertei
Oliver Steckmeier
Osye E. Pritchett III
Pedro Reis
Persphone Giovanni
Pete Houtekier
Peter Merkel
peter peretti
Rabbit
Rachel & Spyder
Rafael Rodrigues
Randall Crawford
Remy de Lioncourt
Rev. Peter "Gothic Wizard" White
Rich Shirley
Richard Chilton
Richard Tighe
Ricochet
Rithy Vyodmot (J.V.Thomas)
Rob McGinnis
Robert "Dice" Pierson
Robert Gatlin
Robert K Stephenson
Roberto Hiroshi Kina Filho
Rodrigo "Coldheart" Narcizo
Rogan The Ancient Hamby
Romain LEDOUX
Rory Chambers
Ross MacKenzie
Roy Gunter Guttmann
Russ Trippett
Ryan Harmon Smith
Ryan Porter
S.Delemarle
Saint George the Pariah
Sam Kastner
Sam Monroe
Scott E. Vigil
Scott Forward
Sebastian N. Behrndtz
Sebastian Pusch
Sergio Pazos Rodriguez
Shan "Shanathan" Morris
Shan W Simpson
Shane Rose
Shawn "Sutekh" Glass
Shawn P
Shea Anderson
Simon Andrews
Simon 'Little Si' Annan
Somalucard
Spilios Aggelos Spiliopoulos
Stefan Lundsby
Stephen Birks
Steven Carroll
Steven Lau
The Black Countess, Alexandra Bennett-Fitzroy
The Dark Father
The Revolving Coterie
Thiago Fazolari Meyer
Thiago Henrique Righetti e Silva
Thierry De Gagne
thomas delicourt
Thomas M Nicholson
Thomas Severinsen
Thomas Solway
Tom Davies
Torben Lindqvist
Tracy Cook
Trista & Daniel Robichaud
Tristan J. Ciceran
Tristan Valentine
Troy Lenze
Tunc Mart
Tyrnis
Umberto Giovanni
Valentina Angelina Campanile
Vasiliy "The Slav" - Baron of Toronto
Vermidas
Vincent Nees
Virgile "Mafalda" Gaspard
Vladimir "Karl Ruhr" Dzundza
Walter B. Schirmacher
Winifred Sweeney
Xane the Black
Yohan Odivart
Yoruychy
Zargyl
Zhupans
Ziv plotnik (the hero?)

Anastasios Grigoriadis
Andrew Hauptman
Anthony Buckley
Arthur Boff
B&A Colbert
Beckett
Bruce Lindsay
Caille Jensen
Colin R. Jones
Dan Schindler
Darryl "Viktor Kamenov" Johnson
David A. Robins (Shane Masters)
David Bradshaw
David W. Kaufman II
Dr. Daniel Thornvick of Clan Malkavian
Emily McCabe
Ernie LaFountain
Evelyn Atwood
Fiona Sullivan
Gary R Smith II
Geoffar
Gevryke
Ichido Hamza
Jason & Amy Berteotti
Jean Michel Du Pont (Lasombra antitribu)
John Paul Hancock
Julia Czarniecki
Lane Carter
Louis
Maarten Geirnaert
Martin Brown
Maxwellion
Mike "Mosaj" Blackett
Monsieur Mal
Mordak
Nikki Brown
Nyk, Lord Fox-Huntington
Pysor Fiavel

Rich (Dark Knight) Palij
Richard Cornman
Robert Thomson
Sameer Yalamanchi
Seven
Stephen Drake
Tetsuo
Thaddeus Ryker
Tom Depoorter "Helen Hunt"
Vicknesh Suppramaniam
Xavier Aubuchon-Mendoza

"Plain Jane" Janelle
Adam Rees
Alexander Kovic
Alexander Mac Grath
Amaryllis
Brad D. Kane
Brad Klinger
Brian Wagner
Cameron Eright
Cardell Kerr
Case
Ciucilon
Claus Mahler Larsen
Crystal Mazur
CSN
Damian Tyrell
Daniel Gochnauer
Daniele Patruno
Darkwolf Nightshade, Gabriel Vandal, & Sithis Nightshade
David "Barachiel" Akers
David Ashby
Disdeinen of the Undercity
Dove mc Tovards
dryack
Eric Ortiz
Erika Eby & Randy Meister
Ethan Zimmerman
Frederick Korte Salubri Inquisitor
Håkan Ståby
Isabeau Estrees
Jamie "Stoker" Ferguson
Jeffrey LaLuc
Jens "Spacejens" Rydholm
Joey Daemen
John Henley
John P Weatherman
Jon House
Jon Murdock
Josaphat Niebler
Kevin Wine
Mason Jones
Mathias
Matthew Lynn
Michael Dyer
Mikael Wolgast
Ralf "Raahat" Raek
Ray Heyberger
Ryan A. Rose
Sawyer Rankin
Shasta
Shimon Klein
Sir Lionel Hopesworth, Ancillae of Clan Malkavian
Soren Haurberg
Stefan Breuker
Thomas H. Elsom
Tommy Svensson
Tony Wileman
Tor-Eilif Hargaut
Wong Zhanpeng Jason
Zachary Strong
Zeven

David N Dow
Raul Urbina
Stefan "LoomChild" Axelsson
The Outlander

1.) Andara Shadowfang 2.) Lodur
Aaron Jacob Kelly & Eleanor Mae Kelly
Adam Caverly, Matt Slade
Adrian Wollniak, Joanna Maria Willniewska
Aizen Bloodfury / Prince Marcus Duvall
Amy Banker, Anonymous
Azeneth Seti / Shawn McAfee
Carlos "Chepe" Fernández de Córdoba & الرياح الصامت
Chris McLean and Varden Fhaling
Colt J. Blunt, Psy.D. & Lint Bunny
Daniel "Illuminos" Persson and Adam "Boman" Persson
Elisabeth von Waldenström zu Brückner // Heike Vollnberg
Erich Mehrland, Francesca Temperini
Gustavo "Brujah" Mattioni
Ivo de Mooij en Martin van Beek
Jan 'Evil GM' Stanek
Jason Robinson / Rachel Rodgers
Joel Walter Dowling ; Jennifer Elizabeth Noble
John "King" Roberts & Erin Roberts
Johnny Gaunt, Clan Ventrue Rita Zvahsky, Clan Ventrue
Marcus "Murderhorse" Ó Maoldúin / Jesse Unruh
Matthew G Payton
Nathan Bjerke, Garson, Voice of the Prince of Seattle
Nicholas D. Dragisic Tim Prisching
Nymeres, Martell; Safar al-Ladid ur Baal
Rafael Brasilio Grotti da Silva and Voivod Vladmir Dracul (Neverovsky)
Raven Woodsman and Moira Shadowflitter-Woodsman
Roland van der Slagt, Lord Byron de Bris
Sara Gelson, Rachel Collins
Shawn Pace, Old Maz
Vincent C. Regar; Adam Devon
Violet Aurora Shepard and Nicolas Shepard
Warin Tyler & Vlad Voss
William J Schebler Jr Ronald Ile

Adam Jones
Aidenn Ossorio & Rain Pletcher
Aldo 'Kuako' Montoya Reynaga
Alexandrias Ortelius
Anthony J. Pirri
Blake Deakins
Brian Lynch

Brian Perlis
Christian "Su-tehp" Fernandez-Duque
Christian Barrett
Christina Shirley
Connor Fraser
David Calvin
David Futterrer
David Rego
Derek Guder
Dr. Philipp Wittmann
Duncan Wong
Elyse Benson
Everett Lo
Face
Harald Hellerud
Heinrich Krebs
Jason Corley
Jason Van Pelt
Jeremy and Natasha Cue
John A W Phillips
Jörg Fick
Joshua Josephson
Kair Heimghull
Kristine Roper
Lee Tate
Malika
Manuel Cádiz
Michael "Rook" Streatfield
Michael V. Roberts
Mike Ruch
Olivier Jobin
Pål Wilhelmsen
Peter 'Malkira' Lennox
Richard 'Vidiian' Greene
Robert T. Sagris
Saint Michael Barr
Shane Campbell
Shawn Kehoe
Stephen McElvaney
Steve Huntsberry
Travis M.
Troy Baker
Victor "Priest heir of Tanith" SaintOn
Vistani Radanavic
Wayne Myers
YoKasta Martinez
Екатерина Андреевна Николаева

Adam Whitcomb
Ahnen Christian - Brother of Nod - Scourge of the BAALI
Alex Kallend
Alexander Kratochwill
Alyisa "ArcaneRazil" Lanning
Andreas "Syrius de Goratrix" Meichelböck
Andy Kwong
Betty Osthoff
Billy Barnes
Bob Stauffer
Brandon Holfeltz
Brent Logan Reitze
Brian Culbertson
Brian Horstmann
Bryce Undy
C Octavia Postuma aka 'Grandma'
Cesar Vandemeer
Charles Myers
Claire Winters
Claude Martel-Olvier
Cuedadar
Darksheer
David Matthew Collinson
Declan Creaney
Edward Bornstein
Frédéri "Volk Kommissar Friedrich" POCHARD
Free Moonshadow
Graeme McCulloch
Greg Moritz
Harrison Outram
Henning "the Lieutenant" Hauser
Henry R Moore III
He-Zin Kwon
Ian Dominey
J. W. Bennett
Jan Lambrechts van der Weijden
Jessica Lilith Darke
Jim "Jericho Caine" Teeter
John R. Trapasso
Joseph Melis
Jürgen Pünter
Karl Fournier
Khrystof
Kim Hosmer
Lars Holgaard
Lisha Amaryn
Marcus Arena
Mark Bussey
Matthew Wasiak
Matthias "Mace" Wendler
Michael Bach Kristensen
Michael Mullin
Nat Kisa "Kizna" A
Nathan Wilhelm Alexander de la Mer
Nicholas Faust
Nicholas Muehlenweg
Owen Milton
Patrick Hutchison
Paul Jonathan S. Tio
Paul Ryan
peter ilegems
Ramon A. Jaimez
Raphael Giovanni
Rayne Darkholme
Robert Applegate
Robert Biskin
Ron Hills
Stéphane "jenesuispasgoth" Zuckerman
Steve S
SUGURU OIKAWA
Tavii Sarress
Tawiscara Blackwing
Tim Driscole
Timothy Mushel
Trent Faversham
Vargas Ghostmaw
Vesper Abaddon
Warren P Nelson

Anthony Ross
Brendan Whaley
Emmanuel "Tito" Betancourt
Josh Heath

Aaron Leeder
Aaron Leeder
Aaron Leeder
Alex Plata, Arthurbearmex, Bercan, Ami Comi, Ernesto Yip Valentin
Arthur Noseda; Charles Trécourt; Louis Trécourt; Yannick Peyrede; Trollune
Dr. Rejack Nafrëad; Joke Bergmans; Clovis "Lord of Flanders"; Reinhardt Lagast "Seneschal of Ghent"; Walter ap Aderyn; Sonny "Keeper of Lore" Bertels
Petros Panagiotidis, Manolis Kemerlis, Chris Paliogiorgos, Manolis Trahiotis
Spirit of Chantelouve

Christopher Mark Sørensen, Sebastian Erik Nielsen, Mikkel Lund, Andreas Esso Jensen, Kristian Højgaard
Diego de Astorga, Sigmar Valten, Albin AmWurten, Khalid Bahir, Desmond Dorian
Lady Synthe, Black Eye Vexed, Scathaigh, Overlord Nobody, Ruinlord of the Nameless
Oliver Schuster, Jonas Rosenfeldt, Dominik Schütze, Marco Klomfas, Robin Wall, Michael Knauer

CLAN EXEMPLAR

NIKOLAI STEEN
David Orna-Ornstein
Donnie "Lord Aludian" Roos, Jr.
James A. Halsey
Kira "Havoc" Earle
Lilavati Chandraka
Lord Rickard Argentis, Knight of the Abyss
Nik 'Pyotr Stanislav' May
Vincent "Victorien LOYOLA" Mora

Brad Whitcomb
Dhaunae De Vir
Evan R. Wood
ipsi
Patrick B. Warren
Robert "Luca" Tucker
Shannon Withrow
Simone "Samira Hammadi" Lohmeier
Sondre Øverås
Zachary Thomas Tyler, Taifa Gangrel ashipu, follower of the Path of Harmony





Lore of the Clans includes:

- The history, lore, and nightly practices of all thirteen Clans, told from the perspective of the Kindred themselves.
- New combo Disciplines, powers, Merits, Flaws, and other rules specific to each Clan.
- Revising and updating more classic Vampire: The Masquerade material to V20.

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