***Blood Faith IV***

My dear Porfirio,

In order to answer your question about the Schism, I will first have to explain to you the two Philosophies which vie for supremacy in the universe. Once you understand the fundamental opposition of the two Philosophies, and the irredeemable flaws in the opposing Philosophy, you will understand why the Schism was both necessary and inevitable. And you may even begin to understand why our ultimate triumph is also inevitable.

The Philosophies are more alike than either side would dare openly admit. But since you have committed yourself fully to our cause, through the sacrament of the Shedding, I can now instruct you fully. The Opposition, like us, are immortal. But they achieve it in a manner quite different from our own. And, in my opinion, it remains to be seen whether what they’ve accomplished is truly an eternal state or just prolonged disintegration.

We use the process of Shedding to subject our flesh. We conquer our mortal flesh and force it to obey our wills. The Opposition hates their own weak flesh, considering it as dung—filthiness and corruption. They seek its destruction that it might consume, wither, and fall away. Then, once it has moldered upon the land, and crumbled, and returned to the earth, they call it up again. But *then*, you see,is when the corruption sets in. How can one possibly believe that by exhuming one’s sundered remains, purity and perfection can be achieved? No, my young *protégé*, in this they are greatly deceived.

An excellent point of evidence against them is this: though they restore the flesh and sinew and bone, nothing flows in their veins. In fact, they are devoid of any fluid whatsoever—tears, mucus, urine, saliva, semen, &c. They are dry and desiccated. When they die, their blood is soaked up by the ground and lost to them—it cannot be recovered. Why is this so? Because it is an offense against Nature, an abomination. They seek to recover that which they once repudiated, and it cries up from the dust against them. They are *anathema*.

Blood is salvation; without it they are but empty husks which are tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of superstition. Though they are immortal, there can be no joy in such an existence, for there can be no pleasure without blood. To a large extent the Shedding renders us dispassionate, but their lack of blood leaves them cold and unresponsive. And should you ever meet one of them (and I think it likely that you will), you will note that they are pale and pasty—even more so that we are.

This in itself is disgusting, but might otherwise be overlooked if it weren’t for the effect this has on their Philosophy. The Opposition is not content with afflicting their own meat; they have enmity for *all* flesh and seek its destruction from off the earth. They side with Jean-Paul Sartre when he said, “*L’enfer, c’est les autres*.” Man’s existence—and especially man’s *happiness*—is a plague to them.They will not be satisfied until all of humanity is laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to become prey to the worms of the earth, the vultures of the air, the dogs, and the wild beasts.

Why should this concern us? you might ask.

Imagine that we are like leeches (setting aside that we are predators rather than parasites). Like leeches, we do not kill our host. But our host is not the individual human (which, sometimes we *do* kill). Rather, it is human society as a whole. Don’t mistake me—I feel no sentiment for humankind. It is simply in our best interest for them to continue indefinitely. The irony is that like us, the Opposition feeds on a human fluid—but while ours is rich, nutritive blood, theirs is bitter, poisonous yellow bile. Our actions promote sanguinity on the earth, while theirs promote choler. We seek the continuation of the human race while they seek its destruction.

I cannot tell you how many times the Opposition has tried to use two factions—of their own creating!—to annihilate each other. Blood, that most delicious and most precious commodity, has soaked the sands of nearly every continent. And all out of dedication to the Opposition. Their faith makes them blind and gives them rage. As I told you before, it can protect them from us, but it more often leads them to destruction—which is exactly what the Opposition desires.

I have interacted with members of the Opposition on a minority of occasions (a thing most earnestly to be avoided) and I’ve been unable to determine how they extract the bile from their victims. They certainly lack any oral structures to facilitate it. As I have never witnessed one of them feeding, I am unable to even speculate as to how it is performed. But certainly they are more gluttonous than we are. They *thrive* on human hatred and misery—and they ensure that it is readily available.

This brings up an interesting point, which I don’t believe you’ve yet been made aware of. There can be no gain, as far as I can see, in your figuring this out for yourself, so I will tell you plainly. You may have noticed that the pleasure you experience when feeding can vary greatly. Perhaps you have already wondered if there were a way to selectively choose your victims so as to maximize your own pleasure. Here is the secret: we don’t derive physical nutrition from feeding on human blood. We are absorbing their excitement, their joy, their enthusiasm, their *élan*, &c. So all you must do is choose prey that exhibit these qualities (my personal favorites are young *inamoratos*).

Another point of similarity (but which again differs in its execution), is our transcendence of the physical plane. We subject our bodies to adopt whatever physical form we desire. Our control is such that the transformation can take place with astonishing rapidity. This ability gives us access to otherwise restricted locations and can aide us in escaping undesirable situations. The Opposition seem to vanish and then reappear in a new location. Again, it is only possible because they lack bodily fluids.

I do not know how it is done, but I have a theory that it involves a temporary violation of the law of conservation of matter. You might think that the ability to transport oneself immediately from one point to another would be more desirable and adventitious than shape-shifting. But that would be an erroneous thought, indeed. Setting aside the distinct possibility that sometimes they vanish and never reappear, swallowed by the void, it is worthy of note that we can still penetrate most barriers erected against us with our ability, but they can never disguise their true nature. The instant they appear, they are recognized.

Coming to the next point, we are able to quickly regenerate when we sustain an injury. If a member of the Opposition were attacked by a human, for example, with a knife, the knife would pass through them. Since they have no fluids—neither blood nor lymph nor cytoplasm—that part of their body is turned to dust. And just as they restored their bodies after death, so they restore them after an injury. Dust they are, and dust they shall remain.

In fact, because they are so dry, they often avoid water entirely. They are never to be found near lakes, rivers, or the ocean. And they never appear when it is raining. Based on this observation, in order to avoid conflicts with them—conflicts which I am sure neither side could win (though I wonder what would happen if one were to cast water on them)—we have learned to frequent the waters. When rain holds them at bay, we frenzy.

Finally, the Opposition abhors the darkness much as we cannot stand the light. They vilify us among mankind, saying that one cannot see in the dark—*obscurum est cæcitas*. But just remember, that for a mortal, too much *light* can blind them, too. And if they stare at it too long, they’ll be blinded *permanently*.

So you see that the Opposition is merely a counterfeit, a bastard imitation of what we have accomplished. Once the Philosophies were united and the Universe was ours. But some of our number became dissatisfied with the stringency of our Philosophy. So they fell away and submitted themselves to an inferior conduct. They sow anger and hatred and reap violence and death. But their Philosophy is self-defeating and eventually, if left to their own devices, they would eradicate themselves.

We live after the flesh and we do not die. By the Shedding we have gained victory over the grave and in it is the sting of death swallowed up. Because of the Shedding, our days are prolonged and we are made perfect *by* our flesh instead of *in spite* of it, as they suppose they can. We use our immortality as a tool. For this reason we will prevail upon the earth.

Affectionately,

Hæmming